

## Interactive lesson



*picture from MMMS collection*

Does anyone want chocolate chip cookies?

<Let them respond; open & set out rancid cookies, then open & hold good cookies>

Those cookies are awful; you can take as many as you want, even hoard them so others do not get any.

These cookies are good; if you come to me, I will give you one so you can share it and come back.

Which would you like? <Let them respond; give one good cookie to each who asks and direct them to share it - if they share it and return, offer another for sharing (no limit, just one at a time and share)>

Are you happy with your choice? <Let them respond>

As an analogy, God's blessings are the good cookies and material gains are like the rancid ones. Can you tell me why? <Let them respond>

God gives us wonderful blessings for sharing with others, and continues to bless us more and more when we do so. Greed and ambition in this world teach us to grab up as much as we can, but leave us feeling unfulfilled and alienated from others.

Which do you think is the better way to live? Why?

<Let them respond>

Let us always seek to live as God created us to, as

Jesus taught us to, and as the Spirit guides us to.

## Gospel lesson

We continue reading Luke's Gospel near where we left off last week, with Jesus teaching.



*picture reversed from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/jesus-teaching/>*

**Luke 12:49-56**

(NRSV)

<sup>49</sup> "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!

<sup>50</sup> I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!

<sup>51</sup> Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division!

<sup>52</sup> From now on five in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three;

<sup>53</sup> they will be divided: father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

<sup>54</sup> He also said to the crowds, "When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, 'It is going to rain'; and so it happens.

<sup>55</sup>And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat'; and it happens.

<sup>56</sup>You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?

*The word of God for the people of God*

<Hymn "When the Church of Jesus"

UMH #592>

## Message: Yielding Wild Grapes



Foreground picture from

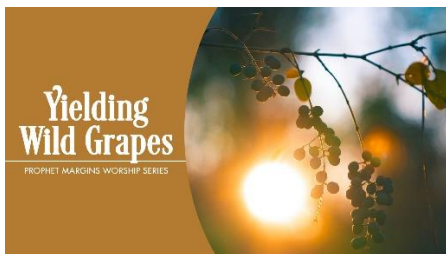
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/prophet-margins/fourth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/fourth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Gracious provider of abundant blessings,  
as we take time now to further consider today's  
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may cling tightly to You and grow fruits of  
Your love to share with all of Your children. Amen.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/prophet-margins/tenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/tenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

This week the prophet sees us “Yielding Wild Grapes”:

“What if we celebrate the church by featuring what happens outside the church? What if we lift up ministry that may be happening in small ways throughout our neighborhood, or city, or world?

What if we take time to point out that the church is wherever the congregation is and does whatever it is each member does?”



picture cropped from  
<https://www.seekpng.com/ima/u2w7o0y3u2r5w7e6/>

I decided that I wanted to make some cookies. I had a really old box of sugar cookie mix in the cupboard and thought, *I can use this. It's just flour and sugar; they don't go bad.* I followed the directions, then folded in some chocolate chips, and baked them.

I did not think other ingredients in the mix would affect it so much. When I first opened it, I looked at the mix and it looked OK. I had no idea that a boxed mix could go rancid rather than just flat.

If I had done as intended and used the mix as soon as I got it, the cookies would probably have been good. But I did not produce as expected. Now, the cookies are not fit for eating; they should just be thrown away. I have never baked anything so terrible before.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/prophet-margins/tenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-Lectionary-planning-notes/tenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Isaiah talks about the people of Israel as not turning out to be the good fruit that God intended them to be. Like me following the directions on the box of cookies, the vineyard owner did everything he could to get good grapes, but there was something off; the vineyard produced wild grapes instead.

Isaiah warns the listener that God is in control and will destroy sinfulness. Last week I spoke about how God designs so much more for us than simply being kind; random acts of kindness are like wild grapes: the grapes are edible but not nearly as large, sweet, and juicy as cultivated grapes.

God tends humanity, working with us to produce the fruits of the Spirit. But people live in sin, so where there should be justice and righteousness, instead people are hurt and cry out. There is a play on words that sound similar in the Hebrew, tantamount to: God expects us to do right but gets fights, to be fair but finds fear.

In the letter to the Hebrews, we hear about the faithful who lived in faith throughout the centuries; but God's kingdom is not yet realized on Earth. The faithful of the early church were severely

persecuted. However, we have assurance that God rewards the faithful and works through them toward developing the kingdom. Are we to let their efforts lie fallow, or to work diligently to build upon them in our generation?

