

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle  
17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
5 October 2014  
Grace and Trinity Lutheran Churches, Wichita  
Isaiah 5:1-7; Matthew 21:33-46

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

*“For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’  
The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him!  
A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’” (Mt 11:18-19)*

The first sign Jesus did was at Cana in Galilee.  
There He righted a very wrong problem: *“They have no wine.”* (Jn 2:3)  
Providing somewhere between 120-180 gallons of wine, which is roughly 600-900 bottles,  
Jesus wanted the party to go on.

With Jesus, there’s no shortage of wine and drinking and joy and partying.  
If you’re against alcohol, then John the Baptizer is for you.  
But you can’t turn Jesus in such a way that He’d put an end to wine.

Now, there are two ways to have wine: a right way and a wrong way.  
The wrong way is what we’re most used to,  
which is why we have an eerie feeling that alcohol isn’t all that good for us.

The wrong way to have wine is to have it for one’s own pleasure:  
to grab and steal and hoard and keep,  
to huddle over every last drop, and store away more for later,  
to say *“who cares!”* or *“to hell with it!”*  
to forget or to stop thinking or to stop hurting.  
to take advantage of someone, or to be taken advantage of—  
these are the wrong ways to have wine.

Wine is no longer serving its purpose when it becomes a cowardly escape—  
a way out of what this world throws at you.

But the abuse doesn’t undo what it’s been given for.  
And it doesn’t make our Lord any less desirous to give and to give more and more and more.

Our collect today begins:  
*Gracious God, You gave Your Son...*

Gracious God means that He is the gift-giver—and it’s clear that the greatest gift is His own Son.  
That’s what God is like:

He gives; and He gives abundantly; and He gives most unexpectedly and undeservedly.  
And in the end, what He wants most, is to share some wine with you.  
Call Him a glutton and a drunkard—you wouldn’t be the first!  
What He wants is fellowship—mutual love and joy—to be held and grasped and delighted in,  
just as he delights in you.

Today’s parable and today’s love song are all about wine.

You might've missed it, but what's planted in both Isaiah's song and Matthew's parable is a *vineyard*—and you know what vineyards are for!

But in both Isaiah and in Matthew, something stops the wine from flowing.

In Isaiah, when the Lord looked for grapes all He found were wild, sour grapes—  
and no wine can come from that!

In Matthew, things are a bit different.

Rather than there being a problem with the fruit,  
there's a problem with those set as stewards over the fruit.

It's those wicked tenants.

The Lord placed them over His vineyard,  
and now they wouldn't share any wine.

Think about it:

The Lord gave these tenants full and free access to the best vineyard around;  
and, therefore, the best wine—  
and went away.

And finally, when he sends some messengers to collect some of *His* wine,  
they beat, stone, and kill the messengers.

What does this say about how they view the Master?

As you know, this is a parable about God and us.

He is the Master;  
the Church is His vineyard—His people, Israel;  
the Pharisees and Chief Priests quickly recognize that this parable is about them—  
they're the tenants—  
and the fruit, the wine: well, that's the joy that comes from the Gospel—  
sacrifices of thanks and praise—the sure delight and purpose of wine.

So, why would these tenants keep the fruit back from the Master?

Why cut off the flow of wine?

Well, it's because they thought the more they give away the less they have for themselves.

It's simply a matter of greed, and fear, and desire for control.

They think they're losing out if they have to cut the Master His portion.

They think there's an end to the wine, a limit and measure that they've got to control.

And so they beat, stone, and kill those messengers sent to share in the wine.

This again, is the wrong way to have wine.

And that's not what God wants.

What He wants is a beautiful vineyard, full of fruit, producing wine—and the best of wine—  
and with wine, joy.

He wants the vineyard to ring with shouts of  
 “*Cheers!*” “*Prost!*” “*Salud!*” “*LeChaim!*”  
 “Pour another!”  
 “Pass the bottle!”  
 “Here’s to you!”

With Him there’s no end, and always more to give, and it’s always the best.  
 More to pour, more to pass, more to be enjoyed—always *for you*.

Now as the parable plays out, we are those listening in.  
 We see the anger and hatred and fear of those tenants.  
 We know there’s no limits to their greed.  
 So when the Master sends servants, and more servants, and finally says,  
 “*They will respect my Son*” (Mt 21:37)—  
 we want to cry out and say, “NO!”

There couldn’t be a worse plan.  
 All that will come is the death of the Son.  
 And when He dies,  
     the inheritance is lost,  
         the vineyard belongs to wicked tenants,  
             and the wine gets cut off forever.

“*But,*” Jesus says, that’s not how the story ends.  
 “*Have you never read in the Scriptures?*”  
 Then Jesus interprets one parable with another:  
 “*The stone that the builders rejected  
     has become the cornerstone;  
 this was the Lord’s doing,  
     and it is marvelous in our eyes*” (Mt 21:42; Ps 118:22-23)

The Master knows full well that He graciously gives His Son into the hands of sinful men.  
 But there are no other men who so need this Son, than those sinners that would kill Him.  
 And, in fact, it’s precisely in this giving of the Son,  
     that while the wine stops flowing for a moment,  
         and is replaced by the flowing of blood,  
             it’s only in the flowing of the blood, that the wine is able to flow again.

This Son—this stone rejected by the builders—has become the cornerstone, the true vine.  
 And He’s done it all for you!  
 He gives and He gives and He gives some more.  
 Never to run out, never to go dry, always for the feast to go on!

You don’t have to ruin it: grasping, and hoarding, stocking up, and storing away secret stashes.  
 The Lord always has more to give: to wicked tenants, and even to you—and it’s always the best!

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