

**3/7/2010**

**THE PRAYER OF THE DAY** - God whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to us when we go astray from your ways and bring us again with penitent hearts and confident faith to believe and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON      Ezekiel 33:7-20**  
**(Turn from your wicked ways and live!)**

7 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. 8 When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. 9 But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself. 10 "Son of man, say to the house of Israel, 'This is what you are saying: "Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of them. How then can we live?"'

11 Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'

12 "Therefore, son of man, say to your countrymen, 'The righteousness of the righteous man will not save him when he disobeys, and the wickedness of the wicked man will not cause him to fall when he turns from it. The righteous man, if he sins, will not be allowed to live because of his former righteousness.' 13 If I tell the righteous man that he will surely live, but then he trusts in his righteousness and does evil, none of the righteous things he has done will be remembered; he will die for the evil he has done.

14 And if I say to the wicked man, 'You will surely die,' but he then turns away from his sin and does what is just and right—15 if he gives back what he took in pledge for a loan, returns what he has stolen, follows the decrees that give life, and does no evil, he will surely live; he will not die. 16 None of the sins he has committed will be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he will surely live. 17 "Yet your countrymen say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But it is their way that is not just. 18 If a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil, he will die for it. 19 And if a wicked man turns away from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he will live by doing so.

20 Yet, O house of Israel, you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But I will judge each of you according to his own ways."

**THE EPISTLE LESSON      1 Corinthians 10:1-13**  
**(Paul shares a warning about temptations with the Corinthians.)**

1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with

most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." 8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did-- and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9 We should not test the Lord, as some of them did-- and were killed by snakes. 10 And do not grumble, as some of them did-- and were killed by the destroying angel. 11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

### **THE GOSPEL LESSON                      Luke 13:1-9**

***(Jesus calls for repentance, and tells the parable of the fruitless fig tree.)***

1 Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? 3 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. 4 Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them-- do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish." 6 Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any.

7 So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' 8 "'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'"

INTRO - One of my favorite pictures from last year is a picture of the back of my truck full of vegetables from my garden. Almost every year Kathy and I have been married we, or I, have planted a garden. I probably spend more money buying the plants compared to what I would pay for the food we get. But, there is something about working with your hands and seeing fruit come from those labors. When someone plants something, they usually have hopes for flowers or fruits and vegetables from their work.

I. That is what Jesus is saying in the parable for today.

A. God wants fruit from His people.

1. God has powerfully, individually, intricately made us.
2. The God of the universe has offered sinners His love through the sacrifice of His own Son, Jesus.

3. God mercifully calls us to believe that Jesus is our Savior and receive His forgiveness and eternal life.
  4. But, because God is so loving, he want us to respond with our lives. That is why Jesus told the parable in today's lesson. He wants His people to bear fruit of his love and mercy.
- B. In all honesty, God has done even more than send Jesus, He is persistent in calling us every day.
1. God has given us His Word to call us to faith and guide our lives.
  2. God calls us to faith and righteousness by His Spirit in Baptism.
  3. God comes to us today in the Lord's Supper.
  4. Again and again God calls people to His love, expecting people to respond.
- C. I told you at the beginning of this year we would focus on the Christian life, and how God wants us to live. God is plain in the Bible about fruit He wants from his people.
1. In Luke 3 John tells the people who came to him for baptism, **8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.** For John this meant sharing with the needy, acting with honesty, going the extra mile with someone. That is fruit for a Christian life.
  2. Jesus tells his disciples after he washed their feet, in John 15 **16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-- fruit that will last.**
  3. Galatians 5 tells us, **22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.**
  4. Today's parable tells us God's disappointment when His people don't bear fruit. But, fruit from the Christian life shows in how we live, worshiping God, loving others.

II. I used to have a garden at our old house here in Palmer. The garden did pretty well for the first few years. But, then it started to give smaller and fewer vegetables, especially on the south side. You see, over the 10-15 years we lived there, a row of trees grew higher and higher on the south side of the garden. The closer to the trees the plants were, the less the light, and the less the plants grew.

- A. It is worth us noting that Jesus does not tell today's parable to unbelievers. It is the people of the church of His time Jesus calls to bear fruit.
1. They were not living as God would have His people to do.
  2. In fact, the thing that was getting in their way was their self-righteousness. Do you see how they were pointing to the troubles for others, thinking to point to their sin? They were trying to show Jesus how they were better than these other people.
  3. You can understand how self-righteousness would get in the way of bearing fruit. If you already think you are doing what God wants, why work to bear more fruit?
- B. It is also good to see that Jesus is saying that when bad things happen to people, such as a tower falling on them, or Pilate mixing their blood with sacrifices in a way that is seen as blasphemy, that these things did not happen

because the people were worse than others.

1. God is slow to anger and abounding in mercy and compassion, according to Psalm 103.

2. But, everyone is a sinner needing repentance.

C. In fact, repentance, admitting my sin and seeking God's help to turn from my sin and to turn to him, this will then help people bear fruit.

1. Repentance not only points to my sin, but strips away any self righteousness that can get in the way of my

2. Repentance also points me to the love of God, who called and loves a sinner like me.

III. At our old house, I finally had to admit that the garden was not going to bear fruit where it was. The trees on the south side were getting higher and blocking the light, and they were my neighbors' trees. I couldn't cut them down. I finally moved my garden, and moved my strawberry bed, away from the shade and the garden did well again.

A. Today, Jesus calls us to dig around our faith, to fertilize it, and to prune away the bad and dead parts.

1. Admit your failings and sin, and get rid of any pretension that We don't need to work to serve God.

2. Confess your sins. Realize, we are sinners who deserve God's punishment, but Jesus has died for us.

3. Turn to God for forgiveness and help.

B. When we admit our sin, and know we deserve God's punishment, His love seems new again.

1. When we see that God's love is undeserved, we know how great his love is.

2. We are led to love God and We want to serve others.

3. Our lives will naturally be lives that show **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.**

CONCLUSION - St. John is God's Garden. He comes looking for fruit. God has planted the seed. He waters it with baptism, fertilizes it with his word and Lord's Supper. Jesus expects our lives to be full of the fruit of righteousness and love.