Jesus came to show people what God intends, to drive us to choose between sinfulness and love of God – not a one-time thing, but a way of living and interacting with everyone and everything. Growing God’s kingdom on earth requires diligence akin to tending crops.

How well do we live our faith? Do we just come to church on Sundays and do random acts of kindness during the week, or do we live with a drive to make the world better for everyone – even when we do not know them or happen to bump into them? Do we have a purposeful plan guiding what we do?



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/stressed-couple-explaining-things-to-each-other-6964106/>

Those happy with {the comforts they have acquired through their own efforts} generally do not want to think about whether or not others suffered pain in the process, because then they might have to do without their comforts, and their efforts would have been for naught. And anyone who tries to get them to think about it may encounter harsh resistance for pushing them out of their comfort zone.

A classic example is the purchase of clothing made in overseas sweatshops: we work hard for money to afford the clothes we want; why do we have to worry about what went into making them?

Or, why should we care what conditions Amazon workers have to deal with? If we paid for our stuff to be delivered to our doorstep instead of our having to go to a store, then why is how it gets there our problem? It just better be on time and intact!

But Jesus calls us to better. So families will be divided when not everyone chooses the same path. If we want better, if we want the life that God offers, we have to step outside our comfort zone.

We need to foster the kinds of relationships Jesus demonstrated, to let God work through us to strengthen our communities and our country, and to enable God's kingdom to develop on Earth. This week I challenge you:

- 1) to look for where someone is afraid or fighting,
- 2) to seek understanding of the full situation, and
- 3) to help that person receive comfort, help, and strength -

that instead of fighting, there can be righting;  
that instead of fearing, there can be cheering.

From there, we can expand our efforts to building

relationships between groups of people, between communities, across our country and across the world.



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/purple-grapes-on-tree-9123036/>

Yield more than wild grapes. Let God work through you for an abundant crop of grace and fellowship.

### <PRAYER OF CONFESSION

*(Kwasi Kena, The Africana Worship Book, Year C, edited by Valerie Bridgeman Davis and Safiyah Fosua, Discipleship Resources, 2008, 159.)>*

Let us confess our sin against God and our neighbors.

Lord, we confess that we have not always listened to you. We worry about trivial things and crowd out your cry.

Lord, we confess that we're not eager to hear what you have to say to us. We think we know a better way to do most everything.

Lord, we confess that we've ignored your Holy Spirit more than once today.

Lord, we confess our faults as ask you to speak to us again.

Send your Spirit of Truth and speak to all that is false within us. We will receive your words and follow your ways. Amen.

<PARDON (from UM BOW #488)>



Through God's grace we are forgiven,  
by the mercy of our Creator,  
through the love of the Christ,  
and in the power of the Spirit.  
Let us rejoice and be glad!  
**Glory to God! Amen.**

Now let us affirm our faith with  
**The Apostles' Creed, Ecumenical Version**

UMH #882

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic\*\* church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

*\*\*universal*

<Doxology>

<Offertory / Pastoral Prayer>

Let us pray:

Creator God, who brought forth the world as your vineyard, provided every needed resource, and asked only that we bear good fruit:

As we give our offerings, remind us again of the fruit you desire -- justice and righteousness are the ones your prophet Isaiah suggests.

Forgive us for the times when our offerings have fallen short and when the only fruit you've received is our own self-centeredness.

Help us bear the fruit that brings you joy.

(above prayer from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org>)

- Lord, please help {these members of the body of Christ whom we lift up} with Your healing touch and comfort:

- Kevin Grewe - Parkinson's

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- Thanks for

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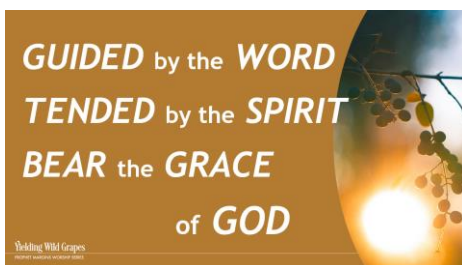
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- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
  - Family far off
  - Travelers
- Lord, please help the people of Ukraine who yet struggle with war in their homeland.
- Guide our Leaders – local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.
- Send Your Spirit to address world/social problems
  - end bigotry, dismantle racism, reform systems persist
  - bring world peace

All these things we pray as You taught us to pray,  
<Lord's Prayer>

<Hymn "God of Grace and God of Glory" UMH #577>

<Benediction>\*\*



background picture from  
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/prophet-margins/tenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/tenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Go forth, guided by the Word and tended by the Spirit, to bear the grace of God in the midst of this troubled world,  
that all may see a glimpse of the heavenly kingdom through you.

Amen.