

Sunday 2nd August 2020

Call to worship

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray:

Gracious God, you have brought us to the beginning of a new week. Your hand is upon us to care for and protect us. We offer you our lives and hearts. May we always do your will and love our neighbour as ourselves. Amen

Confession

Holy God, giver of life and grace, we have sinned against you and against our brothers and sisters, through ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We have belittled your love and betrayed your trust. We are sorry and ashamed; we repent of all our sins. In the name of Jesus Christ, please forgive us and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light.

(Silence)

Assurance of Pardon

The almighty and merciful Lord forgives you from all your sins.

In gratitude we say:

God of love, give us a heart to love you and to love one another; through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour.

Amen

New Testament Reading:

The Gospel of Matthew 12:33-37

³³ 'Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ You brood of vipers! How can you speak good things, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ The good person brings good things out of a good treasure, and the evil person brings evil things out of an evil treasure. ³⁶ I tell you, on the day of judgement you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter; ³⁷ for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.'

This is the word of the Lord

Reflection

We live in very interesting times. Today, most people try to avoid taking responsibility for their words and actions blaming other causes and not themselves. Sadly, we see that in politicians, advisers and people in all sectors of society. For this reason, it may seem hard, for some, that Jesus tells us that we are responsible for our words (and actions) and that we will be recognised and judged on the basis of what is found in our hearts.

Using trees as an example, Jesus compares the human soul to a tree and says that the fruit produced by such tree will make us know whether the tree is good or bad.

I think it would be wise for us to ask ourselves what kind of fruit we produce. When all is said and done, what are you leaving in the world as the fruit of your life?

Reasoning on how this passage connects with the previous verses in this chapter, I believe that Jesus is using the example of the tree for a good reason. The fruit produced by the tree depends very much on how you feed that tree. So, the fruit of our heart depends very much on what with feed our souls with. If you feed your soul with anger, envy, arrogance, immorality, idolatry, distrust and all these kinds of things, then it is no surprise that the fruit of your soul would be a bad one. These are the things that you will be holding in your heart and your soul will be producing what Jesus calls a bad fruit. But if you feed your soul with trust, love, patience, peace, joy, kindness

and all these spiritual foods that enrich the soul with heavenly treasures, then you will produce a good fruit because your heart is holding these things in.

Whatever is in our hearts will come out in words and actions to show what kind of person we are. Every word we speak may be forgotten by humankind but will always be remembered by God; and to God we will need to give account for what is in our heart. Ultimately, the heart is exposed by our thoughts and our thoughts are exposed by our words.

Let's face it, everyone wants to be happy. Here, we must decide what is happiness on a personal level. Do we want a short-lived happiness that the world sells, or a long term, in fact eternal one, that Jesus promised those who follow Him?

Jesus here is giving us His teaching in words that will be upheld by His actions when He finally dies on the cross and is raised from the tomb. In light of His teaching, we have no excuse to walk away from God. We are either with Him or against Him. We cannot sit in the middle like observers; Jesus does not give us that option to be neutral about Him. We must make up our minds about Him, His teaching, His life, His death, His resurrection and His promise that He will come again.

This is all the nourishment that we need to put into our souls in order to produce good fruit. But Jesus does not force anyone. He puts it to you to choose. We can choose to be fed by the things of the world that live with the world and die in the world; or we can choose to be fed by the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Jesus said "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit".

Amen

Hymn: Click [here](#) for a link to the hymn "When it's all been said and done"

Prayer of Intercession:

Heavenly Father, be with us in every experience of life. When we neglect you, remind us of your presence; when we are frightened, give us courage; when we are tempted, give us power to resist; when we are anxious and worried, give us peace; when we are weary in service, give us energy and zeal.

We pray for your Church in this place and throughout the world that, through the courage and faith of your people, your word may be preached and lived.

We pray for all the nations of the world that, following the ways of truth and justice, they may be free from bitterness and strife, and by the power of your love, live in peace.

We pray for those who are in trouble, that those who are sick may be cared for, that those who are lonely may be sustained and those who are oppressed may be strengthened, that those who mourn may be comforted and that those who are close to death may know their risen Lord.

Amen

The Lord's prayer

At the Saviour's command and formed by His divine teaching we pray together:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

Benediction:

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you always. Amen

Rev. Bruno Boldrini