

## **Texts of the devotions on 'Reminisce' (the second Sunday of Lent) February 28, 2021**

**music:** J. B. de Boismortier - Sonata - 1<sup>st</sup> part: Modérément

### **All for nothing** *(read by Michael Basmer)*

One day a fox found an especially enticing vineyard. His greed was aroused by its marvellous fruit. But the vineyard was safely fenced in all around. The fox spied a tiny opening at one corner. Here he wanted to enter the vineyard, but the opening was too narrow for him to get in. In a mixture of greed and cleverness the fox decided to fast until he would be able to enter the vineyard through the gap. After some days he was so slim he could slip in. Now he gorged himself on the beautiful and ripe fruit – and grew fat again. When he tried to get out again through the opening, he could not. So he had to hide for a few days and fast until he was slim enough to save his life by slipping out through the gap. When, slimmed down, he managed to get out, he turned to the vineyard and said, "Vineyard, vineyard! You are so beautiful, and your grapes taste so marvellous. But you are of no use. One goes out as hungry as one went in."

*(After a Jewish fairy tale)*

**music:** J. B. de Boismortier - Sonata - 2<sup>nd</sup> part: Gaiment

### **Sermon** *(Pastor Wolfgang Knopp)*

Dear parishioners, the text today's sermon is based on is from Prophet Isaiah, fifth chapter. Isaiah says that God has spoken to him.

Has God ever spoken to you? I suppose that it must be overwhelming, or frightening, that God addresses a human directly.

Isaiah says: The Lord says. And this will greatly have impressed people of his times.

And perhaps he would have impressed them even more if he had said: The Lady says. But no: The Lord says, and the Lord compares the people of Israel to a vineyard.

God says: I have done everything to this vineyard that a vintner can do. I weeded, I looked after each plant, I watered it, I removed the stones, I went into the vineyard every day to ensure a good harvest, and finally I come to harvest and find that all the grapes are sour.

The crop a total failure, hardly a grape that is really ripe and will make a good wine. The same, Isaiah says, goes for this people of Judah. God has put everything into this people, all his love, all his trust, all his might, all his care – to what avail? People quarrel, they cheat, they lie, they betray each other, they have become enemies in this land.

And so says Isaiah, God says: I will tear down the hedges of this vineyard. I will drive in the herds, they shall eat it all up, no vine shall remain, this land shall be overrun by foreign peoples. That is my revenge on this people that tramples on my mercy, my care. I see a different God in the New Testament. That God of the vineyard to me is like a child having a tantrum. I made some beautiful thing and that thing is not grateful, therefore I shall destroy it. The cake I made in the sandpit did not come out like I wanted, therefore I beat it to dust with my shovel. In the New Testament I learn about a God who treats humans differently, a God who knows that humans simply are a 'misconception'. God giving humans such powers of reasoning, such a big head, such brains about equals handing a three-year-old child a Kalashnikov with the safety catch off. What will be the outcome? A huge calamity.

Humans simply are fallible. Humans are the most dangerous predators on this earth. It is because with this head, this mind we bring about not only good things, but more often than not deeply evil things. But this God of the New Testament knows about these humans, about their fallibility. He does not destroy them, but is by their side on their road into the abysses created by these humans. And this abyss, alas, is within each of us – myself included. This predator is not elsewhere but right here, in this soul, in this head, in this mind. And yet God goes along with humans. And perhaps, in this time of Passion, we take stock of ourselves and reflect: Well, have I somehow become a grape that is not so sweet anymore, but rather sour? Where do I betray others? Where do I speak ill of others? Where do I come in as a factor that makes this world a little worse instead of better? And I feel that if we allow these thoughts, we will also know that this road into darkness is not a road we travel alone, but that this God also goes along with us on this road, that he knows the darkness – and this may give us the strength and the confidence we need to get rid of the darkness and leave it behind us.

We will never be perfect humans. In my life I will not be able to reach that goal. But I know that God accompanies my dark sides, but that he also accompanies me and gives me strength when I want to leave these dark things behind me, when I want to become a new, a different human being. I may not succeed fundamentally and fast, and perhaps not at all – except for basic approaches, small steps. If many humans take small steps, it is a big step for all of us.

So let us take a look at ourselves in this time of Passion and let us view ourselves not as supermen who can do everything and superwomen who succeed in everything, who are always on track, but rather as humans who walk on the brink of an abyss and occasionally fall into it. But this God accompanies us, he does not want to destroy us – he wants to help us get out. If this story were to be told in the New Testament, I suppose God would say: I shall plant a new vineyard. I shall put in new vines. Again I shall look after these vines, help them, water them, weed them, remove the stones and nurture what is good. This is the God I like to believe in. That he is by our side in the abyss, but also helps us rise to new heights. Amen.

**music:** J. B. de Boismortier - Sonata - 3<sup>rd</sup> part: Sarabande, 4<sup>th</sup> part: Gavotte

## The Lord's Prayer

Vater unser im Himmel. Our Father in heaven.  
Geheiligt werde dein Name. Hallowed be your name.  
Dein Reich komme. Your kingdom come.  
Dein Wille geschehe, Your will be done,  
wie im Himmel, so auf Erden. as in heaven, so on earth.  
Unser tägliches Brot gib uns heute. Give us today our daily bread.  
Und vergib uns unsere Schuld, And forgive us our sins,  
wie auch wir vergeben unsern Schuldigern. as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Und führe uns nicht in Versuchung, Lead us not into temptation,  
sondern erlöse uns von dem Bösen. but deliver us from evil.  
Denn dein ist das Reich und die Kraft For the kingdom, the power  
und die Herrlichkeit in Ewigkeit. and the glory are yours now and forever.  
Amen. Amen.