

First Reading

Isaiah 5:1-7

God nurtured Israel, his chosen people, to bear good fruit, but the vineyard of their lives has been wayward. The path to redemption starts with release to the wild — even destruction.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah:

Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard:

My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. 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; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.

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? 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. 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.

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!

The Word of the Lord.

PSALM 80:1-2, 8-18 *(said in unison by all)*

- 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.

A reading from Hebrews [11:29-12:2]

Trials in life are opportunities to cling more closely to God and to allow sin and evil to melt away from our lives.

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews:

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. By faith the walls of Jericho fell after they had been encircled for seven days. By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had received the spies in peace.

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-- who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 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-- of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

Yet all these, though they were commended for their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better so that they would not, apart from us, be made perfect.

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, 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.

The Word of the Lord.