

Kingdom Life: Abundant Fruit

by Pastor Kurt Hoover

Isaiah 5:1-7 Let me sing for my
beloved

my love song concerning his
vineyard:

My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.

² He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst
of it,

and hewed out a wine vat in it;
and he looked for it to yield
grapes,

but it yielded wild grapes.

³ And now, O inhabitants of
Jerusalem

and men of Judah,
judge between me and my
vineyard.

⁴ What more was there to do for
my vineyard,

that I have not done in it?

When I looked for it to yield

grapes,

why did it yield wild grapes?

⁵ And now I will tell you

what I will do to my vineyard.

I will remove its hedge,

and it shall be devoured;

I will break down its wall,

and it shall be trampled down.

⁶ I will make it a waste;

it shall not be pruned or hoed,

and briers and thorns shall grow

up;

I will also command the clouds

that they rain no rain upon it.

⁷ For the vineyard of the Lord of
hosts

is the house of Israel,

and the men of Judah

are his pleasant planting;

and he looked for justice,

but behold, bloodshed;

for righteousness,

but behold, an outcry!

Matthew 21:33-46 ³³ "Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a **vineyard** and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. ³⁴ When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. ³⁵ And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other

servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. ³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.' ³⁹ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰ When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹ They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."

⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

"'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the **kingdom of God** will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. ⁴⁴ And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶ And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. – Matthew 21:43

What is the fruit that Jesus is referring to here? Because that seems to be the heart of the wisdom we might benefit from hearing. And this is significant wisdom. How many people are going through life chasing after, investing in the wrong fruit. Thinking that their contribution to the world, their performance is the most important. Or let's be honest, most people are just trying to survive the overwhelming current that is modern life. They have found a pattern or a rut that keeps them on the shore, and they dare not deviate from their system lest they be swept away again.

The rush of modern life appeals to our pride and our ability to produce, there are a lot of really good 'tenants out there,' We

have all been really good tenants – for ourselves – in the past... or the rush of modern life overwhelms, and we are just happy to have a patch of ground to call our own ... I will just accept the fruit my little routine can give me.

Here is the interesting thing about this parable. The fruit Jesus is referring to has little to do with the good or the bad decisions and paths we might lead our family on. To say this another way. It is easy to hear this parable and assume that there is only one right fruit to produce. It turns out God can use anything we can produce, even wild grapes to benefit His Kingdom. But there is one fruit that He will not allow. The same age old fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. The things you and your family can invest in are endless, but God will not tolerate those things in our lives that make us question His love and His faithfulness.

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. – Matthew 21:43

Fruits. With an 's.' Fruits of any type so long as it is not the one that robs you and yours of their connection to God.

This is not so much a narrowing of how you should live a righteous life, you actually have lots of options open to you. This is a deceleration that the self-righteous faith of the Pharisee... the self-righteous faith in self that does not need God and slowly erodes your family's connection to God will not stand. God's Son will create Faith, even if it cost him His life. Even if it crushes you and Him in the process. Because God is a God of resurrection.

Faith is the fruit that God produces in you.

It is our human nature to focus on our contribution, our production. And History proves out that it is this temptation that gets in the way of God's work in us.

The people in history least able to participate in the work of the vineyard (Kingdom) were not prostitutes or tax collectors who had given their children and community so many sour grapes.

The people least able to participate in the Kingdom were those who had lost the connection with the God in the first place. Those who had lost their faith. Those who had replaced the awe and wonder they first experienced stepping into a brand-new Kingdom with fences and watch towers and rows of vines they did not plant. The ones who had slowly over time had given into the lie that the result of these vines, the things this world produces, was because of their tiny contributions.

It may take us a whole season to repair a fence or tend your little part of the garden, but your effort matters very little compared to the one who provided the earth and all that is in it. The daily provision of sun, light, water and carbon dioxide the 'vineyard' needs for the world to move on and produce anything.

And the fruit that God is looking for has nothing to do with material things, but the hope and trust, the freedom and generosity that is produced when we see how faithfully God provides. God provides in His creation a wondrous and surprising ways with a beautiful mosaic of results.

We humans being have actually given into the lie that there is only one good and loving and efficient and sustainable result that God is looking for in our lives. One perfect fruit that if we could all just agree upon and build a mission around, we could

produce it for God. Which is just another way of saying we could produce without God.

When there is nothing in creation that follows that pattern.

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. – Romans 1:18-23

I do not think that God looks at all of the potential of His creation (Vineyard/Kingdom) and think to himself, man I hope they figure out the one most beneficial and efficient and loving and sustaining way to cultivate the earth as if the end result depends on us.

He planted His vineyard and said man I hope they have fun with the many a varied ways their lives might unfold. The many and varied ways grapes can grow and what they might produce.

