

## O Canada – Isaiah 5:1-7

As Canadians we are proud of who we are and our contributions to the world. The whole world enjoys a sport called basketball, which started in Canada. The space station relies on the Canada arm to move things safely around. These things most Canadians know about.

But did you know that the paint roller was invented by a Canadian? In 1940 Norman Breakey freed us from having to paint everything with a brush. Sadly an American registered the patent and made all the money off this invention.

In 1950 Larry Hanson invented the plastic garbage bag, called Glad Bags. In 1930 John D. Millar of Ontario invented the lines for roadways! In 1949 Canadian John Hopps invented the pacemaker. In 1953 a Canadian named George Klein invented the electric wheelchair. In 1937 Donald Lewis of Canada invented the walkie-talkie. And in 1970 three Canadians came up with a novel way to see life through the Imax theatre.

God has blessed the country with great minds and resources, and out of this has flowed all kinds of great inventions and ideas.

One wonders if this abundance of creativity is part of a blessing God put on the nation. You see, from its foundations as a modern nation God was acknowledged and honoured in this country. We read in history that John Cabot arrived in the New Found Land and the first thing he did was to plant a cross in the soil of this new land, claiming it for God and England.

Yet even this is not the first time Christianity entered Canada, for among the Inuit peoples are Christian symbols, shared with them from Christian Vikings that visited these lands long before Cabot arrived.

Samuel De Champlain, one of the co-founders of Quebec, is noted as saying to a native chief that the salvation of one soul was worth more than the development of a nation.

Jacques Cartier would hold worship services daily for his men, the people around him and the first nations peoples. A paralyzed chief was brought to one of those services, and that night there were many people healed. Cartier wrote, "It was as if Jesus himself was walking through the crowd" as one after the other was healed.

Egerton Ryerson founded the first public schools in Canada, which he said must be Christian in form. His first textbook was the Bible, and the second textbook was a book he wrote called "On Christian Morals and Living."

David Thompson, famous explorer and map maker, who travelled over 90,000 km and mapped over 4.9 million square kilometres in Western Canada so accurately that the maps were used for over 100 years without change, he did his work so that the missionaries could reach every village and tribe in Western Canada.

In 1867 when Canada was founded in P.E.I., the founding Fathers were not sure what this new nation should be called. They adjourned for the day and said they would continue discussions the next day. When they gathered the next day Samuel Leonard Tilley was all excited. He said that as he did his morning devotions (imagine saying that in parliament today!) he read Psalm 72:8 where we find, "He will have dominion from sea to sea, from the river to the ends of the earth..."

From this we received the name "Dominion of Canada." Tilley, by the way, did not want his headstone to read that he was a Founding Father of the nation, or Premier of New Brunswick. He said he would rather his headstone read, "His trust was in Jesus."

On the Peace Tower of our Parliament Buildings in Ottawa are carved three messages to those who enter: on the west side is chiselled in the stone Proverbs 29:18, "Without a vision the people perish." On the front is chiseled Psalm 72:1, "Give the king Thy judgements, O God." And on the east is written Psalm 72:8, "He shall have dominion from sea to sea."

It is true that soon greed and the lust for power introduced many, many terrible policies into Canadian history, but there were deep Christian roots in our country. We have a heritage that allowed room for Christ to be known, loved and served in this nation. We had a good beginning due to the grace of God.

Which reminds us of another nation, the nation of Israel. No other country ever had so much Divine intervention to see it established. From the calling of Abraham to the conquest of Canaan, God was leading His people. So what did the nation do with this blessing?

This is what Isaiah 5 is about. This morning we will read just the first 7 verses of this chapter. Here we find an Old Testament parable, called the Song of the Vineyard. Listen carefully to the Word of the Lord.

#### READ TEXT

This song speaks of a man who had a vineyard. It had all the advantages needed so that it could bear good crops. It was on fertile ground (v.1). All the stones were removed and the best of vines were planted there (v.2). A watchtower was built so men could keep watch over the vines, making sure no animals or thieves destroyed them (v. 2). Even a winepress was constructed so that the fruit could be turned into wine.

The owner of the vineyard went out to gather a harvest of good grapes, but there were none. There was only bad fruit. The singer asks the people of Judah, what more could the owner of the vineyard do? The answer was clear – nothing. He had done all he could.

So the owner was going to remove the protective wall that surrounded his vineyard. He would remove the hedge of protection. He would stop tending the vines, and soon briars and thorns would grow up and choke them out (v. 6). Even the rain would be held back, the water that brought it life.

Then God makes it clear who he is talking about. “The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah.” (v. 7)

God was looking for justice in the land but found bloodshed. He was looking for righteousness but only heard cries of distress. That seventh verse has an interesting play on words in the Hebrew.

