

Song of Solomon 8: 11 and 12; “My Own Vineyard is Before Me”, Sermon # 73 in the series – “I am My Beloved’s”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on August 21st, 2022, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

Everyone who is a Christian should think about whether they are bearing fruit to God in their life and labors for Christ’s kingdom. Here in these verses our hearts are described as a vineyard which we must tend so that we can bring forth fruit for Christ. What does it mean to tend the vineyard of your heart for Christ? What does it mean to tend the vineyard of the Church for Christ? These are good questions to ask, and in order to answer them I would like to give you three more.

1st of all – How does the picture of Solomon having a vineyard at Baal Hamon relate to us personally? (verse 11a)

“Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon; He leased the vineyard to keepers....” Now, when we look at the Scripture in regard to Solomon, we find that he did plant vineyards. In Ecclesiastes 2, verses 4-6 he says – “I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards.” “I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.” “I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove.” No mention is made, however, of Baal-Hamon as being the place where he planted these things. There, no doubt, is a meaning which lies behind this name. The name means – Lord of a multitude. (See Ellicott’s Commentary on this verse.) The translation can therefore read – “A vineyard was to Solomon as lord of a multitude”.

In other words, Solomon is the type of Christ in this book. Christ’s vineyard is His Church, both Old Testament and New, and as such, He is the Lord of a multitude of people, all of which He expects to receive fruit from. Turn with me over to Isaiah chapter 5, verses 1-7. “Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill.” “He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine.” “He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes.” “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.” “What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it?” “Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?”

“And now, please let Me tell you what I will do with My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.” “I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns.” “I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it.” “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.” “He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.” So, here we find the prophet Isaiah prophetically speaking to Israel in the form of a song which is very much like the Song of Solomon. He sings on behalf of His Well-Beloved a song concerning His Well-Beloved. That is, it is a song about a vineyard which He had planted.

The vineyard here in this passage is Old Testament Israel. He planted it on a very fruitful hill; a land flowing with milk and honey, and every blessing for their being cultivated as a righteous and holy nation in His sight. He fenced it with good and wholesome laws which separated them as a people unto Himself. He gathered the stones of this land; that is the seven nations that inhabited the land of Caanan, who can be compared to stones for their hardness of heart and moral stupidity; for their worshiping idols of stone. He planted it with the choicest vine. That is, with men like Abraham, Joshua, and Caleb, and many others who followed the Lord fully. He built a tower in the midst of it. This means that He made Jerusalem into a fortress city against all of her enemies, and in time, He had the temple built there for their worship of Him.

In doing all of these good things, He expected that His vineyard would bring forth good grapes. He expected to see good fruits of loving obedience to His law and grateful, loving service rendered Himself in every way, as their Lord. Instead He saw people worshiping false gods and oppressing

one another with their sins. What did the Lord do then, in response for their repaying Him evil for all the good that He had done for them. Well, it says that He took away their hedge of protection that He had put up around them, and the city of Jerusalem, so that the whole nation would be left defenseless against their enemies. He would lay it waste several different times in Old Testament times, and then also in 70 A.D. when He had the Romans destroy the city entirely.

In this last case, God brought destruction upon Jerusalem because He had leased the vineyard to keepers; the scribes, the Pharisees, and the rulers of Israel, and they put to death God's beloved Son. Turn with me over to Matthew chapter 21, verses 33-46. "Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower." "And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country." "Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit." "And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another." "Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them." "Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'"

"But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.'" "So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him." "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" "They said to Him, 'He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.'" "Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures: **THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE. THIS WAS THE LORD'S DOING, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES?**'"

"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it." "And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder." "Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them." "But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet." So we see here that this parable that Jesus told was the fulfillment of the verses in Isaiah 5 that I just read to you a minute ago. The vineyard, Solomon's vineyard, Christ's vineyard, was leased to keepers in Israel. They were the vinedressers who were supposed to render to Him the fruits of righteousness in their seasons. But they did not.

