

*5Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. 2He 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; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. 3And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. 4What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? 5And 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. 6I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. 7For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!*

Let me sing a song for my beloved, my love song concerning his vineyard. How he has prepared the soil!

Maybe it was hard ground once, but he has dug it up, broken up the clumps, added humus, by hand he has picked the rocks and stones and removed them. He has prepared such a fine place for growth.

Good soil, full of nutrients, planted with the best plants, continually weeded, cared for.

How my beloved looks forward to the harvest! All the tender care will produce fruit so sweet, so delicate, so fresh.

Then comes the day of the harvest. The tasting of the first fruit.

And it is hard, sour.

What should my beloved do? What would you do?

If you had blessed a people with a land like this.

Our Beloved has continually sent messengers with his word, to break up the hard soil in us.

Our Beloved has picked out the rocks and stones, every time we hear God's word, and learn to honor our father and mother, and to have no other gods, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, our Beloved is continually preparing the soil that is we.

How he has watered us and fed us with abundance! Food and clothing endless in variety and goodness, we have been blessed by daily bread as no people has ever been blessed. Our cars, our homes, our gadgets and conveniences - every moment of our lives is full of blessings beyond imagining.

We travel across the state, across the country, around the world; we see with our own eyes what people in other ages could not even imagine. How God has prepared this vineyard to bear fruit!

Think of how sweet the fruit will be!

Can you imagine how grateful a people blessed as the people right here in this room are blessed, how grateful such a people would be? Who could ever say thanks enough for what we have been given? The ears of our Beloved must be in every moment filled with words of thanks?

Or think of the fruit of generosity? Can you see the wholesome fruit of giving for others pouring out of a people blessed as we? Not one of us will go to bed hungry tonight. Think of the tenderness of the fruit as we share with those who will!

Or the fruit of love: "From our mother's arms," the hymn says, "we have been blessed with countless gifts of love": the love of our creator, and our God, the love of one another in the church. Will not the fruit of the spirit pour out of us: love and joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control? That is what might be expected from a people blessed as we.

What do you think, does our beloved taste such a harvest from us?

Or are we grumbling, complaining, miserly?

Do we think: If only I had some more then I could share. If only I was more loved, then I could be more loving. If only they deserved my help, then I would give it.

Through Isaiah, God spoke to the vineyard God was tending in Isaiah's day. Through Jesus God spoke to the vineyard God was tending in Jesus' day. Through me God is speaking to the vineyard God is tending on this day.

We know what happened in Isaiah's day: God let the vineyard go to ruin. The Babylonians trampled a people who only bore wild grapes. The vineyard was left in ruins.

We know what happened in Jesus' day: God's people took the Son whom the vineyard owner sent and killed him. And soon the vineyard was given to others.

Now what of this day? Our Beloved has in every way prepared you to bear fruit. His Son who was killed has been given for your forgiveness. Daily bread for which you pray has been heaped blessing upon blessing. Even tomorrow has been guaranteed to you through Jesus resurrection which we will share.

But will there be any fruit? Will our beloved delight this day in the sweet fruit of love and giving that grows out of you? Will the harvest from these vines grow beyond every boundary, even beyond every dream of God? Will the story of the vineyard in this day, have just the ending God has hoped for all along?

If Jesus gets his way with you, how sweet the fruit will be. Amen