

The Vineyard: Isaiah 5:1-7

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[0 : 0 0] As we jump into this new sermon series, we're headed into a new year, we have the opportunity to do something a little bit unique. This is going to be a shorter series, it's only six weeks.

But in this series, what we're going to do is we're going to look at a very under-taught, under-studied section of, or genre, if you will, of scripture, and that would be parables in the Old Testament. Now immediately, I know exactly what you're thinking, what in the world is this guy talking about? It should be parables of the New Testament. Now how many of us have heard the parables, we've read the stories in children's ministry when we were young ourselves, we were taught the lessons of Jesus, maybe the Good Samaritan, the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son, the sower and the seed, wonderful, marvelous stories that we cherish.

When I mention the word parable, I'm not sure exactly what may come to your mind, but I want to just encourage us right off the top here before we even jump into our text, what is a parable? We have to understand that before we dive into studying a parable. So let's look at what a parable is. I've got a lot of slides this week, so forgive me. I'll try to move quickly.

But first, what is a parable? An earthly story with a heavenly meaning. In other words, kingdom ethics illustrated through narrative. One of the things that we're going to be doing in this quick short series in the Old Testament is, we saw the tagline of that series, which is portraits of the kingdom of God. Meaning that when we look at a parable in the Bible, the parables are opening up God's kingdom to look at it from a different lens. And so each parable you see in the Bible I'm going to offer to us is like a portrait that God has painted. It's perfect. It's beautiful. It's majestic. And it's up on the wall. And you look at that picture and you say, I wonder what world this is in. That's what parables are meant to do. They're meant to connect us with the true reality of God's kingdom.

The world as it should be, in other words. But oftentimes, or actually every time, all the parables in the Bible, they use an earthly story to convey a heavenly reality. And this is powerful because narratives connect us with what they contain. You pick up your favorite book, you watch your favorite movie, you stream your favorite show. Why do you feel connected to that? Because the characters are relatable. The plots are relevant. The motion is recognizable. And the themes throughout.

[2 : 4 6] In this case, the biblical parables have redemptive themes. Action and consequence. Love and loss. Cost and reward. These are themes that permeate the parables of the Bible. But secondly, what is a parable? An indirect form of teaching truth. Now you can see this right off the bat by looking at any of Jesus' parables. What he usually does is he'll set up a story. He'll teach the story. He'll talk about the characters. He'll talk about the plot. And then he'll just stop talking. And almost every single time he does this, somebody goes, teacher, what does that mean? Because we want truth laid out for us so drastically. But yet Jesus continues to teach in an indirect form. He asks questions. He teaches in narrative and in story that we might have to think through what is contained in the story.

So usually the parables are allegorical. They're symbolic in nature. They contain a lot of elements that are rich in storytelling. But then thirdly, what is a parable? Thematic portrayals of God's reign and rule manifesting on earth. Like I said before, parables are windows into the kingdom of God.

But not just the kingdom of God. They're windows specifically into how God has ordained that all things might exist. So in order to understand parables in the kingdom of God, I want to just ask the next question which will lead us into understanding our Old Testament parables, which is this. What is the kingdom of God? If parables are little portraits of the kingdom of God, we have to know what the kingdom of God is to really start to understand the parables. So what is the kingdom of God? Well, here's a few ideas. The cosmic reign of Jesus over all things forever. Number two, what is the kingdom of God? The kingdom is made up of a king. The kingdom has to contain a king. And that's Jesus Christ and the loyal subjects of that kingdom, which are his saints. Number three, this kingdom transcends worldly jurisdiction. In other words, if you look to the world or the earth for this example of kingdom, what God's kingdom is, you're not going to see it outright. This is why Jesus came into the world.

And when he was tried by Pilate, here's what Jesus said to Pilate about his kingdom. My kingdom is not of this world. It's not a kingdom that you can put your hands on and feel and say, look, there's a real throne. There's a real border. There's a real scepter. Here's what Jesus is saying instead. My kingdom comes out of heaven. It's an eternal one, a beautiful divine one that the Lord has ordained that I would be king over. But then next, what is the kingdom of God? The power and effects of God's kingdom can be observed on earth. In Luke chapter 11, we see this, that Jesus says, if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Meaning that there are little moments in the world where the kingdom of God jumps down and infiltrates our earthly world. And we saw little pieces of this puzzle fall into place when Jesus would heal someone.

