

God entrusts His people with a mission, not because He needs us but because His love overflows. Isaiah 5 tells the story of a vineyard carefully planted by God, yet yielding only sour fruit. Psalm 80 recalls the same vineyard—once flourishing, now broken—and cries out for restoration.

Communion reminds us of this mission's cost. Israel failed, we fail, but Christ became the true Vine. The cup we share is the sign of His sacrifice and the call to bear lasting fruit.

Thought to Hold: God has given us everything we need—His Word, His Spirit, His sacraments. The question is not His faithfulness but our fruitfulness.

Exegesis: Isaiah 5:1–7

- **5:1–2** – God spares no effort: fertile land, choice vines, watchtower, winepress. Yet only wild fruit appears. *God's provision is full; failure is human response.*
- **5:3–4** – “What more could have been done?” God invites Judah to judge. His justice is undeniable.
- **5:5–6** – Judgment falls: God removes protection, echoing covenant curses (Deut. 28). *Rejection leads to vulnerability.*
- **5:7** – God looked for justice (*mishpat*) but saw bloodshed (*mispach*); righteousness (*tsedeqah*) but heard cries (*tse'aqah*). The wordplay underscores betrayal.

Exegesis: Psalm 80:7–15

- **80:7** – Refrain: “Restore us... make your face shine on us.” Salvation rests in God's mercy, not our power.
- **80:8–9** – Israel as a vine transplanted from Egypt. God plants His people in promise.
- **80:10–11** – The vine flourished, reaching the nations. Israel's mission was outward and expansive.
- **80:12–13** – The walls fall; enemies ravage. Honest lament questions God's absence.
- **80:14–15** – A final plea: “Return to us.” Restoration depends on God who planted the vine.

Cross References (Apologetic Notes)

- **John 15:1–8** – Jesus is the true vine. Where Israel failed, Christ succeeds.
- **Matthew 21:33–43** – Parable of the tenants repeats Isaiah's vineyard warning.
- **Deuteronomy 28** – Covenant blessings/curses explain the vineyard's judgment.
- **Hosea 10:1–2** – Israel described as an unfaithful vine.
- **Romans 11:17–24** – Gentiles grafted in by faith. God's mission is inclusive.
- **1 Corinthians 11:23–26** – Communion links the vineyard to Christ's blood.
- **Galatians 5:22–23** – Fruit of the Spirit contrasts with sour grapes.
- **Philippians 1:11** – Believers are filled with Christ's righteousness.

Wesleyan/Methodist Perspective

- **Prevenient Grace:** God clears the soil and plants the vine—grace always comes first.
- **Resistible Grace:** Israel resisted God’s work, yielding wild fruit. We must cooperate with grace.
- **Communal Holiness:** God looks for justice and righteousness in community, not private piety alone.
- **Fruit in Mission:** Communion nourishes us to bear fruit outwardly—justice, mercy, love.

Modern-Day Questions This Study Addresses

1. **If God is good, why is there so much injustice in the world?**
Isaiah shows that injustice flows from human rebellion, not divine neglect. God looks for justice and righteousness and grieves when they are absent.
2. **Why would God judge His people if He loves them?**
The vineyard song reveals judgment as the natural outworking of covenant faithfulness. God’s discipline is not cruelty but the consequence of resisted grace.
3. **Can we question God when life feels broken?**
Psalm 80 models lament as faithful prayer. Asking “why” is not unbelief but trust that God hears even our hardest questions.
4. **Has God abandoned us?**
The psalmist pleads, “Return to us.” Scripture shows God does not forget His people. Restoration is always possible through His presence and mercy.
5. **What difference does Communion make in a broken world?**
The cup we share reminds us that the mission is costly—Christ’s own life poured out. It equips us to live faithfully, bearing fruit in justice and love.

Discussion Questions

1. What does the vineyard imagery teach us about God’s care and our responsibility?
2. How do these passages help answer the question, “If God is good, why does evil persist?”
3. In what ways do we see “wild grapes” in today’s church or culture?
4. Why is lament (like in Psalm 80) important for apologetics and faith?
5. How does Communion connect to the vineyard imagery and God’s mission?
6. What does it mean, in Wesleyan terms, to “bear fruit” together as the church?
7. How might remembering past deliverance (Ps. 80:8–11) strengthen hope today?

Closing Prayer

Lord of the vineyard, You have planted us in love, nourished us with grace, and called us to bear fruit for Your kingdom. Forgive the times we have resisted Your Spirit and yielded wild grapes. Restore us, shine Your face upon us, and make us fruitful in love, justice, and mercy. In Christ, the true Vine, we pray. Amen.

♦ **Takeaway:** The vineyard failed, but Christ became the true vine. In Him, we are restored and empowered to bear fruit that lasts.