

SONG OF THE VINEYARD
Reflection by Dave Scott
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August 15, 2010

When I was asked to do a reflection, the guidance given to me was not to interpret the Bible text, but to talk about how the text speaks to me. Today's reading is Isaiah, Chapter 5 verses 1 through 7 and it is called "the Song of the Vineyard". It is considered to be one of the greatest pieces of literature in the Bible and it spoke to me loud and clear. Because my time is limited I am going to paraphrase the text. The prophet Isaiah tells a story of God planting an exquisite vineyard with the finest vines in the best soil and expects to get excellent grapes, but God only gets very poor grapes. The story is about Israel and their failure to do what God expects. I believe God expects us to love him or her with all our hearts and minds and everything else in the vineyard. Most of us love God, but I am not sure we love the rest of the vineyard to the extent God desires.

For me the vineyard is not just Israel, it is the entire Earth and all its inhabitants. If we stop to think about it, the Earth is the perfect vineyard. It provides all who inhabit it with sustainable life. Just as the people of Israel failed to follow the desires of God so have we. I believe we have failed God by exploiting the Earth. We have done so much damage that it potentially threatens the sustainability of future inhabitants. We have lived by consuming what we want not what we need. In so doing we are not giving God good grapes.

Beyond our exploitation of the Earth, I believe we have failed as the human race to do the thing God desires the most of us, to love each other. The human race tends to have a superior tribal mentality that prevents us from working together for the betterment of everyone and everything that inhabits this spaceship we call Earth. Within our tribes we erect barriers to prevent successful cooperation among peoples. We create myths that say we are the chosen people and those that don't look, act, think, or live where we do are inferior. Quoting a character in the Madagascar movie "its nothing personal, we like you, we are just better than you". How can we say that we love God and not do what God asks of us, to care for everyone in the vineyard?

I believe that God is frustrated with the state of the world and our inability to do what God desires. I am also sure God is frustrated with the Church. When I say Church I mean it with a big C. As you are well aware the Church over time has been the antithesis of what God has desired of us. The Church has actively and passively discriminated against women and people of other races. How can we claim to love God when we discriminate against those God loves? One can say in the Presbyterian Church today, women and people of other races are treated equal. I would agree we have made great strides in that direction, but I would say we still have a way to go before everyone is treated equal. The good news is that God has eternal faith that we will get to that point. I also believe despite our reluctance to get there, God keeps opening doors to help us get past the impediments we as humans erect. These impediments result in the treatment of some within the church as second class citizens. This leads me to a sensitive issue within the Presbyterian Church. Speaking for myself, and I emphasize I am speaking for myself. I find it intolerable that those who have same sex relationships cannot be ordained in the Presbyterian Church as Deacons, Elders or Ministers. I cannot imagine that God condones such blatant discrimination. As I mentioned God keeps opening doors despite those in the Church who keep trying to close them. At this year's General Assembly an amendment to the text on who can be ordained was approved and sent to the Presbyteries for their approval. The amendment is devoid of any language which

would prevent a person with a different sexual orientation from being ordained into a church office. That's the good news, the bad news is that the majority of the Presbyteries need to approve the amendment and our Presbytery has not had a good track record on the issue of sexual orientation.

We at SPC may not be able to change the raping of the earth or the attitudes of all its inhabitants, but we can help provide God good grapes by making everyone in the Presbyterian Church equal. To that end I hope those who have worked on the ordination issue before and those who want to work on it now, will join me in a proactive effort to educate members of the Presbytery and create a ground swell for approval of the General Assembly amendment. We need to till the minds of our fellow Presbyterians and educate them that anything less than equality is not an act of love. In so doing we will provide the grapes God desires.

In conclusion, I ask you to think about what you can do in your life to show your love for God by reaching out and being compassionate to that which God loves – the Earth and all its inhabitants.