The fruit God sent his servants and His son into the world to harvest is the truth (Romans 1:18) of our reality. That we have an almighty God who provides all that we need. Eternal power and divine nature (Romans 1:20)

The good news is that the fruit of God's vineyard is so powerful and life changing that it can overcome a lifetime or a childhood or a generation of wasted effort... planting the wrong seeds and producing wild grapes, even bloodshed and rebellion (Isaiah 5:7).

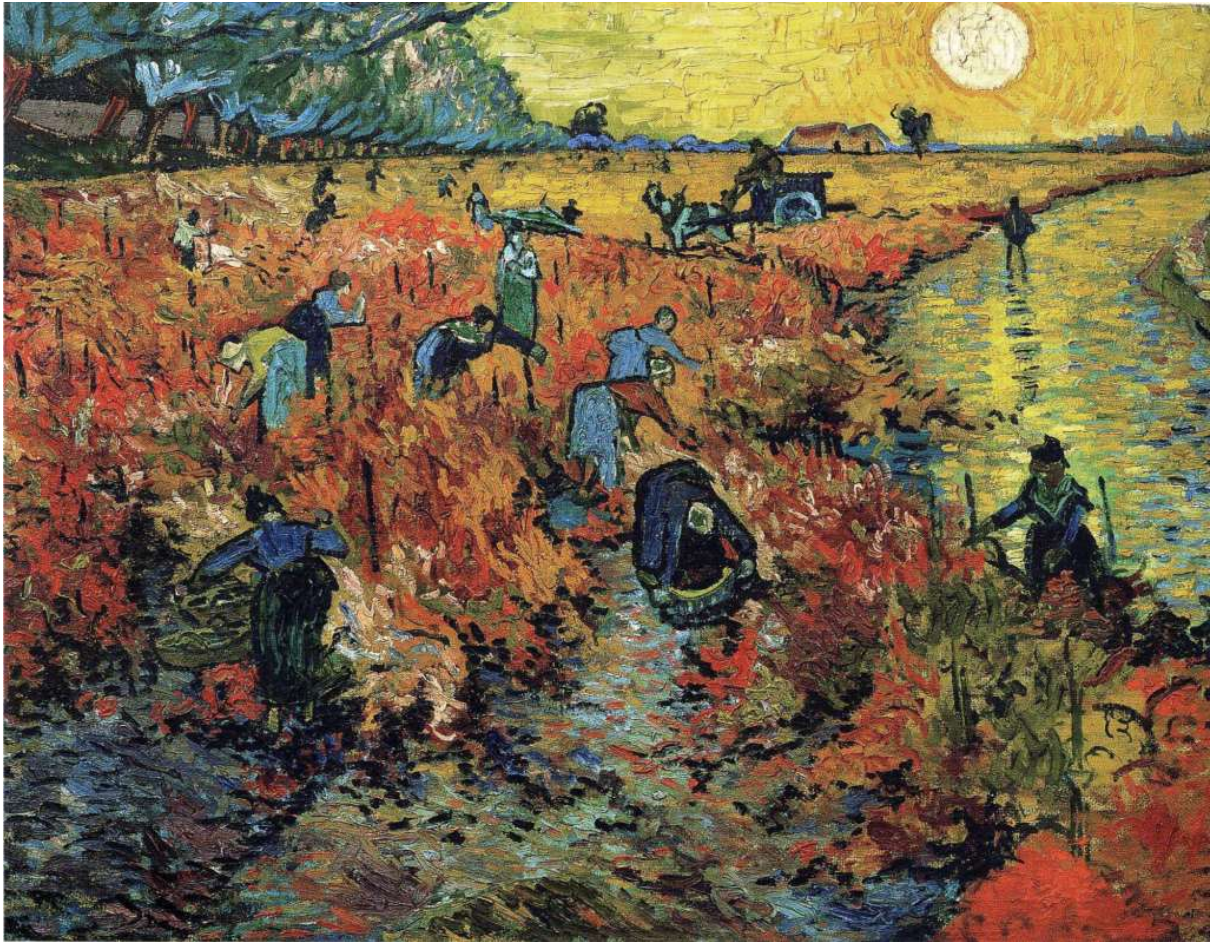
The good news is that the time of harvest is much more often than you could possibly imagine (Matthew 21:34). Each decision and moment of inspiration. Each moment of Sabbath rest and reflection that places the fruit in us that Christ is looking for.

The good news is that God is not looking for your productivity, your good habits or moral behavior, God is not looking for your good deeds or relational sacrifices... The fruit that God is looking for ... you cannot produce. It is the natural byproduct of living in God's Kingdom. Seeing what He has done and does for you every day.

The fruit God is looking for is not the produce of the vine, but the connection made between you and God when you see what His vineyard can produce. It is a fruit so powerful you are more than happy to give away your contribution, your produce ... knowing and trusting that God will provide what is needed most.

God's Son will create Faith, even if it cost him His life. Even if it crushes you and Him in the process. Because God is a God of resurrection.

Faith is the fruit that God produces in you.



**The Red Vineyard by Vincent Van Gogh, 1888*