Jesus says that when the vintage-time drew near, God sent His servants to the vinedressers, that He might receive fruit from them. And they beat one, killed one, and stoned another. He again sent others more than the first. And they did the same thing to them. And then came the ultimate outrage. When God sent His Son to them, it was for their salvation. It was for their greatest possible good. He thought that they would respect His Son. But when they saw Him, they said among themselves – This is the heir. Come and let us kill Him and seize His inheritance. This just what the scribes, the Pharisees, the chief priests and ruler of Israel did when Jesus came. In fact these men listening to this parable understood that Jesus was speaking of them.

He was speaking of His own death at their hands. He was also stating to them that the owner of the vineyard, even God, would come and destroy them and lease His vineyard to others, even to Christ's apostles and all the pastors, Jew and Gentile, down through this Church age, who would render to Him the fruits in their seasons. In Isaiah 7, verses 23 and 24 it says – "It shall happen in that day, that wherever there could be a thousand vines worth a thousand shekels of silver, it will be for briers and thorns." "With arrows and bows men will come there because all the land will become briers and thorns." This is what happened to Jerusalem in the days after God destroyed it in 70 A.D. I hope that you can see the importance of faithfulness in pastors; to preach the gospel and to render to God the fruits of their labors in their season. A pastor must preach to his people, Christ, as the way of salvation and as the One who by His Spirit makes men holy and righteous so that they can bear fruit to God in righteousness.

Colossians 1: 3-6 – “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth. And verses 9 and 10 – “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” This is the fruit that Christ looks for in His vineyard.

2nd – What is the meaning of the thousand silver coins which everyone is to bring for its fruit? (verse 11b)

“Solomon leased the vineyard to keepers; everyone was to bring for its fruit a thousand silver coins.” We have seen how the vineyard was leased to keepers in Old Testament times. We now turn our attention to New Testament times, and to the apostles who became the keepers of the New Testament Vineyard of Christ, His Church. We should also understand that the keepers are all of the faithful pastors who have been leased the responsibility of overseeing and cultivating the Lord’s vineyard in all generations since. Christ “leases” his vineyard to these pastors. The vineyard in verse 11 is a type of Christ’s Church. It is the responsibility of those who the vineyard is leased to, that is pastors, to oversee the operation of bring forth fruits to Christ in their season.

Christ has called these pastors not according to their own works but according to His own grace and purpose, to labor in His vineyard. Christ has planted the Vine. Christ is Lord of the Vineyard. It was customary in the days of Solomon to portion off vineyards into sections containing a certain number of vines. The rent of the vines was set at a shekel each. The thousand shekels of silver in our text, which everyone was to bring, the thousand silverlings, represented the annual produce of the vineyard. This was a high rent apparently, and it indicated the choice quality of the vine. And so it is very interesting that what many ministers in Israel could not do in Old Testament times running all the way through to the ministry of Christ, Christ’s apostles would be able to do because they knew the greater Solomon who is Christ.

John chapter 15, verse 16 – “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” This was leasing the vineyard to the apostles. And it is also Christ’s way of doing things, that when He calls men to minister in individual local churches, and to preach His word, He leases them particular vines in His vineyard (that is, a particular group of believers in a church). He would have these men, these keepers, watch over and tend the vines so that they would be fruitful. He would have them bring in the proceeds of fruit to Him according to their oversight.

God is concerned with their faithfulness to preach the word and to live out the Christian life before the church in such a way that these vines will be able to bear fruit to God. Godly pastors are those who “tend the fruit”. They instruct all those in their church that it is Christ who is the true vine, and His Father is the vinedresser. They preach to them that, “Every branch in Him that does not bear fruit Christ takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (John 15: 1 and 2) And, a good pastor, a good keeper of the garden will show the people in his part of the vineyard the truth of how essential it is to abide in Christ; to see all of our fruit as coming from Him originally, but that we study to know how we can bring it forth to Him.

