

The Song of the Vineyard: The Garden of God's Delight

When Dr. Martin Luther lectured on this chapter to his students, he explained why the prophet begins by saying, "I will sing." There was no fear of God in the people; they were rebellious, sinful, and faithless. They did not fear any of God's threats in his holy law. They no longer paid any attention to God's gospel promises. "Therefore the prophet saw that neither threats nor promises stirred their hearts, and so he said, 'Very well then, we shall sing. Maybe they will take my song to heart.'"^a

¹ I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. ² He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit.

³ "Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? ⁵ Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. ⁶ I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it." ⁷ The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

I have shepherded flocks. I have sailed in boats. I have preached outdoors and indoors. But I have never planted a vineyard or tended one. But let us listen to the text of Isaiah's song and apply it to our lives. The "Loved one" in verse 1 is the Lord God, and might even be a hint that Isaiah was related to line of King David, since דוד *DOD* can also mean "cousin" or "relative," and so Isaiah might have been distantly related to the coming Christ.

What kinds of things had God done for his people, the "Vineyard of Israel"? He had planted their church **in a fertile place**. By this, he doesn't mean the rocky hilltop of Jerusalem, but rather the fertile and stable foundation of the Word of God.

^a LW 16:57