

# The Myth of Lying Fruit

Luke

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**Bible Text:** Luke 6:43-45

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## Founders Baptist Church

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If you would, please, turn to the gospel of Luke chapter six and we read beginning with verse 43. Jesus said:

For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.<sup>1</sup>

Let's go to our God together in prayer and ask his blessing.

*Lord, I know that I give voice to what is also true in my brothers and sisters hearts when I tell you tonight that I love you. I thank you that you have made me one of your children. I thank you that you have given to me the knowledge of your Son. I thank you that your Spirit lives in my heart. I thank you that I have fellowship with you. And our hearts desires tonight, Lord, are that you would be glorified in our midst, that our Savior would be exalted, that your Word would impact us, that your Word, Lord, all on its own is powerful. It is truth. It is your Word. And yet we realize every day that apart from your Spirit taking your Word and dealing with our hearts that we have no real access to it. And so we ask you to bless in this hour. We ask you to move and to work in our midst.*

*Lord, we don't want this time to be wasted. We don't want to go through the motions of empty and dead religion. We want tonight to meet with you, the living God through the ministry of preaching.*

*We pray for those in this room who don't belong to you, who don't have fellowship with you, who don't have your Son, who are not indwelt by your Spirit. Have mercy upon them even tonight we ask. Shine your light into their hearts. Let them hear the voice of your Son. Grant them repentance and faith in Jesus. And then, Lord, save them by the finished work of your Son. We ask for this tonight in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 6:43-45.

What we talk about tonight is very important. Of course, everything from God's Word is very important. What we talk about tonight, I think, is timely. There is a frightening myth at work in the evangelical world of our generation. You hear it regularly. Sometimes you hear it in the form of official doctrine. I mean, sometimes people try to teach this myth with evidence for it from Scripture. They believe that they are right. They believe that they see what they think to be true on the pages of Scripture and so they put it forth in the form of official doctrine. In fact, there is a particular theological seminary that has been associated with this myth. It has become quite famous in its association with this myth. But I think even more than hearing it put forth in an official way, you hear this myth, again and again, in the informal thoughts and the conversations and in the opinions of professing Christians. You hear this myth from the lips of people as they tell the story of their own life and salvation in view of their destiny and you hear this myth from the lips of people who are telling you a story about people they love, their mother, their father, their brother, their sister, someone they work with.

What is this myth? Well, it is the myth of lying fruit. I say, again, it is a myth, but it is the myth of lying fruit. It is the idea that you can have a person who has a spiritual nature that is one way when everything in their life is another way. It is the myth that someone can know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, someone can say that they are a new creation in Christ Jesus, someone can say that they are indwelt by the Spirit, someone can say that they have everlasting life, someone can say that they are on their way to heaven and we are to believe that it is true when everything about their life, the way they think, what motivates their living, what they set their heart upon, what they devote themselves to, everything about the way they live tells a different story. It is the myth of lying fruit. It is the thought that using the analogy of a tree, you can have a certain kind of tree that produces a fruit that is totally unlike the tree you claim to be.

And I say to you it is a myth because Jesus tells us that it is a myth. He tells us this plainly in our text and then the Holy Spirit of God throughout the rest of the New Testament tells us this again and again and again just in case we missed it.

The first thing I want to point out tonight from our text is the fact that Jesus gives us some illustrations here that present truth to us in statements of certainty. I want you to notice that he deliberately gives us illustrations here that demonstrate that we are not talking about possibilities. We are not talking about probabilities. We are talking about certainties. He says in verse 43:

“For no good tree bears bad fruit.”<sup>2</sup>

That sounds like a certainty to me. Doesn't it to you?

“...nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes...”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 6:43.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 6:43-44.

Or are they sometimes? Isn't it right? Figs are not gathered from thorn bushes. Isn't that a certainty?

“...nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.”<sup>4</sup>

That is a certainty. So, you see, it is certain.

“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”<sup>5</sup>

Not possibilities. Not probabilities, certainties. I think that is very important. Because, quite often, it is true that when we talk about salvation and the fact that when someone actually has been saved, their life manifests that. Often times someone comes to us with some sort of anecdotal evidence that tells a different story.

And we say, “Now wait a second. I want to tell you about my life. You see, I prayed to receive Christ when I was seven years old and then I went through 20 years of wasteland and then the Lord began to work with me in a fresh and new way when I was about 27. And how do you explain me?”

I mean, if a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit, what do you do with those 20 years?

Or someone will say, “You know, I know mom is in heaven, because even though she didn't manifest any real love for the Lord for the past 30 years, even though she had no desire to go to church even though, you know, she didn't want to gather with God's people or talk about the things of the Lord, there was a time when she was a little girl that she asked Jesus into her heart and she was baptized at the Baptist Church down the road. And so I know mom is in heaven because she asked Jesus into her life.”