Maybe give a blind man his sight back or a beggar their health back. And then finally, kingdom of God is manifested by the citizens of the kingdom by displaying the kingship of Christ in their lives. One of our guiding goals as Christians is yes, to make disciples, is yes, to follow Jesus. But the meta goal of our lives, brothers and sisters, is to bring God's kingdom here on earth. And that's a broad umbrella that any and all commands to a Christian can fall under.

[6 : 45] This is why Jesus says in Luke 11, when you pray, say, Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. We are to pray toward that end, that God would use our lives to bring his kingdom forward. So with all of this, an understanding of the parables in the kingdom of God, I'm going to encourage this lastly with these words Jesus said concerning parables, the way he taught predominantly parables through story. This is from Matthew 13. Listen to this real quick. Matthew 10, 13, 10. When the disciples came and said to him, why do you speak to them in parables? And he answered them, to you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For the one who has more will be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says, listen to this, you will hear but never understand. You will indeed see but never perceive, for this people's heart has grown dull. And with the ears they can barely hear, and their eyes have closed, lest they should see the eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart. In turn, I would heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly I say to you, many prophets and righteous people long to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. In other words, here's what Jesus is saying. Here's why he teaches in parables. The hard-hearted will not listen. They will never hear God's truth, the divine revelation of Jesus Christ for the redemption of their sins, because of the hardness of their heart.

But the spiritually minded see and hear, and this is an act of the Spirit, to soften our hearts, to ready us to hear what God has. So finally, I'm going to encourage us with this. There's a lot of mystery in parables. I'm teaching the majority of these parables, but in two weeks' time, Brother Wit is going to be bringing the Word. I'm excited to hear from Wit. I'll be hearing online, some won't be in town, but the rest of y'all will hear in person. And Wit's going to bring the Word. And for anyone else that preaches in this series, here's one thing I can tell you that we're going to have to work through. Parables are wonderful because they're so rich in imagery, and they're rich in their lessons and their truth. But one of the challenging things about teaching a parable is the mystery that enshrouds every story. A lot of times, Jesus will just outright explain the parable in full, but a lot of times he doesn't. And so it's left up to the preacher or teacher to have to do the hard work to decipher what is it that the Lord wants from this story for us to understand.

So to that, I want to invite you to jump into that mystery with us. Even these Old Testament parables have a lot of mystery. But in that, I also want us to be grounded in what we know. So I've got a three little step here to help us sort of think through parables. First, through faith, we gain a full knowledge of the Word, Christ, and thus God. Do not be deceived, brothers and sisters. We have a full knowledge of God the Father through Jesus the Son. There is no mystery about God in as far as our relationship to Him and His relationship to us. All the fullness of the mystery of God is found in Jesus Christ. So we have now, through faith, a full knowledge and a full relationship with God.

But through faith, we also seek further understanding of the known God in all of His ways. We fully know God relationally, but yet we don't fully understand God in terms of our intellect and our knowledge. This is why we pick up books and we read them and we say there's a mystery here and I want to keep reading to find out more. It's the same thing with our faith. We seek more and more to understand God. But thirdly, through faith, and here's where the parables come into fruition, we wait for the final revelation of all things and all mysteries. So as we're teaching through this, if you discover, hey, there's a piece of this I don't understand. I'm confused. Even the way Eric explained it was not good and I'm confused. I want to study this more. I want to encourage you, seek, but also be grounded in that which you do know. God loves us. He has redeemed us through the work of Jesus and one day all the mysteries of God will be fully revealed. With that, let's jump into Isaiah chapter 5 verse 1 to 7. We're going to read this text together and then we're going to work through it fairly quickly. This is probably one of the more simpler parables of the Old Testament.

It's pretty straightforward in what it says, so hopefully it won't be too laborious for us. But let's read Isaiah 5, 1 to 7. It says this, let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard.

[11:58] My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it as stones. He 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. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men 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 looked to it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I 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 that shall not be pruned or hoed and briars and thorns shall grow up. I will also command the clouds that no rain may rain upon it. 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. This is the word of the Lord.

What do we have? Well, we're thrown into a chapter of a massive book. Here's what we do know.