He looked for *mishpat*, but behold *mispat* (“bloodshed”); for *tsedaqua*, but behold *tseaqua* (the cry that attends anarchy, covetousness, and dissipation)<sup>1</sup>(Dissipation is a squandering of money, energy or resources)

God had done so much for the nation of Israel, and the Old Testament is the account of all God did to form the nation and prepare it to be a blessing to the whole world. But the people did not follow God. They went after false gods. They trusted foreign armies over the deliverance of God. They disobeyed the commands handed down to them from Moses. They were nation divided. They even oppressed their own people.

And God said trouble would come on the people. Judgement was descending. We know that the judgement would look like a conquest by a foreign army, and the people taken into exile for 70 years. The city of Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed. They would have to start again.

It would take many years for Israel to regain its strength, and it never became as strong as it was in the days of King David and Solomon. But by the time Jesus came Israel was once again a nation, and it was given a chance to turn to God by accepting Jesus as their Messiah and God. But once again Israel failed, and instead of justice, there was bloodshed.

The innocent, our Lord Jesus Christ, was falsely accused and tried and illegally beaten and crucified. Though this was God’s plan to redeem all people from the curse of sin, still it was a tragedy to see Israel turn their back on Jesus, justice, and their call to demonstrate righteous living to a sinful world.

In AD 70 Israel once again was destroyed, not to be a nation again until 1948. God removed the hedge of protection from her, and brought down the wall of safety. Today she gets another chance as the clock of time on this planet ticks down. You see, God said he would never abandon Israel (I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! – Romans 11:1) but instead has a great plan for her salvation in the last days (Romans 11:26). But for a long time she did not have the protection of God and she was a scattered nation.

As I read this parable and followed the story of Israel, I had to wonder what God must think about Canada!

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<sup>1</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [\*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 434). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

We noted already how God provided God fearing men, Christians, to give leadership early in our country. They founded our Dominion on Christian principles and enshrined then in the constitution drafted back in 1867.

Our nation was poised to bear great fruit for Christ. With abundance of natural resources which led to wealth, we were a nation which could be a blessing to others. We could provide food to the starving, medicine to the sick, and most importantly, we could send missionaries to help spread the Good News of salvation through faith in Jesus to the world. Like the vineyard in the passage we read in Isaiah 5, we were a blessed nation.

So as God looks upon us today, does he see justice, or bloodshed? Our nation weeps for the hundreds of children who died in the residential schools. Who will weep for the thousands of children killed every year through abortion? Also, our current government has opened the door to assisted suicide, making it easier to access and promoting it as acceptable in our society.

We see our prisons misproportionately filled with first nations peoples, and we shudder to see that criminals with money and good lawyers face less punishment for their crimes than those without money. We see criminals laugh at the justice system as crime increases, and police officers struggle to balance all that is expected of them.

God looks for righteousness, at least within his church, and even there he hears cries of distress. There is no longer any sense of right and wrong, and many churches have ceased to preach that sin as the #1 problem of our world today. We seem to be returning to the days of the Judges when "... everyone did what was right in their own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

Many churches no longer use the Bible as their source of authority, but the writings of various authors. Is it any wonder the church is declining in Canada instead of growing?

I love my country too much to spend much more time pointing out how broken and corrupted it has become. Don't get me wrong, there is much good still in our country. We are still known as a country that provides humanitarian aid like no other country, and we have brilliant minds in all fields of study and manufacturing. *But there is a tragic move away from our Christian foundation*, into secular humanism that allows people to be their own final authority.

Psalm 11:3 asks, "When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

The answer in that Psalm is a simple one: turn back to God. God is still on the throne, the Psalmist asserts, so we turn to God for our refuge.

We sense that the words of 2 Chronicles 7:14 are needed in our land today more than ever:

<sup>14</sup> If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

This morning, this first Sunday after Canada Day and our first chance to gather as God's people to thank Him for our land, we need to humble ourselves, pray, seek the face of God, and turn from any wicked ways.

We cannot change the nation with protests and petitions, but the nation can be changed through revival and a move of God's Spirit that touches every home in Nanaimo, every home in BC, every home from sea to sea.

God can do this. God wants to do this. May revival start in us, today, now!

Today we will take time to pray for our country – and in doing that we must pray for ourselves. We have the altars here at the front of the church for prayer. You may want to come and pray for your country, your city, your church, your family, yourself. The altars are open for you to come and meet God here.

But you can pray in your seats as well. You may want to sit, or kneel, or stand. But pray with us, first in the song the worship team will lead us in, and then as I lead us in a time of prayer.

O Canada... we need God to move once again, and touch our leaders, and every home from sea to sea to sea.

Dear God, heal our land...