

This is My Commandment



love one another, as I have loved you

John 15:12

Easter 6-May 9, 2021

Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

John 15:9-17

"Fruit That Will Last"

Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Graduates, confirmands, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers in Christ, grace, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

It is about as black and white as the front of your bulletin cover is for today. When Jesus speaks about fruit, it is either good fruit or bad fruit. There is nothing in between. When Jesus tells the parable of the Sower on the other hand there are four different types of soil. There is a spectrum from rocky soil that you find on Iron Mountain Road in the Black Hills to our windblown soils of South Dakota to the deep rich soils of northern Iowa. All these different soils will produce something. But when Jesus speaks about bearing fruit, Jesus said there is fruit that will spoil or there will be fruit that will last. There is no fruit that is just ok.

I went on a short road trip on Thursday afternoon. Before I started, I stopped at a convenience store along the way to buy a coffee large enough for the trip and then I looked around the store for a treat to go with it. I was tempted by many good things, but then I saw a cup of mixed fruit in the display case that really appeared inviting so chose the fruit cup. I put my coffee cup in one cup holder of my pickup and the fruit cup in the other. The transparent cup revealed all the different types of fruit in the cup, and I didn't see any fruit I didn't think I wouldn't like. As I focused on my driving, I just reached over to the cup and identified what I put in my mouth only by the feel of the fruit and its taste. I never looked at the fruit before I tasted it.

I could feel the first piece was a grape. It was firm to the touch, and it was crisp, and the juice exploded in my mouth when I bit into it. After tasting it, I knew it was a green grape and it was good fruit. The next piece of fruit I grabbed I could feel was a blueberry, but it wasn't firm to the touch and when I bit into it, there was no burst of flavor. I almost spit it out. I guess I agree with Jesus when it comes to fruit. Either fruit is good or it's bad, there is nothing in between. But none of the fruit that I ate on my road trip is fruit that lasts. Fruit is good when it is purchased or picked fresh, but once it is removed from the vine it may be good for a while, but it won't last forever.

The gospel from John today is a continuation from last week's gospel when Jesus said that He is the "True Vine", and we are the branches. Jesus said that without Him, we can do nothing. And today, as we just heard, Jesus adds that apart from him you cannot bear good fruit. However, when you are connected to Jesus you cannot help but bear good fruit. When you are connected to Jesus, the True Vine, you will bear the kind of fruit that will last.

And the good news about good fruit even gets better. Branches do not decide what kind of fruit they will produce. And Jesus chooses his branches. Jesus said, "You did not choose me, I chose you." And when you are chosen by Jesus, you don't have to worry about what kind of fruit you will produce. You have no choice, but to bear good fruit.

Moses delivered 10 Commandments for us to obey. Each year in Confirmation, we begin by going through each commandment one by one. We learn that when we break the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me" you cannot keep any of the other commandments either. Again, apart from God, you can do nothing. In the gospel for today, Jesus doesn't go through the Ten Commandments one by one. Instead, Jesus only gave one. Jesus said, this is MY commandment that you should love one another, just as I have loved you. This commandment is not only easy for you to remember, but it is easy for you to do since when you abide in the Love of Jesus you will love one another.

Jesus doesn't proceed to give you a step-by-step list of how to get closer to him so that you the branch will attach yourself to the Vine. Instead, you are connected to Jesus by hearing his voice. When you are connected to Jesus you are no longer servants, but you are called friends. You are called. You are chosen. You will bear fruit that will last.

I wrote a parable for Confirmation that is attached to the back of the gift the Confirmands will each receive today. I wrote it last fall when the last class was confirmed on Reformation Sunday. But the parable fits even better with the scripture for today. This is what is printed for the Confirmands, but it applies for each of us who are appointed to go and bear fruit. Every wooden plaque was cut from the same board. Therefore, each of your gifts came from the same tree. It is now time for you to bear fruit. The fruit that you will bear is the faith that has been given to you by the Holy Spirit when you were baptized. You never were intended to stay as together as a class forever. Instead, you have been prepared to boldly proclaim the good news you have heard wherever you go. As you go, remember this final promise Jesus gave to his disciples as he commissioned them to go into the world to preach. "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age," That is good fruit. Fruit for you that will last, Amen.