

Pentecost 19 (Proper 22A)

October 4, 2026



PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

By faith, as St. Peter says, we acquire a new and clean heart, and God will and does account us entirely righteous and holy for the sake of Christ, our Mediator. . . And such faith, renewal, and forgiveness of sins is followed by good works. . . We say, besides, that if good works do not follow, faith is false and not true.

– Martin Luther–

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article VIII

Isaiah 5:1-7

At the time in which Isaiah lived, the glory days for the kingdom of Judah were over. The Assyrians had already conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, and it would not be long before the Babylonians would do the same in the kingdom of Judah to the south.

As a parable of this judgment, the prophet speaks of the vineyard of the Lord, his “beloved.” The vineyard, which represents the houses of Israel and Judah, is destroyed after it yields wild grapes. The Lord, who did everything he could to create a beautiful haven for his people cried out to the vineyard tenants, “What more could I have done for you?”

- What is the difference between fruit that is “cultivated” and fruit that is “wild?” Compare Paul’s description of the Works of the Flesh vs. the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.
- Why must we depend on God to cultivate good fruit in our lives? Left “wild” to ourselves, what do we produce?

In verse 7, the fruit that God expects from his people is contrasted with what he actually finds through a play on similar-sounding Hebrew words:

God Wanted:

Mishpat = Justice

Zedekah = Righteousness

The Vineyard Produced:

Mispach = Bloodshed

Ze’aqah = Outcry

God calls the people of Jerusalem and Judah to judge the vineyard, and in doing so, they are convicted of their own sins. During Holy Week, on Good Friday, there is an ancient set of prayers called the Solemn Reproaches. These laments mirror the good that God has done for his people since the beginning of time up to the crucifixion of Christ. As each reproach is said we hear, “O my people, O my church, what have I done to you? How have I offended you?”

- In what ways is understanding God’s radical grace in our lives a result of first understanding our sin and its consequences? Why is it important to recognize that we are responsible for our sinful condition? Where is the good news in God’s sorrowful words?

Psalms 80:7-19

The psalm for today picks up the same imagery of God’s people as his beloved vineyard. It serves as a fitting reflection and response to the first reading from Isaiah, this time from the perspective of God’s people.

- What are some of the things in this psalm that match the vineyard parable in Isaiah 7? In what sense does Isaiah

answer the questions asked in this psalm?

- Under the reality of judgment, what does the psalmist pray for? If the life of God’s people is to be restored, who must make it happen? In what sense is our prayer the same?

Philippians 3:4b-14

Paul responded to those who were tempted to brag of their own self-righteousness by saying that if anyone could justify himself by his works, it would be the apostle himself. Paul is righteous according to the law — he calls himself “blameless” when it comes to keeping the law to the letter. But this, he tells the Philippians, is “rubbish” compared to what Christ Jesus has done for him. “Rubbish” is a polite way of translating the Greek word *skubala*, which literally means “crap” or “dung.”

- Why would Paul refer to the good he had done in his life as “crap?” Compare Isaiah 64:6. What is he saying here?

In our desire to justify ourselves we often cling to the accomplishments that we can boast about, but none of these is anything when it comes to our life in Christ. It is only through Jesus that we are righteous.

- What things have you been prone to clinging to in your life that have made you feel good about yourself? How are those unimportant when it comes to our salvation?

Matthew 21:33-46

Given the familiar biblical image in the Old Testament, the religious authorities would have known right away that Jesus was referring to God’s people as his “vineyard.” But here, in this parable, the accusation is not against the vineyard itself, but of the caretakers of the vineyard — the “tenants” who had been charged by God with caring for God’s people.

- What are the similarities between Isaiah’s parable and Jesus’ parable? What are the differences?
- What sin was at the root of this parable?
- This parable foreshadows the condemnation and death of Jesus. What part did the Jewish religious authorities play in his death? Who are the “other tenants” (v. 41) that Jesus refers to?

Psalms 118:21 — “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone...” — is the singlemost Old Testament verse quoted most often in the New Testament.

- What do you think is so important about this verse in helping us understand the central message of Jesus?