

His Roots Bear The Best Fruits

Second in a Series of Four Sermons “Making Advent All About Jesus”

December 8, 2019

Second Sunday in Advent

Rev. Dr. Larry Griffin

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Isaiah 11:1 - There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

Isaiah 11:10 - In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples - of him shall the nations inquire and his resting place shall be glorious.

Rev. 22:16 - I am the root and the offspring of David and the bright Morning Star.

Dear Friends in Christ

An author named Mary Roach writes a story about her old mechanic who was at times brutally honest. She had her car towed into him one morning with a note fixed to the steering wheel, “it won’t start.” A little while later, he called to say that the reason it wouldn’t start is that the gas tank was empty. He added that he was charging her \$50 because she was so stupid! She went on to admit that she didn’t know anything about cars, that her mechanic knew her well, and he had given up on her and on women in general.

In our text for today, the people of Isaiah’s day had given up on the idea that their nation would ever amount to anything. They had spent years in exile, they had groaned in faraway lands under oppression, they were giving up on the idea that God would be keeping his promises to their fathers Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and King David, the son of Jesse. To which the prophet Isaiah prophesies at the beginning of our text, **“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.”** And in the last verse of our text, **In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples - of him shall the nations inquire and his resting place shall be glorious.**

Our sermon series is titled, “Making Advent All About Jesus.” In last Sunday’s sermon we worked with the metaphor of mountains. We hear Isaiah refer to the New Testament Church as the highest of the mountains to which the Holy Spirit would be drawing all the nations by the preaching of His Gospel. Today we switch to the metaphor of a tree, specifically the tree of Jesse, who is the father of King David. Our sermon theme is “His Roots Bear the Best Fruits.”

Three truths we explore today about the fruits of the Holy Spirit, their source, their taste, and their purpose.

Truth #1 to explore is the source of the Best Fruits. One of the great privileges of serving as pastor over the years is to be a teacher of the confirmation class. I mean that. I like to lay down the law and say to them, “Now I want you to do one of two things today, I want you to listen to me or look like you’re listening to me! This past Wednesday, I was asking each of the six students in our class who were their parents, their grandparents, and in a couple of

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their cases, their great grandparents. I am pleased to report to you that these kids are a lot of fun, that their mentors and parents are teaching them well, and it is helpful to me to know who their parents, grandparents, and great grandparents are. In every case, their faith, their repentance, and the fruits they are bearing are a family affair. The Holy Spirit has been working on these families for generations.

So it has always been. Isaiah lived 700 years before Christ, but this passage is about Christ. Isaiah is saying that the Messiah would be both the shoot and the root of Jesse and that He would bear abundant fruit. This fruit would be a kingdom of life and peace for people around the world, for all of creation, and for every one of us here today.

Both the shoot and the root of Jesse. Jesse's claim to fame is that he is the son of Obed, the grandson of Ruth and Boaz, but mainly the father of King David.. The line of kings, David and Solomon and so forth, lasted about 400 years, but then it was cut off, at least as far as kings actively ruling in Jerusalem. At a certain point, Babylon defeated Judah and carried their king off into exile. The royal line looked like a tree once beautiful but it got a disease, it's branches died, it had to be cut down, and it looked like a stump. Jesus was both the root and the shoot of Jesse's tree. He as both the origin of this Davidic line, and he would be the whole new David, a new and better king who would refer to himself as the vine, we are now the branches, apart from him there can be no fruit.

Lesson #1 today, in keeping with our sermon series theme to make this Advent all about Jesus, is to never give up on God fulfilling His promises. No matter how many times your prayers seem to be going unanswered, do not stop praying. No matter how bad are your circumstances in life, do not doubt that God will be working it out for good for those who love God and are called according to his purposes. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is both the Alpha and the Omega. The fruits of His labors are better than the best anyone else could ever offer.

Which brings us to **Truth #2 to explore is the taste of the Best Fruits** I read recently about a 4 year old boy who was asked to give the meal blessing before Christmas dinner. Family members bowed their heads and folded their hands. He began his prayer, thanking God for friends and family, naming them one by one. He thanked God for turkey, the dressing, the fruit salad, the cranberry sauce, the pies, the cakes, the cool whip. Then he paused, everyone waited, he looked up at his mom and asked, “If I thank God for the broccoli, won't he know that I'm lying?”

