

## “Bearing Fruit In God’s Kingdom”

Pentecost 20

1)

Matthew 21:33-43

2)

October 25, 2020

May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance. (2 Thess. 3:5)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

A few weeks ago, my wife and I and our kids had an opportunity to head up to Door County to check out the Fall colors. And if you’ve been up that way before, you probably have driven by one of the many orchards or vineyards there. It’s pretty neat, isn’t it, to see all of the trees or vines right in a row? It takes me back to growing up in the country and having various fruit trees – pear, plum and apple trees – in the yard. It has been said of fruit trees, and I’ll use apple trees for this illustration – it’s that apple trees produce apples, because that’s what apple trees do.

Isn’t the same true of Christians? God tells us in Ephesians 2 – **“We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.”** Like the apple tree producing apples, Christians produce fruit as a product of their faith.

The focus of our gospel lesson is on a vineyard that produces fruit. Jesus said in v 43 – <sup>43</sup>**“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.** The point that we want to consider today is what it means to **“Bear Fruit in God’s Kingdom.”**

### Retell Story

<sup>33</sup> **“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. <sup>34</sup> When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.**

<sup>35</sup> **“The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. <sup>36</sup> Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. <sup>37</sup> Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.**

**<sup>38</sup> “But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup> So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.**

Jesus does something a little different here than what he typically does with his parables – earthly stories with a heavenly meaning. Jesus doesn’t tell us what the parable means. Instead, he poses a question to his hearers, the same question I ask you today. Jesus said –

**<sup>40</sup> “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”**

They replied – **<sup>41</sup> “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end...and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”**

It’s important for us to think about what each of these things mean, not only for the people of Jesus’ day, but what it means for us today.

### **Meaning at Jesus’ time**

- The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law were the primary audience
- Owner = God
- Vineyard = people of Israel

The Jewish leaders felt that they had ultimate control on spirituality, and that they were the gate keepers for faith in God. Unfortunately, they were wrong. They insisted that you needed to keep God’s laws to get into a right relationship with God.

God did so much for the people of Israel. But when God sent the prophets to the people – they beat them, killed them and stoned them. Think about the prophet Isaiah, or the weeping prophet, Jeremiah.

Finally, God sent his own Son. Jesus knew what was going to happen. They would lead Jesus out of the city and kill him too. What do we see from the owner of the vineyard – what do we see from God? Great patience. Yet, the religious leaders took this great patience from God for granted.

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**41 “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”**

v. 42 –

**“ The stone the builders rejected  
has become the capstone;  
the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes”?**

The Lord is extremely patient with us. The bible tells us about his patience –

- **The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**
- **He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve...**

Too often we're like the religious leaders squandering God's patience. We're guilty of –

- Rejecting God's messengers
- Think we're better than others or have a “I've been a Christian my whole life” attitude
- We're like the characters in Jesus' parable – we covet, we murder, we steal

Especially when you realize how wicked we are. How many times haven't we –

Fruit God desires=Fruits of the spirit

God is like the landowner – one day he'll come back. What kind of fruit does he expect?

**22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.**

God wants us to repent of our sins – today – and to not wait for Judgment Day. God wants us to not look to ourselves for the solution – but to look to what you can consider the most amazing part of the parable – the landowner sent his only Son.

- **This is how God showed his love among us – he sent his Son Jesus that we might live through him.**

God wants us to have the fruits of the Spirit displayed in our life. After all – wouldn't the world be a better place?

- In our marriages – if we displayed a little more love and peace
- In our relationships with our children – if we had a little more gentleness
- In our relationships with co-workers and neighbors – if we displayed a little more kindness and self-control?

How do we get those fruits of the Spirit in our lives? He tells us in v. 42 –

**“The stone the builders rejected  
has become the capstone;  
the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes”?**

Jesus lived and died and rose again. He's the one who we build the foundation of our faith on – Jesus is the cornerstone.

Are you bearing fruit in God's kingdom? It's harvest time all around us – driving on a country road you'll often see farm equipment bringing in the crops.

We bear fruit in God's kingdom – not to earn God's favor. But to say, Thank you, to God for all that he's done for us. He sent Jesus, and now we reap that fruit of forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Now we go and bear fruit as our ways of saying thank you for all he's done for us.

Let's pray – Thank you for giving us this parable – to allow us to contemplate what it means to bear fruit in your kingdom. We repent of those times that we have failed to bear fruit. We trust in Jesus for taking away our every sin. Be with us and give us the strength to bear fruit, the fruits of the Spirit, in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Phil.4:7)