John chapter 15, verse 5– “I am the vine, and you are the branches.” “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” Even though it is true that Christ has let out His vineyard to keepers, still it is His vineyard. It says here in verse 11b, that “everyone was to bring for its fruit a thousand silver coins”. That is, there is a cost in being a follower of Christ, being a plant in His vineyard. Everyone must count that cost if they would be Christ’s disciple whether it is the pastor or the people. And this leads me to ask the final question of our text.

3rd – What is the meaning of the statement – My own vineyard is before me?

Verse 12 says – “My own vineyard is before me.” “You, O Solomon, may have a thousand, and those who tend its fruit two hundred.” I have just been saying to you that there is a cost to leasing the vineyard from Solomon, that is, Christ. Everyone was to bring a thousand silver coins for its fruit. This is not our purchasing our salvation. This is our part in our leasing the garden in which we will bear fruit to God. The cost of leasing is individual. Each one of us contracts with Christ, when they first believe in Him, to serve Him according to the grace which He supplies. Our service is in the vineyard, which is Christ’s Church. The work is being faithful to labor for Him in the context of the local church.

The cost of this discipleship must be counted at the outset of taking up the profession of faith, and certainly at the outset of becoming a pastor in a church. Luke chapter 14, verses 25-30 – “Now great multitudes went with Him.” “And He turned and said to them, ‘If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.’” “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it – lest after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish?’”

Truly, it is a great privilege to follow Christ and serve Christ and to tend the garden of your own heart. It is a great privilege to be in a church where you have a pastor over you helping you to tend the garden of your life. He preaches to you the truth of God’s word so that you will better understand how you can bear fruit to God. “My own vineyard is before me”, ought to be the language of each of our hearts. The New American Standard translation of Proverbs 4: 23 says – “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life.”

We could apply this to ourselves in this way – We should, each of us, tend the garden of our heart with all diligence, for out of it will be spring forth good grapes, good fruit, to God. All of the fruit of the Spirit should be cultivated. The Spirit gives you these graces of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. But you must choose to cultivate them. That is, you must bring them out in your speech and conduct in order to bear fruit to God, and to truly minister to people in this church and the people all around you.

As Matthew Henry says: “Christ’s church is his vineyard, a pleasant and peculiar place, privileged with many honors; He delights to walk in it, as a Man in His vineyard, and is pleased with its fruits.” “He comes, seeking fruit, and requires gospel-duty of all those that enjoy gospel-privileges.” “Every one, of what rank or degree soever, must bring glory and honor to Christ, and do some service to the interest of His kingdom in the world, in consideration of what benefit and advantage they enjoy by their share of the privileges of the vineyard.”

Let us remember that Christ is observing us as we tend the vineyard of our heart. In Hosea chapter 14, verses 8 and 9 – “Ephraim shall say, ‘What have I to do anymore with idols?’” “I have heard and observed Him.” (Christ says) “I am like a green cypress tree; Your fruit is found in Me.” “Who is wise?” “Let him understand these things.” “Who is prudent?” “Let him know them.” As you look at your own heart, your own personal vineyard, have you leased it for Him, giving Him the 1,000 pieces of silver? Will you give Him all the glory for all that you cultivate in your heart and all that you do for him in service to Him in the church and outside of it, in your everyday life?

Will you give to those who tend the garden of the church, the pastors, two hundred? Will you give the elders who rule well, your respectful attention as they preach the word to you? Will you count them worthy of double honor if they are faithful to watch over your soul and cultivate the good things of truth and wise counsel in your life? Will you contribute to help supply their needs? Let us remember that he Lord Himself is watching over His vineyard. He purchased it with His blood. In Isaiah 27: 2 & 3 it says – “In that day sing to her, A vineyard of red wine!” “I, the Lord keep it, I water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I keep it night and day.”