The prophet Isaiah is set apart by God to speak his holy words, his holy oracles to a rebellious people. And as he speaks to a rebellious Israel, in the entirety of Isaiah, here's what the Lord is going to do. I will judge sin and I will discipline you by sending you into exile, by removing you from your land, taking away all of the blessings that I have given you, that you might come back to me. But also in Isaiah, you see this continual pattern where the Lord also says, but I'm going to send a servant to redeem you. I'm going to build you back up into the holy city. I'm going to be with you forever and establish you on my mountain, Mount Zion. Isaiah is a book about promise, but also a book about judgment.

And we see those two themes in Isaiah 5. So what I'm going to do is break it up into four sections here. I'll throw these up on the screen. These are the four sections we're going to work through quickly. The caretaker's care, the caretaker's disappointment, the caretaker's discipline, and the parable explained. So here's the context. Israel is in sin. Isaiah comes to them through the word of the Lord and he speaks a word of warning through a parable. So let's first talk about the caretaker's care in verse 1 and 2. Well first here, Isaiah refers to God as his beloved. I think that's noteworthy. Isaiah is speaking in verse 1. He says, let me sing for my beloved, the Lord, the caretaker of the vineyard. My love song concerning his vineyard. My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.

Here's the opening of the story. I love God. He is my beloved. He's the one I follow. And let me tell you Israel's story about the one whom I love, God, as a divine caretaker who has taken a vineyard and planted it on a fertile hill. That's the opening to our story. So we know that God is the caretaker.

[15 : 25] We know that the vineyard is on a fertile hill. But let's work through in these first two verses all of the images that we're given of what's happening here. What does it take to plant a vineyard, to cultivate it, to nurture it, to watch it grow, and then at some point down in the future to harvest its fruit?

Well, we actually are given some incredible images of what it looks like to cultivate a vineyard. So let's work through them together. The first one, fertile hill. The caretaker looked for a place that showed immense promise for cultivation and said, here is where I will take my vines and plant them. It shows sovereignty, planning, thought toward this vineyard that it might be a blessing.

So too has God taken his people and through his incredible love for them and choice over them has taken them and planted them firmly. But next we see the next image which is cleared it of stones and dug it. Now dug it means this, that the cultivator, the caretaker, God, went to a gruesome work of plowing the field in rows after clearing it of all of its hindrances, which is picking up stones, clearing brush, carrying off debris. My wife grew up in a farm town and one of the things that they always talk about is hiring boys, high school boys, to go into the fields and to do what?

Pick rock is what they call it. You're going to take your wheelbarrow, your tractors, you're going to go in the field and here's what you're going to do for the next eight hours. Find a rock, pry it out, and then put it in the wheelbarrow and or tractor and then load it off.

That's what it means to dig it out and clear it of stones. This caretaker has gone to a great work to do this. But next we see this, planted with choice vines.

[17 : 33] The caretaker again looks for immense promise by planting only the best vines. And this speaks to, again, the agricultural process of saying, what type of grape are you looking to produce?

What type of wine are you looking to produce? And in the midst of that, to go through all of the selections of different vines and say, this one is perfect.

This one shows promise. This one looks radiant. And to leave all the rest behind. Meaning that the caretaker has gone through the stock and has chosen only, I love this term, choice vines.

When a farmer selects the choice vines and puts them in the ground on the most fertile hill, do you think the caretaker expects a great product?

But here's the thing about producing a vineyard. There's a two-year waiting cultivation interval before grapevines actually begin to produce any fruit.

[18 : 47] So this is a long-term investment that the caretaker is making. It's such a long-term investment that we have to do something with our investment. Here's what we see. In verse 2, he also built a watchtower in the midst of it.

But not only that, it says this, that he hewed out a wine vat in it. Building a watchtower means during that two-year waiting period, if a caretaker was nervous of marauders or the security of his vineyard, which they would have been, this is one of the most expensive products of this time and age, he would build a small watchtower with an accompanying fence or gate or wall around this vineyard in order to keep a lookout on potential trouble.

Literally, imagine somebody in a watchtower looking out for any sort of hindrance that would come in and threaten the integrity of the vines. And then a wine vat. The caretaker prepares a storage vat to collect and preserve the fruit of his labor.

