

## Sing the Song of the LORD's Vineyard

- ‡ Loving care (vv.1,2)
- ‡ Deep disappointment (vv.3-6)
- ‡ Glorious grace (v.7)

In the name of the LORD, my strength and my song, dearly beloved of God:

If you ask a famous composer to write a love song, would it be a sad song of disappointment, a longing song of hopeful anticipation, or a joyful song of heartfelt fulfillment? “Pastor,” I can just hear even our teenagers saying, “what is this, a multiple choice test?” Good answer: *All of the above*. And probably as many more possibilities as there are composers and lovers of all time. But *sad, hopeful, or joyful* pretty much cover the themes of all of them. And the Lover of our souls is right here with His own song from eternity which He wants to play for us to **Sing the Song of the LORD's Vineyard**. Ah, what...!

### ‡ Loving care (vv.1,2)

On a trip to Israel in 2014, we found a visitor's center at the base of Masada, that fortress high above the Dead Sea. My better half who is also my college sweetheart, has a good eye for free wine tasting. She doesn't care for it herself, but seems to enjoy my enjoyment. A young woman about the age of our daughters poured me a “taste” almost as much as in a restaurant, while she explained the source of this Israeli wine. It came from the hills above Gilgal, overlooking the Jordan River a little north of Jericho. After all the stories about vineyards in the Bible, this was the first wine I tasted from the Holy Land. She saw my eyes light up at the bouquet and smiled as I tasted some of the best from anywhere. Next question? “How much for a bottle of that?” \$400 U.S. “That's a bit over my budget,” I gasped. She got very serious. “He knows what he has.” “For sure. Thanks for such a generous pour.”

You know the Bible stories about wine go back to the days of Noah right after the flood about 2500 B.C. So the **Loving care** we see here in Isaiah's “Song About the LORD's Vineyard” was very familiar to God's people through the ages. ***“Let me sing for my loved one a song about my loved one's vineyard. My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile ridge. He dug it up and gathered the stones out of it. He planted it with the best vines. He built a tower in the middle of it. He also cut a winepress into it. He expected it to produce clusters of sweet grapes, but it produced only sour grapes.”*** (EHV<sup>1</sup>)

*Dodi*, the same Hebrew word for *my beloved*, as in the Song of Solomon. This ***fertile ridge*** is literally, *on a horn, a son of oil*, suggesting an olive grove which often grows near vineyards. Lots of hard work is needed to clear the stones and plant the ***best vines*** available. Expenses mount for the ***watch tower*** not needed for marauding raiders as much as ***“the little foxes that ruin the vineyards.”*** (Song 2:15) **Loving care** must chase the little critters away to preserve the juice for the ***winepress***. Extra **Loving care** is required because the best wine comes from stressed vines on sunny, rocky hillsides with cool nights.

***He expected***, i.e., waited eagerly for harvest. So what does this mean in our Hymn of the Day? “And be with us to hasten Your kingdom from above.” (CW 559:1) How do we speed up Christ's kingdom? Jesus rules in our hearts by Word and Sacraments. His kingdom comes when we hear and believe the Good News of sins forgiven and heaven won. Judgment Day will dawn when “all Israel,” all believers have come into Christ's kingdom by faith, and the sufferings in His “body,” the Church, are complete. (Colossians 1:24) ***“Come quickly, Lord Jesus,”*** we pray and work while it is day with **Loving care!**

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<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations *Evangelical Heritage Version* EHV © 2019. [www.wartburgproject.org](http://www.wartburgproject.org) – NPH: 1-800-662-6022

## † Deep disappointment (vv.3-6)

Ah, but how often don't things turn out as we hoped? ***“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”*** (Proverbs 22:6 KJV) How many parents' **Deep disappointment** wondered if God's promise failed them? Yet God as the perfect, loving Father was rejected by His children of Israel, a nation refused His training. Stubborn rebellion can stifle the **Song**.

***“So now, you residents of Jerusalem and you men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done for my vineyard that I have not already done for it? When I expected it to produce clusters of sweet grapes, why did it produce sour grapes (stinky fruit)? Now, let me tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away its hedge, and it will become a pasture. I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled down. I will make it a wasteland. It will not be pruned or hoed. So briars and thorns will shoot up. I will also command the clouds not to pour rain on it.”***

Instead of praising God for His **Loving care**, Israel worshipped Baal as rain god and suffered one dreadful drought after another. How many Americans still deny any Creator at all and suffer from wild fires that could end with wise management of God's creation, the way the wild fires stop at our northern and southern borders? Could we pray to God for rain and control of floods too? Shall we continue in stubborn rebellion until He must break down everything we hold dear? So surprising His patience that allows our economy to recover, the virus to fade, His **Deep disappointment** to wait and not to destroy.

How long should God keep waiting for Americans to repent? More importantly, how long should He wait to **Sing the Song of the LORD's Vineyard** over your heart and life? Have you decided that worshiping the Lord together at least once a week is optional? Do you despise the Lord's Holy Supper as if you can live without the body and blood of Christ? Do you cause God **Deep disappointment**?

## † Glorious grace (v.7)

Through tears and heartache you might miss the greatest surprise in this last verse. Can you see God's **Glorious grace**? ***“Yes, the vineyard of the LORD of Armies is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the planting that was pleasing to him. He expected justice, but instead there was oppression. He expected righteousness, but there was an outcry.”*** Later the Holy Spirit inspired Isaiah to write: ***“He saw that there was no one. He was appalled that there was no one who could intervene. So his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness supported him....”*** (Isaiah 59:16-21 EHV)

Three times in these verses the Holy Spirit has said the LORD is waiting (יִחַד). We humans are not the only ones who *wait* for good to happen. Our patient, loving LORD is constantly *waiting* for His work through Word and sacraments to bring blessings on our lives so that we bear fruit of faith in keeping with repentance. Every farmer and gardener who has planted crops and flowers understands God's deep desire to see His vineyard bearing fruit. See His **Glorious grace** in the compassionate heart, in the bleeding, dying love of Him who says, ***“I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him is the one who bears much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.”*** (John 15:5)

**Glorious grace** waits for the garden of His delight to produce *justice*, but man's courts fail and the strong prevail against the weak. God sees *oppression* caused by those who complain the loudest about it, but fail themselves to protect the innocent unborn, the elderly and infirm, citizens with special needs that go unnoticed. **Glorious grace** looks for righteousness in our homes and hearts, and failing that gives the only righteousness that avails in God's courtroom, the righteousness from God that He gives us to receive by faith in *the LORD our righteousness*. (Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16) **Glorious grace**, speed the day when we can **Sing the Song of the LORD's Vineyard** full volume with the angels: ***“Look, here is our God! We waited for him, and he saved us! This is the LORD! We waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation!”*** (Isaiah 25:9 EHV) May the LORD enjoy fine wine in your heart today! Amen.