



Advent Reflection for Monday, December 5, 2023

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Isaiah 5:1-10

I will 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 rotten grapes.
And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem
and people of Judah,
judge between me
and my vineyard.
What more was there to do for my vineyard
that I have not done in it?
When I expected it to yield grapes,
why did it yield rotten grapes?
And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.

I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.
I will make it a wasteland;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and it shall be overgrown with briers and thorns;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.
For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are his cherished garden;
he expected justice
but saw bloodshed;
righteousness
but heard a cry!
Woe to those who join house to house,
who add field to field,
until there is room for no one,
and you are left to live alone
in the midst of the land!
The Lord of hosts has sworn in my hearing:
Surely many houses shall be desolate,
large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.
For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath,
and a homer of seed shall yield a mere ephah.

Today's Reflection is by Emily Hursh

Sometimes, we do the bare minimum on a project, and if that project fails, we comfort ourselves with the knowledge that we didn't really try that hard. We tell ourselves that if we had, we would have nailed it. It takes courage to put our whole heart into something, to invest blood, sweat, and tears into it, because no matter how hard we try, we may fail, and the more we put into it, the more the failure feels like a reflection on us.

I hear that heartbreak and frustration in this passage when the beloved says, "judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield rotten grapes?" I hear him saying, "I did all I could. I did everything right. Why did it turn out this way?" I've certainly felt that way, in

matters big and small: a shot I missed at pool that I took my time lining up, in relationships that were important to me.

The reading goes on to say that God is the owner of the vineyard, and God's people are the vineyard, set up for success in every possible way, and yet somehow still turning out wrong. The vineyard owner's dramatic response feels intimidating in that context, to say the least: I don't generally find the 'smash the vineyard' approach to be very helpful when I fail at something. Instead, I try to learn from my mistakes, and try again. On the other hand, I'm drawn to God's call for justice from Their people, and Their refusal to accept less.

Also, by burning it all to the ground, so to speak, the signs of this failure are erased, allowing for a fresh, and fertile start. Maybe there's a lesson about letting go of a plan that just isn't working. Maybe that plan was never meant to work. Sometimes when we feel that we have let God down, we're really failing to meet overly specific expectations placed on us by influencers, friends or family, and the answer isn't to blame ourselves, or try again harder, but to tear down those expectations completely, and thereby invite ourselves to be more fully who God truly called us to be.



Emily has attended Holy Apostles for about six years now. She's a doula, and an aerialist, and loves cooking, playing the ukulele and guitar, and learning more about birth.