

*Read also Luke 13:34, 19:41-44. Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

My brother used to say “show your house is loved by taking care of it.” When we would see a house where the plants were overgrown and grass full of weeds, the house rundown and dirty, he would say “nobody loves that house.”

Last Sunday afternoon was such a beautiful day I decided to work in my neglected flower bed. We had designed the bed two years ago and bought some plants and it looked great! But when I examined it, something appalling had happened. Weeds were everywhere. Vines had grown up and covered some of the shrubs. Where did they come from?

They certainly weren't planted!

Old plants had “rebirthed” on top of the newer plants. The double knockout roses were supposed to bloom from spring through fall with a soft, full blanket of pink roses that could thrive anywhere and required no deadheading! But instead of a soft blanket of blooms, mine were like shredded rags of brown-spotted leaves and profuse thorns.

It was like love-gone-wrong. My valued garden was a mess. Who could love it? It had not lived up to the gardener's promises. There was no way to salvage this—only a hoe and clippers.

I wanted my home to be a loved house, so I went to work.

Isaiah 5 begins with Isaiah expressing his love for God in a song. He tells of God's love for the people in terms of a garden. But the song turns quickly into the blues because the people are not returning God's love. They are like a garden in disarray. They are not what they are meant to be at all. READ Isaiah 5:1-7

God is UPSET. God is MAD. God's love has been spurned. His beloved people are unfaithful.

God is angry because God made an extensive investment in love. God's investment included finding the land, clearing it, making room for them; providing everything they would need to flourish; building a protective wall around them. That's what the vineyard metaphor means:

1. God settled the people in very fertile land.
2. God dug it, cleared it of stones, and built a fence out of the stones to keep wild animals out.
3. God erected a watchtower to keep watch over them.
4. God planted it with good people whom God called “my bride”—that's how God sees you!
5. God fashioned a wine vat because God expected them to be extremely fruitful.

It looked like perfectly tilled land; a loved home.

But nothing grew except wild, unproductive grapes.

These people did not bloom where they were planted, they did not produce anything positive at all.

God's love was not returned. You have to admit, God has quite an angry response. Put yourself in God's shoes.

God's angry response sounds like a country music song of love-gone-wrong<sup>1</sup>. Let's listen.  
(STOP SONG AT 2:00)

Carrie was looking for love but she found a wandering eye. She was looking for faithfulness but when she wasn't looking, her man was running after someone else.

God was looking for justice but God found violence. God was looking for righteousness but heard cries of distress. God cannot believe that his beloved people have no appreciation for God's love. God, like Carrie, wants to undo all the blessings of the relationship.

You might agree—*yeah, give it to 'em, Carrie. He is not worthy of you.*

*I dug my key into the side  
of his pretty little souped-up four-wheel drive  
Carved my name into his leather seats  
I took a Louisville slugger to both head lights  
I slashed a hole in all four tires  
Maybe next time he'll think before he cheats*

So, like Carrie, God is going to act. God is going to respond with retribution. And then God says this. READ Isaiah 5:8-10:

What sorrow for you who buy up house after house and field after field, until everyone is evicted and you live alone in the land. But I have heard the LORD swear a solemn oath: "Many houses will stand deserted; even beautiful mansions will be empty. Ten acres of vineyard will not produce even six gallons of wine. Ten baskets of seed will yield only one basket of grain."

They would end up alone and their economics would fail. It's a painful message borne of the pain of God. Once Jesus, in agony and tears, proclaimed:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God's messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me." (Lk 13:34)

God's people returned bitter for sweet; evil for good; darkness for light; unfaithfulness for loving commitment. The people who are made in God's image have spurned Him.

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<sup>1</sup> "Before He Cheats," Carrie Underwood, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaSy8yy-mr8>, accessed October 11, 2016.

Being made in God's image means we bear God's characteristics. So your feelings of pain, rejection, and lost love, reflect the same heartbrokenness God feels when we, as God's beloved walk away from Him.

The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, expresses God's feelings of love quite readily. For example, God says:

“Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands” (Is 49:15-16).

“For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the LORD has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like the wife of a man's youth when she is cast off, says your God” (Is 54:5-6).

“For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you” (Is 62:5).

But at this time and place, God's heart is broken, like a man singing a country song about forlorn love.

Isaiah tells us what bothers God:

God is distressed when we love things and disregard people;  
God is unhappy when we drink too much;  
God grieves when we deny justice and ignore the oppressed;  
God is offended when we are sexually immoral.

God hates it when evil is called good and good, evil. These things are signs of broken love.

The result will be lost homes, economic decline, and grief.

The God of the Old Testament is not solely a God of wrath, but one who feels great sorrow when God's children choose a destructive path. Listen to this song as if it was an expression of God's thoughts when love is lost.<sup>2</sup>

His beloved people have turned away, and Isaiah sees nothing but empty houses, darkness and distress ahead. Isaiah sees God's broken heart. Do you? Consider it when you push God away. And reconsider drawing near to God instead because our God does not forever give up. Live in the fruitful garden of God's house.

AMEN

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<sup>2</sup> Blake Shelton, “Goodbye Time,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLn6ZYkGBP0>, accessed October 11, 2016.