

LWML Sunday/Pentecost 18 10/4/20  
Matthew 21:33-46 22A

THEREFORE I TELL YOU, THE KINGDOM OF GOD WILL BE TAKEN AWAY FROM YOU AND GIVEN TO A PEOPLE PRODUCING ITS FRUITS.

Georgia is well-known for its peaches; which is why it is called the Peach State. However, Georgia is not unique in being known for its production of a particular fruit. The state of Washington has its apples, and Florida, oranges. In fact, all 50 of the United States have an official fruit associated with their state; including North Dakota which has its ... ?

Just as states are known by the fruit each produces; the kingdom of God is recognized by the fruit its people produce. Of course, this fruit is different than that which is found on common branches or vines. The fruit that Jesus talks about in our lesson this Sunday is the fruits of the faith that Holy Spirit works within us. As today, we celebrate LWML Sunday, our theme is **Kingdom people produce kingdom fruit.**

The Sunday before Jesus spoke the words of our Gospel, He had ridden into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. As Jesus was teaching in the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" (Mt 21:23). He tells them the parable of the Two Sons, which we heard last Sunday, and then, immediately, tells them the parable of the Tenants before us in our Gospel this morning. And, the Evangelist tells us

"When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived He was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest Him, they feared the crowds, because they hold Him to be a prophet" (v. 45).

Do you ever fear the crowd? Well, the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment which says, “You shall have no other gods,” teaches us that we are to “fear, love, and trust in God above all things”. But, you don’t, do you?

By the providence of Almighty God, we are not imprisoned, beaten, and killed for our faith in Jesus. But Satan, with all of his lies and all of his fury, knows your ego. And he understands all too well how much your ego drives you to be popular and liked. And he plays games with you, so that you fear what people think of you more than what God thinks of you.

Take your greed, for example. It shows itself in your grumbling and complaining. Your neighbor gets new and bigger and nicer ... whatever...., and you don’t have it, so you get angry and are filled with self-pity. You accumulate more and more earthly stuff, because you really don’t believe God will open His hand and satisfy your every need of body and soul.

Or, consider how you view marriage. You most certainly believe two people of the same gender cannot enter into marriage. But, what happens at the Friday night get-together or the coffee break at work, and the off-color joke is told? You, you Christian, you think it’s funny.

You would never think of murdering your neighbor; that would send you to jail, after all. But, you have no hesitation using your tongue to defame and hurt your neighbor’s name and reputation with gossip; especially because it makes you feel so good about yourself.

And how about your neighbor. God loves you and you expect Him to forgive you. But, you hate your neighbor. Sure, ya do and it shows in that you keep a record of wrongs. You refuse to forgive and be reconciled in Christ.

When you fear, love, and trust in man, what they think of you above all things, you are like an apple tree with horrible, decaying roots, that can produce only rotten apples.

II. The GOOD NEWS of the Gospel is that when Jesus came into this world, He did fear, love, and trust in God above all things for you, and for your salvation.

Jesus took from you all the times you feared the crowd; all the times you feared, loved, and trusted in what people thought of you; He took from you all your sins and carried the weight of all those sins to the cross of Calvary. There, He died as the punishment for your breaking of the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment and all the Commandments, so that you are forgiven. And, then He rose the 3<sup>rd</sup> day to free us from the death of sin, so that we may live today and for all eternity in Him.

III. Jesus Himself said it this way,

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:4-5).

In the new birth of Holy Baptism, we are grafted into the living vine, Jesus Christ, just as BIRKIN was this very day. We live in Christ, and Christ Jesus lives in us, which means He does His work through us, so we bear much fruit. **III. APPLICATION**

Inquiring minds want to know, so I supposed I am obligated to tell you that the CHOKECHERRY is the official fruit of the state of North Dakota. No, probably not as well-known as Georgia for its peaches, or Washington for its apples, or Florida for its oranges, but we have a state fruit, because chokecherries grow wild in all parts of our beloved state.

So, Dear Child of God, what fruit are you known for? No, the fruits of your faith may not be great or impressive, or even wise in the eyes of the world, but abiding in Christ, you bear the fruits of repentance.

Think of it this way ... *{you know my favorite example of fruit-bearing, don't you?}* After Bible class this morning, you will get in your motorized carriage and drive home. How fast will you drive? The answer: The speed limit. Why? 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment. The 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment teaches you to obey those in authority over you. Just like if you are a student and the teacher says, this is your assignment, turn it in tomorrow. So, you do it, and you turn it into your teacher and, in doing so, live a God-pleasing life.

You wouldn't think of hurting or harming your neighbor in their body by any means, and you don't hate or want to remain angry at your neighbor. Rather, you forgive, as God in Christ Jesus has forgiven you.

You honor marriage as a God-pleasing estate, because that pleases God. You don't throw rocks through your neighbor's windows because you help your neighbor to improve and protect their property and income. You don't gossip, but speak well of your neighbor and put the best construction on everything. And, you are content with the life and stuff that God has given you, for what pleases God, that pleases you, Dear Child of God.

From local congregations, throughout our communities, to the ends of the earth, the Lutheran Women's Missionary League are well-known for the fruits they bear. Especially, for gathering mites for mission grants in their home districts and global work abroad. Their labors expand from congregation to community to around the world. "Kingdom people produce kingdom fruit" fits well the description of their purpose and mission.

God is at work in us through Word and Sacrament so that we may bear much fruit in your thoughts, words, and deeds that glorify your Father in heaven and serve your neighbor. Being fully nurtured by God, [we] “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work” (Co 1:10).

To God be the Glory. Amen.