And here's the expectation again. The wine vat tells us that the Lord is expecting, not hoping, expecting that this vat will soon be full of grapes slash wine.

But here's what I want us to pick up first in this first two verses. The most important term of this parable, I believe, is choice vines. Again, it implies that the Lord, in his sovereignty, in his grand master plan, has looked out upon the ages of eternal human beings crafted in his image and has handpicked all those that would be called according to his purpose, that he would establish as his people forever.

[20 : 35] God's loving sovereignty over his people is right here. To choose them to be his fruit bearers and light bearers in all the earth. And for Isaiah, this story illustrates that Israel is that chosen vine.

That God has set his affection and his love on a people who did not deserve affection and love. In fact, in Deuteronomy 7, the Lord literally says, I did not choose you because of your strength or your number.

I chose you because of my love for you. Let this be a reminder to us, church, that as Israel was chosen by nothing more than the affection and love of God, so too we, elected through the ages, before the foundation of time, were selected and elected and chosen as choice vines purely by the love of Jesus.

You are God's choice vines. And it is our job and our obligation to produce a harvest for him.

But here's how verse 2 ends, and this is tragic. He looked to it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. In spite of God's great care for us and plan for us, we often live careless lives, don't we?

[22 : 00] That even though God plants us on the most fertile ground, his love, his foundation, his abiding presence in our lives, and although he chooses us to be his people, setting his affection upon us, we still so carelessly choose our own way.

Which leads to our second section, the caretaker's disappointment. Verse 3 and 4. And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem, a man of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.

We now move from Isaiah speaking on behalf of God to God himself speaking. This happens a lot in Isaiah. Isaiah will be talking about the Lord, and all of a sudden it'll just change. God's now talking. It's almost like the Lord is like, Isaiah, say these words.

And he begins to prophesy, and he says, all right, just let me take over. I love that. Okay? So now the Lord steps in, and now he's speaking. And now what happens to Jerusalem and a man 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 look to it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And the Lord is asking a question of Israel that he actually expects an answer from.

[23 : 12] It's very similar. This parable is so similar to the way Jesus taught, where Jesus would ask a question and just leave it there to ruminate in every mind of every person that was listening.

That's what the parables do. They draw our attention outside of ourselves towards something grander, and they cause us to think deeply. So here's the question, and this is so convicting.

What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? In other words, here's the question that the caretaker, God, is trying to get us to wrestle with. Who is to blame for the bitter harvest?

Who is to blame for the fact that the grapes that were produced were wild grapes, not choice, great, splendorous grapes as they were meant to be?

I think we often find ourselves in life questioning the origins and cause of our fruitlessness, whether it be that we feel we're not summing up to what God wants, we're not meeting His standard for a holy, joyful life, whether it be when life's hard circumstances hit us in the face and we wonder why, whether it be when we consider ourselves a failure in the eyes of our parents or our peers or our pastors, or we consider ourselves a failure as pastors and leaders.

[24 : 50] The reality of the situation we are in in this fallen, broken world as fallen, sinful creatures is this. This question can be incredibly hard to answer, even though it's clear.

And I think if we're honest, a lot of times we point to the divine caretaker and we say, here's why there's no fruit, here's why the grapes in my life are wild, because you did not care well enough, God.

This is clearly the question that the Lord is trying to draw out. Whose fault is it, Israel? Is it me and my love that I've set upon you? Is it the grace I've given you?

Is it the election, the choice of you over all other nations? Is it my abiding presence with you to sustain you throughout every moment of life? Is that the reason why there are wild grapes?

Or is it something else? Clearly it's something else. And that's why verse 4 gives us that sobering question, what more was there to do that I have not done in it? And here's what's painful.

[25 : 58] In order to answer this question, Israel's going to have to do some really deep, extremely hard internal processing. And for us today, we get to do the same thing, which can be difficult, but good.

In order to answer this question today, if maybe you're sitting here today and you say, you know what? I feel like my grapes are wild. We have to do this. We have to compile a list of all the things God has done in our lives to bless us and care for us.

Because that's what he says. Did I not do enough? That can't be the reason. So here's what we have to do. Pull out your phone and open up your notes app. Maybe not right now.

