

**SERMON AT GELORUP: 13/8/2022: GEOFF CHADWICK:**

**“IF YOU HAD A VINYARD”**

**OS 27a Sunday Between 2 and 8 October**

Readings about the biblical “vineyard” often make me emotional. That’s because I have visited “the vineyard” and am aware of the conflicts over it.

The reading is talking about the land of Israel and Judah being a beautiful vineyard that God has planted, and it has gone to rack and ruin. This beautiful vineyard has fallen apart.

Putting that in some historical context you may know that King Solomon united the people of Israel and Judah into a kingdom. Solomon died in 931BCE.

Now Solomon is credited with being wise, but I wonder, because he did not put in a succession plan. So who would be the next ruler after him?

You know what happened- the sons fought over the throne- one called Jeroboam, the other Rehoboam. Jeroboam was based in the North (Israel) and Rehoboam was based in the south (Judah). Civil war broke out and basically they destroyed anything that Solomon had created. The kingdom was divided, civil war, destruction- great disappointment.

This vineyard that was meant to be beautiful had been destroyed.

When I visited to the vineyard, I was taken up to Mount Carmel where there is a wonderful view down the valley. Literally you can see the fruit trees, you can see the crops growing, and you can see the green valleys near the water courses.

Surrounding that is the desert country. There’s a wonderful sense of knowing that the little patches of productive land need to be protected from the nearby desert.

Those little fertile areas have been planted, cultivated, run over, destroyed and planted again, many times over the Centuries. Each time there has been great disappointment.

I will read to you that little bit of 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.* (Isa 5:1-2, NRSV)

... Great disappointment.

Every now and then as I watch the news I think about the world as God's vineyard-this wonderful world that we live in, and I sense the disappointment that maybe God has in us. I'm know God delights in us as well, but I am sure there must be disappointment when he sees the ways we treat the vineyard.

But let's think about this a little closer to home.

How's your own personal vineyard going?

How's your little patch?

How's your family- is there some civil war going on?

Are the some hopes and dreams you've had for your facility that haven't happened? Maybe some beautiful grapes you longed for and the children or grandchildren or nieces or nephews etc have yielded wild grapes instead?

Nevertheless, I think disappointment it is a sign of love. And I think if God is disappointed in some of our human activities, it is a sign of God's great love for us.

The antidote, I think, is not to give up hope. The antidote is to be like those people in the mentioned in the Hebrews reading. To be people of faith, people of hope and people who lovingly tend our little patch of the vineyard.

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Play the song:

*If You Had a Vinyard*, Sinead O'Connor, Theology 2007.

It's a bit sad, but I love it.

