

Connecting faith and daily life

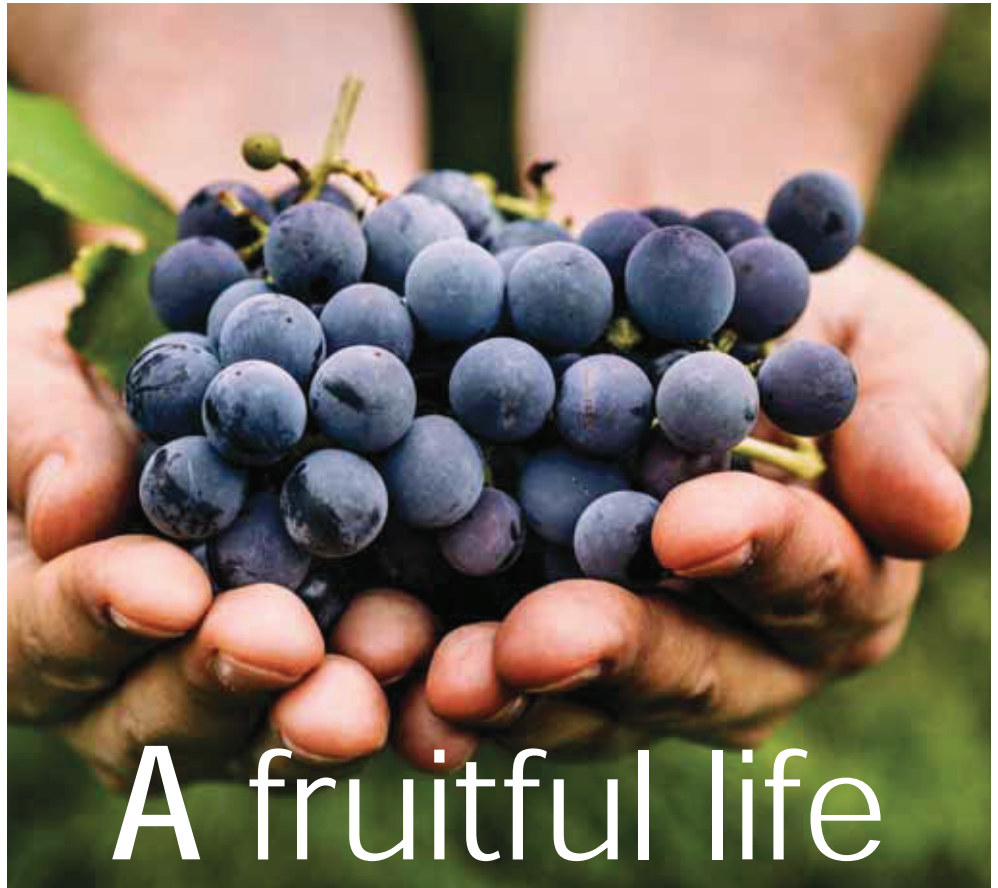
Becky Mynett *reflects on* Isaiah 5:1-7 and Matthew 21:33-end

The chief priests and Pharisees were really angered by the time Jesus got to the end of the parable in today's Gospel. We are told that they realised that Jesus was speaking about them. It started innocently enough. Jesus began by describing the vineyard in much the same way that Isaiah had. There is no doubt that his listeners would have recognised the reference to God's anger and sense of betrayal when Israel did not behave justly.

They had heard it all before, of course. In Isaiah's story the vines spontaneously produce wild grapes instead of cultivated ones. In Jesus' story the vineyard produces good fruit, but it is left in the charge of tenants who not only want to keep the produce for themselves, but to take absolute control of the vineyard.

Many of the priests and Pharisees were probably landowners themselves. They knew only too well what they would do if their tenants behaved like that. And they would realise that Jesus was talking about the way they controlled the Temple, colluded with the Romans in oppressing the people, and used their position to further their own ends.

Jesus tells them they are not fit to rule and will be replaced by people who will produce the fruit of the kingdom. People who will prioritise justice and compassion for those who are oppressed, rather than their own self-interest. 🍷



A fruitful life

Lord God, help us to be good custodians of your kingdom – to work always for justice for the oppressed, to care for those in any kind of need and to listen attentively to your word, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

If there is a heavy dew when I go to check the sheep early in the morning I can see their tracks on the grass telling me where they've been overnight. There's a word in Welsh, "cynefin", which is about familiar paths, the homely feeling of being on the path where you

belong in the landscape, rooted by relationship and history, that fits this early morning experience for me. There's no adequate English translation but I experience what I think it means both in the sheep field and in my sinking into my local Welsh community and in that relationship I have with God here. I follow the sheep paths, seeing where they've stood to eat a particularly tasty weed or where they've lain down and there's no dew at all just a soft hollow in the green. Such rootedness is a slow process, but it leads to abundant life. 🍷

“God sees hearts as we see faces.”

George Herbert (1593-1633), poet, preacher and priest

Angels

Part III – the annunciation

by Trevor Dennis

The most famous angel in the Bible is Gabriel. It's partly because we know what to call him – most of the angels in the Bible are just angels – but mostly, of course, because of Luke's wonderful story of his meeting with Mary. Christmas is still some way off, but when it comes remember that Mary's annunciation is not the only one in the Bible. The first annunciation is in Genesis

16 and begins as an encounter between Hagar and "the angel of the Lord". That messenger is referred to as an angel, but actually turns out to be God, for Hagar "sees" God, and even gives God a name.

Fancy that! Hagar is the first person in the Bible to "see" God, the only one to give God a new name – and she a slave and a foreigner. That says something about God, don't you think? Sometimes we don't need angels. 🍷