But go ahead and attempt to take a list on your notes app, on your phone, Apple or Android. We both have notes apps. And here's what I would offer to you. There's no terabyte storage allocation you could put in a single phone that would be able to store the amount of notes you would take if you actually did this exercise.

fully. How has God cared for me? You would run out of storage on any phone produced by any company.

[27 : 11] But here's the most integral part of this illustration. The term wild grapes. The reason for God's disappointment is simple. That which he planted, cultivated, and nurtured did not produce a faithful product.

He cannot take wild grapes that have no value and turn it into a product. What he wants from his vineyard is fruit.

That is the Lord's love language. obedience that leads to fruit. Now I grew up in the state of Oregon. And in Oregon, we have something called Oregon grapes.

We have them here too. In my backyard, I've got a few bushes here and there. They're sporadic. But let me tell you, they're called Oregon grapes for a reason. Because where I grew up in southern Oregon, Oregon grape bushes are all over the place.

And they're incredibly difficult to kill off. They're an invasive species. Yet they're called Oregon grapes. But here's what's so terrible about the Oregon grape. If you take a shear and you go and you cut down every single branch of the Oregon grape down to the little stump of a root that you can get, it will grow back unbelievably fast in a matter of months.

[28 : 24] The only way to kill Oregon grape is to completely pull it out of the ground every single root. If you miss one, it will grow back. Or you have to literally suffocate it, I looked this up, with a bag, duct tape it, put all of your chemicals in to literally kill it and drown it out.

And even that won't probably kill it all the way. So what is an Oregon grape? I've got a picture here. The one on the left is the Oregon grape. Now you're looking at this and you're like, okay, wait a minute.

I recognize this plant, the pokey little tendrils on the side of the leaves and the little wimpy grapes. Maybe you're like, I hate those plants. I now know what an Oregon grape is. There it is. So I'm from Oregon.

I'm now Washingtonian. I'm sorry, Washington, that we have invaded this wonderful state with this horrible plant. But here's what I want us to notice, okay?

The wild grape, as it was meant in this parable, is kind of like the Oregon grape. Notice on the left how tiny those little grapes are, which have almost no sweetness.

[29 : 26] They were used by a lot of Native American cultures for certain remedies to illnesses, but they're essentially worthless in our understanding today. And then I want you to look on the picture on the right.

My grandmother, still to this day, has one single solitary vine that she goes about 100 yards and it goes all the way up the side of her house.

Every year, she trims it, prunes it, cultivates it, and it keeps producing wine grapes. And I remember as a child, we would grow up and we would eat these wine grapes.

We would love them. There's nothing like a wine grape when you've had one. It's like the most rich, sweet, delicious grape ever. You'd peel the skin off. A lot of people eat the skin. I didn't eat the skin.

I was a snob. Eat just the grape. And every year, we'd go out there and we'd help her harvest and we'd eat her wine grapes. Let me tell you how disappointed my grandma and all of us grandkids would have been if we would go out there and the Oregon grape is what came off those vines.

[30 : 28] That's what the parable is teaching. There's a massive difference between the choice grape. I love the word choice and the wild grape. The wild grape is readily abundant and of no worth.

The choice grape is farmed with great care and of great value. In other words, what this parable is really about is when the fruit doesn't match the stock. If a wine grower plants wine grapes, wine vines, they expect wine grapes, not wild grapes.

In spite of God's great care for us, we often live careless lives and produce organ grapes, which leads us to verse 5 and 6. Look with me at verse 5 and 6.

It says this, 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 briars and thorns shall grow up and also command the clouds that no rain may rain upon it.

Isaiah uses this parable to teach Israel that because of their fruitless lives, God, the divine caretaker, will not simply abandon his care, but he will adapt the way in which he cares.

[31 : 44] The imagery here is one of discipline that unfortunately includes a loss of protection and eventual judgment. Look at the images of this discipline.

First, the hedge removed, which is a symbol that the wine dresser, the caretaker, is going to remove the protection that was once over the vineyard. Hungry animals who would normally avoid the inconvenient pokey line of thorns or wall of stone will now wander into the vineyard and freely eat of the vine.

The wall broken symbolizes a defense that's compromised, a structure on which the hedges grow, the walls are strong. Any robber, any marauder, any thief can now jump the wall and easily access the vineyard.

