

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Occasion: Proper 15

Sunday, August 18, 2019

Year (cycle): C

Resource Website Links:

[The Collect/Readings¹](#)

[Book/Passage Summaries²](#)

[Reflection³](#)

The Collect:

Almighty God, you have given your only Son to be for us a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of godly life: Give us grace to receive thankfully the fruits of his redeeming work, and to follow daily in the blessed steps of his most holy life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Reading 1

Old Testament:

Isaiah 5: 1-7

- 1 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 watch-tower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
he expected it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.
- 3 And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people 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 expected 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 it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;
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 people of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
he expected justice,
but saw bloodshed;
righteousness,
but heard a cry!

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection:

Isaiah 5:1-7

The prophet begins this iconic passage by speaking on behalf of his “beloved” (i.e. the Lord). The love song unfolds, describing a vineyard situated on land that was perfectly suited for a vineyard – lush, fertile ground on a hill with no stones and only “choice vines.” What was expected of the vineyard did not come to fruition. Only bad or wild grapes came forth from the vines. The prophet turns to the audience as an arbitrator; the prophet asks Israel to judge themselves in light of the vineyard parable. What else could have been done for the vineyard? The answer is implied: nothing. So, the vineyard will be trampled down, destruction is inevitable. This parabolic text is not dissimilar to Nathan offering a parable for David to judge, only to find out that the person David condemns in the parable is himself. Those who are hearing this text can only agree with the prophet and with the Lord: we are at fault, we are the ones who have abandoned

the gifts of the land, we are the ones who have been unfaithful. This point is underlined, bolded, and highlighted in the last verse: “He expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry.” Israel had abandoned their commitment to covenant loyalty by neglecting justice and equity and disregarding righteousness. So have we. When we hear this parable, this prophet’s anthem, the only response is for us to repent, to ask for forgiveness, to learn to practice and embody justice yet again.

- What lush land have you been given and neglected (both literally and figuratively)? What wild grapes have been yielded by your community lately?
- Besides the General Confession in the Book of Common Prayer, what are other ways that our communities can practice repentance and confession for our “bloodshed” and “cries”?

Reading 2

Psalm 80: 1-2, 8-18

- 1 Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; *
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
- 2 In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, *
stir up your strength and come to help us.
- 8 You have brought a vine out of Egypt; *
you cast out the nations and planted it.
- 9 You prepared the ground for it; *
it took root and filled the land.
- 10 The mountains were covered by its shadow *
and the towering cedar trees by its boughs.
- 11 You stretched out its tendrils to the Sea *
and its branches to the River.
- 12 Why have you broken down its wall, *
so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes?
- 13 The wild boar of the forest has ravaged it, *
and the beasts of the field have grazed upon it.
- 14 Turn now, O God of hosts, look down from heaven;
behold and tend this vine; *
preserve what your right hand has planted.
- 15 They burn it with fire like rubbish; *
at the rebuke of your countenance let them perish.

16 Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, *
the son of man you have made so strong for yourself.
17 And so will we never turn away from you; *
give us life, that we may call upon your Name.
18 Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection:

Psalm 80:1-2, 8-18

The psalmist gives us a different, possible response to the destruction of the vineyard, to the ravaging of its vine. Underlying this psalm is a different theology, a different way of seeing Israel's own destruction. Isaiah the prophet condemns Israel's disregard for justice and righteousness – because of their actions, destruction has come upon them. But the psalmist asks God: why have you broken down the vineyard's wall? Are you to blame for our destruction? Instead of only seeing Israel's own complicity, they ask God why he was involved in the people's destruction. And even more, it's a call to God to tend the vine again and to save God's people from further ruin.

The different perspective that the psalmist offers is so human: when tragedies happen, we wonder why God's hand has been against us. We ask for God's hand to return to us and give us life. We simultaneously protest the destruction of our world as we know it and we ask God to be near and sustain us. The psalmist records our own human protest and pleading in light of a world that is not fully set right. At the end of the psalm, we plead for restoration, for light, for salvation. God does not intend for the walls of our vineyards to be broken down, but God will help us rebuild them.

- When the world as you know it ends, how do you respond to God? How has your community responded? What can you learn from the psalmist?
- What vineyard walls have been shattered? What would rebuilding them look like?

Reading 3

Epistle:

Hebrews 11:29-12:2

29 By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted to do so they were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days. 31 By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace.

32 And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, 34 quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. 35 Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. 36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented— 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

39 Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, 40 since God had provided something better so that they would not, without us, be made perfect.

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection:

Hebrews 11:29-12:2

By faith, by faith, by faith... the long line of forefathers and foremothers unfolds in this passage, declaring God's powerful deeds done by means of their faith. But time would fail to tell of the others, the author of Hebrew offers.

Time would fail to tell of the others, wouldn't it? Those who carried the faith to us: mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, friends who extended an invitation and walked with you through a dark time. Aunties who disclosed God's marvelous works in their lives and cousins who held your hand in hushed prayers under the night's sky. Time would fail to tell of the journal pages full of prayers on behalf of you and me. Time would fail to tell of the ways that God has used all sorts of people in all sorts of places to spread God's kingdom. Time would fail to tell of the ways that God continues to liberate and redeem and make whole all that has been wrong. Time would fail...

This great cloud of witnesses, the ones we personally know and the ones whom we've only read about, are cheering us on. They gave up much for us to be here, proclaiming the coming of the kingdom, and they're asking much from us: do the same for those in your midst. Write prayer entries in your journal for others, be the cousin who holds out a hand in prayer, be that father or mother or sister or brother who tells others of the glory of God. Be another one – one that time would fail to tell of – in our midst.

- Who is in your great cloud of witnesses?
- What are the feats of faith that you've seen in your own life?

Reading 4

Gospel:

Luke 12:49-56

49 'I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!

51Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! 52From now on, five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three; 53they will be divided:

father against son

and son against father,

mother against daughter

and daughter against mother,

mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law
and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.'

54 He also said to the crowds, 'When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, "It is going to rain"; and so it happens. 55And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, "There will be scorching heat"; and it happens. 56You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

[Link to Passage Summary](#)

Reflection:

Luke 12:49-56

The fire which Jesus brings is startling to the contemporary hearer. This passage pivots and turns on ancient rhetoric, utilizing hyperbole and passion, as described by the Rev. W. Bentley Manning. But isn't the fire a regular experience of our faith journey? Are we not purged and cleansed by Jesus' presence and life? Our loyalties are realigned, and Jesus invites us into the transformational fire.

This fire is not the same as self-soothing techniques or self-actualization. You might lose yourself under its flames. These sparks ignite and spread in the landscape of the soul – coming through the deserts of our hearts, cleansing us from our sin and worldly allegiances. The fire comes into our minds and renews our imaginations. The fire comes, yes, even into our family and political lives and changes them. The division that Jesus speaks about is temporary, an initial death. We lose ourselves and the things we thought were our true lives, only to find a spring of salvation, a baptism of healing, a Savior who gifts us everlasting life.

- What are the ways that the fire is purging you in this season?
- What imaginative renewal do you hope for in your community?

Sources

¹ “Tenth Sunday After Pentecost, ” *The Episcopal Church*, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/lectionary/tenth-sunday-after-pentecost-1>

² Chris Haslam, “Tenth Sunday After Pentecost-August 18, 2019,” *Comments: Revised Lectionary Commentary*, <http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/cpr20m.shtml?>

³Kellan Day, “Pentecost 10 (C)-August 18, 2019, *Bible Study*, <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/bible-study/bible-study-pentecost-10-c-august-18-2019>