



# Plants for Reflection: Grapevine

The common **grapevine** is a species of flowering plant which can be found across much of the Mediterranean region, from Central Europe to Southwestern Asia and North Africa. Grapes can be eaten fresh or made into wine, juice, or vinegar, or dried to make raisins.

## **Bible passage: John 15:5 (NRSV\*)**

I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit

## **Reflection: Hope & Promise**

Whenever the Old Testament prophets referred to vines or vineyards, they always had in mind the imminent judgment that God would bring upon his people. In Psalm 80 the psalmist begins with a lament over the Lord's severe punishment of his people, comparing Israel with God's flourishing transplanted vine but which becomes uprooted and abandoned. In other words, the idea of vines would not bring positive images to mind. For this reason, the Gospel of John refers to Jesus not simply as the vine but more specifically as the *true* vine, implying that in contrast to Israel which became unfaithful and incurred the judgment of God, Jesus remains faithful and thus fulfils Israel's calling to be the vine of God. The contrast is between Israel and Jesus, not between Israel and the Church. The Church is not the true vine; Jesus is fulfilling the destiny to which Israel was called. The Church cannot fulfil Israel's destiny without Christ. There is the promise of hope for the future in Isaiah 62:8.

The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink the wine for which you have laboured, but those who garner it shall eat it and praise the Lord, and those who gather it shall drink it in my holy courts.

Grapes are among the strongest Christian symbols, as they represent the blood of Jesus; moreover, vineyards come to represent the mission field or - put another way - grapes come to also represent good works, while vines reflect the words of Jesus.

Spiritually, we are called to present ourselves as receptive ground for God's word, to care for and nurture it until we become strong branches, spreading the message of love to all who will listen. Many have spoken about the therapeutic effects of gardening, when hands act out what we hold in our hearts, and we become "fruit that will last" (John 15:16).

## **Prayer: A living tree**

God of all goodness  
who delights to look on the world  
as it comes to be,  
look on me this day.  
I seek the right path;  
I'm hungry for your teaching,  
thirsty for your spring of life.  
I want to grow and flourish.  
My deep desire  
is to be rooted in your desire,  
to flower in the light of your delight  
and never wither.  
May I delight in you  
as you delight in me,  
and may I bear fragrant fruit  
for the world.

Amen

## **Notes**

Garstang URC is proud to have volunteers who tend the churchyard, the Bible Garden, Memorial Garden, and bee-friendly beds throughout the year. We are grateful for the help of Garstang in Bloom volunteers in the maintenance of the Garden. Everyone's efforts are recognised as we hope to achieve an Eco Church Gold Award.

The Reflection is drawn from ideas in *The Symbolism of Vine in Scripture*, Jirair Tashjian, © 2018, Jirair Tashjian and The Christian Resource Institute - All Rights Reserved.