You see this other term, pruning, withheld. Without proper pruning, any tree, any vine, any branch, any bush, maybe you've experienced this, if you stop pruning for a year or two, your bush will become out of whack.

I've experienced this recently. I had to prune down our entire front yard, which took me days, when all it would have taken is minutes over a few months every year. It grew out of control, and such, the branches and the trees suffer from a lack of pruning.

[33 : 03] But then he says this, allow briars and thorns to grow up. Painful hindrance of the vine from thriving. We learn this in another parable of Jesus, the sower, that there are seeds that grow up among the thorns, and the thorns choke it out and it dies.

It's not a good image. But then lastly, rain, no rain, which is a lack of sustenance in life, which is the final indictment on this false vine.

This vine will die due to lack of water. And this is the end of the parable for a reason. Here's the truth. Our sin and rebellion leads to something called relational exile.

It leads to a place where we're dry and empty and withered away. A state in which we have forsaken the blessing and favor of God. Relational exile is when we've turned our back on God, even in the midst of His care, His blessings, and His protection and love for us and following sin.

And when we get to this state of relational exile, all pleasures eventually taste bitter. All avenues and paths lead to eventual dead ends. All happiness and joy is fleeting and fades away.

[34 : 17] Do you feel any of these symptoms this morning? Has God done to you metaphorically what He promised He would do to Israel? Are you in relational exile this morning?

We would go on long trips with my dad down to California. One of the things my dad was very kind to do is he would take in his massive excursion, he would take this thing called the converter and it would take, you plug it into like a cigarette outlet on the car and it would convert that power to outlet power.

DCAC power. And the reason he did that he bought this converter that had a massive fuse in the middle so that we could bring, my dad loved us very much, we could bring our amazing state-of-the-art technology Nintendo GameCube in the car, plug it in with our little transportable monitor and all of us boys would sit in the back and we'd play GameCube the entire 12-hour journey down there.

Now he did this probably because it shut us up and entertained us, but also because he loved us. But here's what would happen all the time. He would remind us, don't turn the GameCube on until the car is running and don't turn the converter on until the car is on and running, otherwise you'll blow the fuse.

And we would jump in the car all the time for my dad, get excited, turn the converter on, turn the GameCube on and wait and he would turn the car and it would pop the fuse every single time.

[35 : 50] We did this all the time to the point where my dad was so patient but eventually he got really upset. So one time we're doing this, we're on the road halfway to California, six hours to go, we turn it all on, we forget, he turns the car, pops the fuse and we just sat there and went, oh my word.

We didn't have the guts to tell him for about 30 minutes because we were so fearful of what he was going to say. But eventually we told him, Dad, we broke the fuse.

Are you serious? Why, guys? Understandable frustration but here's what would happen. That one trip he was particularly frustrated. We popped that fuse, we lost our GameCube, we now had to just sit in the car with no GameCube, just silent as Dad seized in the front seat.

The reason I share that story is that's kind of what it felt like, I think, for Israel. Because of their silliness, God taking care of them, much more miraculously and divinely than an adapter so they could play a GameCube, God took care of them in every way, gave them a land, took them out of slavery, gave them sustenance when they were in the wilderness, established them with His law and His rule, His sovereignty over them as their King and their God.

Everything they could need, salvation, through atonement. And yet Israel pops the fuse and now lives in a state where they are in exile.

[37 : 33] So how do we get out of relational exile? How does Israel get out of a place where they're in the vineyard about to be torn down because of God's discipline? Well, there's only one word for this, it's repentance.

Repentance. We turn from our sin out of relational exile back to the graces, favor and mercy and blessing of God.

Psalms 32 gives us an image of what it's like to be in relational exile and how David, the writer of the psalm, gets out of it. David says this, blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man whom the Lord counts no iniquity and whom spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through the groaning all day long. Feel that? My bones wasted away.

Relational exile. My sin has taken away all the blessings and favor that I used to feel from you, Lord. Now I'm wasting away. Verse 4, for day and night your hand was heavy upon me.

[38 : 34] Turn, son. Repent, son. Daughter. Come back. My strength was dried up as with the fever heat of summer. Salah. But here's verse 5.

What's the remedy for relational exile? I acknowledge my sin to you. I did not cover my iniquity and said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave me the iniquity of my sin.