I can relate to that boy. It's not that I'm against broccoli or cauliflower or salads or green beans or any number of foods that are healthy, it's just that I prefer foods that actually taste

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good. A Norwegian friend of mine asked me recently if I had ever tasted lundefist, and I gave my standard answer. If I don't like the way something smells, I assume I'm not going to enjoy the taste. And so I stick with the familiar.

We are all familiar with the fruits the Messiah produced. Isaiah predicted that the Spirit of the Lord would be resting on Him, which is exactly what happened at his baptism by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. Isaiah described these best fruits in the language we still use at Lutheran Confirmation - the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Believers who rubbed elbows with Jesus in the first century tasted in Him the fruit of wisdom, He had the ability to look into the essence of reality, they tasted in Him the fruit of knowledge, which is the ability to distinguish and perceive the difference between the truths of the kingdom and the lies of the satan. They tasted in him the fruit of counsel - He was the Wonderful Counselor, He gave perfect advice, the knew and gave what people truly needed. They tasted in him the knowledge and the fear of Yahweh, He was acquainted with His Father and His will, and most importantly, Jesus submitted to His Father, as in the Garden of Gethsemane, nevertheless not my will but thine be done.

In John the Baptist's case, life was all about doing the will of the one true God. He cared little about his outward appearance or the food that he ate, He cared about calling sinners to repentance and directing all eyes to Jesus. So also, Jesus cared little about possessions or pension plans or his neighbors' perception of him, he cared entirely about accomplishing the mission for which he was sent.

In John 4:34, in response to His disciples were urging Jesus to eat something, He declared, **“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.**

Lesson #2 today, in keeping with our sermon series theme of making this Advent all about Jesus is to spend more and more time rubbing elbows with Jesus Christ in His Word and Sacraments. As often as we hear the Christmas Story, as often as we listen to the preaching and teaching of God's Word, as often as we are eating and drinking at our Lord's Table, that the Spirit of God will be resting on us in increasing fashion. As often as the Spirit of God is working on our hearts, that often we will be drowning the old sinful nature inside of us, that often we will be confessing instead of explaining our faults, that often we will be repenting instead of covering up our bad habits. And as often as we are repenting, dear friends, that often we will be bringing forth fruits meet for repentance.

Truth #3 to explore is the purpose of the Best Fruits Isaiah describes the purpose of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in this way, **In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a**

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banner for the peoples - of him shall the nations inquire and his resting place shall be glorious. When Isaiah pictures the Messiah standing as a banner for all the peoples, He would point us to the cross upon which Jesus was lifted. Jesus said this about being crucified until he was dead and buried. He predicted, **“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”** The apostle John adds, “that Jesus said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

Dear friends in Christ, the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, and patience and all of the good works they produce. They are kindness, goodness, and faithfulness and all of the beauty that comes along with them. Fruits of the Spirit are gentleness and self-control, these are the fruits that will help us make Advent all about Jesus in this place and in this season. Peter invites early Christians to let their lights so shine before others that they might see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.

Just a few days ago, I came face to face with a person who has been homeless here in Waseca for several months. She is allowed into a couple of warm buildings during the day, but is spending her nights in her car. No doubt many of her troubles are self-inflicted, and yet a troubled person she is. I shared a bit of her story with our Confirmation Class, at which point the 7th grade students got very quiet. Soon they were wondering how they might help.

These young confirmands wanting to help shouldn't surprise you. You see they have been rubbing elbows with Jesus in Confirmation Class. The Spirit of God is resting more and more on their hearts. They don't really care about her past mistakes. They just want her not to be sleeping in her car at night, they want her not to be cold.

Dear Friends, lesson #3, in keeping with our desire to make this Advent all about Jesus Christ, is to live these days wondering how we might be helpful to wounded and hurting people. It is to be wondering how we can manage our time, our talents, and our treasures in a way that gives glory to God. It is to be wondering how we can bring just a little bit of light into the darkness all around us.

In Revelation 22, Jesus declares, **I am the root and the offspring of David and the bright Morning Star.** The kingdom of God is like a medium size church in a medium sized city full of folks who are determined in these days not just to be worshiping the Light of the World, they are wondering what it means to be the light of the world. They are looking forward to the Last Day for a lot of reasons, and they wonder what it will feel like when Jesus looks them in the eyes and says, “When I was frustrated, you were patient with me,

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when I was frightened, you were kind to me, when I was hungry and hurting and on one occasion homeless, you reached out to me.” Amen.