

## Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

**Title: 80**

**Lesson: Isaiah 5:1-7**

**5** *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.*

80! The number 80 seems especially important this year. What kind of connection do you see between the year 2025 and the number 80? I'll give you about ten seconds to think. What is the link between 2025 and 80? Have you thought about it? What came to mind? Does 80 remind you of age? Or maybe speed limits on highways? Let me give you a hint—it has something to do with *freedom*.

**(Slide 1)** Since I am a Korean pastor, let me begin with a story about Korea. Just two days ago, on August 15, Koreans celebrated a very meaningful day. On August 15, 1945, Korea was liberated from 36 years of Japanese occupation and regained its national independence and freedom. In American culture, July 4th is Independence Day. For Koreans, August 15th is our Independence Day. We call it *Gwangbok*, which literally means "to regain the light." And just two days ago, we marked the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that day of freedom. Some of you may have heard of the novel *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee, a Korean American author. That story is set during the painful time of Japanese colonial rule.

But this number 80 is not only meaningful for Korea—it also connects us to world history.

Let's shift our view to the world stage. The year 1945 was filled with major historical events. During World War II, about six million Jews and many others were murdered. We call that tragedy the Holocaust. In those concentration camps, where human rights were denied, countless people longed, prayed, and waited for freedom and salvation until their last breath. After great suffering and sacrifice, liberation finally came on January 27, 1945. This year marks 80 years since that day.

Germany's surrender was declared on May 8, 1945. This year marks 80 years since then as well. Even after Germany surrendered, Japan tried to continue fighting, but after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan finally surrendered. That too was 80 years ago. And with Japan's surrender, Korea regained its freedom.

Soon after, Indonesia and Vietnam declared independence, and the wave of freedom spread to the Philippines, India, parts of Africa, and the Middle East.

So we can say that 2025 is a year filled with great historical meaning. The year 1945 was not only the end of a war—it was the beginning of the decline of imperialism, the liberation and independence of colonies, and the spread of national self-determination and freedom around the globe. It was a year when the hopes and prayers of people longing for freedom and liberation were fulfilled. We might even say it was like the vineyard in Isaiah 5, filled with the best hopes and expectations.

**(Slide 2)** Isaiah 5 begins this way: *"I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside."* (v.1)

The vineyard owner desired good grapes. He did everything he could. He chose a fertile hillside, cleared the stones, prepared the soil, and planted the choicest vines. He built a watchtower to protect the vineyard from wild animals. He even prepared a winepress so that when the good grapes came, he would be ready to make wine. He poured out his best efforts and waited with hope.

But when the time came, what grew were only bad grapes.

Friends, how could this happen? The vineyard owner gave his very best, but the result was nothing but bad fruit. These grapes were so bad they could not even be eaten, let alone made into wine. How could this be?

The problem was not with the owner. He had done everything he could. The problem was with the vineyard itself—God’s people. They were supposed to trust the owner and grow in love, but instead, they turned toward disobedience and injustice. So instead of good fruit, they bore useless fruit.

When we read Isaiah 5, we might find it hard to understand. How could the vineyard, with the best conditions, still produce bad grapes? Why didn’t they follow the owner? Why didn’t they follow God?

But when we look at history, we are not surprised anymore by how often bad fruit appears.

Let’s return to Korea’s example. Eighty years ago, Korea received freedom. Liberation had been the longing and prayer of countless Koreans, and God answered. The long-awaited day finally arrived. But what happened afterward? Instead of bearing good fruit with their newfound freedom, the country was soon divided between North and South. Conflict grew, and just five years later, the Korean War began—a war that has never officially ended, leaving the nation divided to this day.

Indonesia and Vietnam also experienced civil wars, conflicts, and new wars soon after their independence.

Many nations received the freedom they had long prayed for, but without responsibility and maturity, they soon faced more suffering.

This teaches us something important: longing for freedom and regaining it is not enough. To preserve freedom, responsibility and maturity are also needed.

Friends, is this only the story of the vineyard in Isaiah? Is it just something written 2,700 years ago? Are these history stories only about Korea, Indonesia, or Vietnam? No—I don’t believe that at all.

Isaiah 5 speaks to all of us. The Bible says the vineyard owner is God, and the vineyard is Israel. But Israel here does not only mean the people in the Middle East. It points to all of us.

From the beginning, God created this beautiful world. He made day and night, all living things, and created us in his image. He has always given us good things and filled our lives with blessings. When we prayed, he listened and answered. Every story in Scripture—the parting of the Red Sea, manna and quail in the wilderness, the crossing of the Jordan—shows us how much God loves us.

But how have we responded? Once our needs were met, once we no longer felt lack, we turned away from God, forgot him, and did not follow him. So in the end, God sent his Son to us. Friends, am I wrong?

Just as the vineyard owner gave his very best, God gave us his most precious gift, his very best—his Son.

But even though God has given us the best, that does not automatically mean good fruit will grow. Unless we confess with our lips and with our lives that Jesus is Christ and Savior, unless we believe and follow him, our lives will not bear fruit.

Friends, God has already given us the very best. In Jesus Christ, we have already received the grace of salvation. But salvation is not the end. It is the beginning of a life that grows in the Spirit and bears fruit. Through the Spirit's help and guidance, we continue to abide in God's love, grow in holiness, and live as forgiven people of Christ. Then, our lives will bear good fruit. God has promised this to us.

Friends, God has already given us his very best. Now it is our turn to live in his love and bear fruit. Then our lives, our church, and even this world will be transformed into the kingdom of God.