Therefore, let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found. When can God be found, church? Church. All times. Every time. Any time. The onus is on us to turn from our sin, to go to the divine caretaker and to be found with forgiveness.

We have a kid slide. You can throw that up there real quick. Kids, here's what this sermon is about and adults as well. Sometimes the kid's big idea and lesson is better than anything I wrote.

So here's what it is. Here's the key word, choice vine. God chose you, children. Spiritual children of God and literal children in both.

[39 : 43] You are chosen by God. He loves you. He put his affection upon you from before you were even conceived. And what does that mean? It means this, again, that you are chosen and loved by him.

So here's the big idea. Bear choice grapes for Jesus. How do we get there? Well, let's look at verse 7. Here's the final verse of this amazing parable.

For the vineyard of the Lord of the hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah. And here's what it says. They are his pleasant planting. He looked for justice for the whole bloodshed.

Righteousness will behold an outcry. What are those choice grapes that are expected from the choice vines? What is the fruit that God expects from you, his chosen church, his bride?

Justice and righteousness. Those are the beautiful, delicious wine grapes that the Lord expects to see. Here they are. My vineyard produced this.

[40 : 46] It's an offering to me. Righteousness and justice. Here's what this ultimately leads us to this morning.

First, God delights in his chosen people no matter what. Did you notice two terms in here? First, choice vines and second, pleasant planting.

Both give us an image, church, that we are, God delights in us. He's pleased to choose us and to plant us. He delights in us.

Even in spite of our rebellion. God still considers us chosen, elect, and redeemed.

Notice that that phrase in verse 7, pleasant planting, is after the judgment has been rendered. He still considers them his pleasant planting. even when we produce wild grapes, God still delights in us as his chosen people.

[41 : 50] But then B, when we turn justice to bloodshed and righteousness to sinful outcry, when we do that, we forsake joy and relationship.

Do not be deceived. Rebellion is our natural state. We cannot remove our rebellious nature and our sin by any act of penance or miraculous effort. But instead, we are to be in the habit of cutting off all sources of rot that lead to wild grapes, which leads us to three, the most important one.

The Messiah is the true vine who is faithful to redeem us. Jesus himself said what? I am the vine.

It's almost as if Jesus is fulfilling Isaiah 5 saying, Lord, you love your people. You've chosen them. They are your chosen people. They are your vine. They're not producing the right grapes. I am the vine.

I am the fulfillment of Israel and I am the fulfillment of the church. I am the fulfillment of your faithful choice vine. And through what I will do, all of my followers will also produce good fruit.

[43 : 10] Jesus has not only rescued us from death, he's also the exact manifestation of God's power to continue in a life of good works and fruit.

Jesus. This is why in chapter 4, the verse, the chapter before, the Lord predicts that the day of the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious. Literally, that there'll be a branch that comes from God that fulfills this.

And then finally, number 4, the only way to produce choice grapes is to abide in the true vine, Christ. It's interesting that in this parable, God is the caretaker, we are the vines, and as vines, we fail to produce good grapes.

But Christ, the one who comes as the true vine, produces the perfect grape through his perfect life. And he offers that up to the Father that we might be branches of his vineyard.

We are continuations from the true vine, Jesus. So we get to be a branch in this vineyard that is off of Jesus, our true vine. And in view of God's great care for us through the life of Christ, we live fruitful, caring lives for the glory and enjoyment of the caretaker.

[44 : 20] Back to that kid slide. Bear choice grapes for Jesus. For Jesus is the one that has become God's beloved vineyard.

And we are his beloved branches. Choice vines, not wild grapes, church. Lord, I pray this morning as we consider, Lord, where we're at in our walk, help us to know and be reminded that we are choice vines.

That, Lord, you have not removed in us as your chosen people, but instead you have entered into a wonderful arrangement in which your Son, Jesus, comes to earth, fulfills the role of the vine.

And that, Lord, we get to live because of his life and death and resurrection. God, I pray that you would cultivate in us, your church, true choice grapes.

Help us to be empowered by the gospel, by what Jesus has done, that all sustenance that we draw from Jesus, the great vine, would be truly of him and nothing else. Lord, may wild grapes be far from us this morning.

[45 : 41] Help us to see your glory in this parable and to respond accordingly. Let me pray. Amen. The Lord's Supper, which we get to