What are they trying to say? They are trying to say that this, this statement from Jesus is not as certain as it appears, that you really can't have a good tree that just doesn't bear good fruit. And I make no apology tonight for telling you that I will believe what the Bible says before I believe your experience. I will believe what the Bible says before I believe my experience. And I want you to believe what the Bible says before you will believe anybody's experience.

Jesus speaks in terms of three illustrations. First of all, there is an illustration with respect to quality. He gives an illustration with respect to quality, verse 43.

“For no good tree bears bad fruit.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Luke 6:44.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 6:45.

<sup>6</sup> Luke 6:43.

We are talking about the quality of a tree and the quality of its fruit.

“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit.”<sup>7</sup>

The quality of the fruit has to do with the quality of the tree. This is unmistakable. Good quality trees are good quality trees because they produce good fruit. Worthless trees are worthless because they produce worthless fruit or no fruit at all. But you can be certain of this. No good tree produces worthless fruit and no bad tree produces good fruit. It is impossible.

Then he gives a second illustration, an illustration with respect to nature. That is, whatever is bearing fruit, it bears according to its nature. Verse 44:

“For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.”<sup>8</sup>

Trees and bushes and vines all produce according to their natures. Apple trees don't produce peaches. Peach trees don't produce grapes. Fruitless types of things that grow in the ground don't produce fruit. Thorn bushes, Jesus says specifically, thorn bushes don't produce figs. Bramble bushes don't produce grapes. The word translated bramble bushes there is βάτος (bat'-os) and it refers to a type of bush known as a bramble. In fact, the study of brambles is known as batology. Raspberries, blackberries, dewberries belong to the rhubarb type of plant and they are brambles. Well, he says you don't get grapes from those things.

Trees, bushes, vines, they produce according to their nature. And then he says, next statement: he says:

“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil.”<sup>9</sup>

What is true of trees, what is true of bushes, what is true of vines is also true of people. He speaks to the nature of men. He speaks of good men and evil men. He says:

“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil.”<sup>10</sup>

Good men, evil men. We know this, do we not from Scripture, there are no good men according to nature, not since the fall. So the only way you have a good man is by God's grace. The only way you have a good man is by salvation.

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<sup>7</sup> Luke 6:43-44.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 6:44.

<sup>9</sup> Luke 6:45.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

You see, prior to salvation, the whole human race is described as evil. Romans 3:12:

“All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”<sup>11</sup>

And so the only way you have a good person is God’s grace, salvation. So we could really say saved people and lost people, could we not? The good person is the saved person. The evil person is the lost person. The good person is the one who has known the grace of God in salvation. The evil person is the person who is just as they were by nature from birth. So two natures are described and you have, as a result, two storehouses, which is to say two kinds of heart, two kinds of hearts. He says in verse 45:

“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure [which is his heart] produces evil.”<sup>12</sup>

You see what we are talking about here is whether or not a man’s heart has been transformed by God’s grace. And this is really what is at the root of the debate about whether or not you can have salvation and then fruit that tells a totally different story. Is salvation something that is just accomplished legally or is it something that is accomplished experientially? Does salvation mean that your status has been changed but your heart has not been changed? I mean, you are on the roll, you know, going to hell. And now you are on the roll going to heaven, because you prayed the prayer. You asked Jesus into your heart. I mean, is that all that salvation is, a change in your status, you know, a note in your record book? Or is salvation the transformation of the life? Is salvation the bringing into being of a new creation? Someone who has been saved, are they a new creation?

What does the Bible say? 2 Corinthians 5:17: Therefore if they re really super duper special people are in Christ. Is that what it says?

Therefore if what?

“...anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”<sup>13</sup>

Well, if you have been saved there is a new treasure house that has been brought into existence. The Lord has transformed you at the core.

Now there is a new heart that speaks of a new man and that heart is a good one. It is not attributable to you. You didn’t bring it into being. It is not you by nature. But the Lord has brought into being a heart that is now made of flesh, which is to say, no longer stone, which is to say, sensitive to God, receptive to his Word, loving his Son, wanting to please

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<sup>11</sup> Romans 3:12.

<sup>12</sup> Luke 6:45.

<sup>13</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17.

him. God brought that into being in the life of every single person whom he has saved by his Son so that you have two natures and where there are these two natures, two treasures houses, two different kinds of heart.

And then he says these two natures, these two hearts they get manifested. They get expressed.

“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil.”<sup>14</sup>

Not possibly, not probably, certainly. Where you have a good person and a good heart there is the production of good. Where you have an evil person and an evil heart there is the production of evil. And it gets manifested at the fountainhead.

“...for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”<sup>15</sup>

What comes out of the mouth is just simply symbolic of every thing that comes out of his heart, that is, his life, his whole life tells the story. But you can begin with his speech. A man’s spiritual condition, a man’s heart condition, it is manifested in his speech.

So we have three statements of certainty. The quality of a tree is known by the quality of what it produces. The nature of something is known by what is evident. It becomes manifested in it and it will be manifested. That includes people. Natures, hearts, words.

Which leads to the second thought. We have statements of certainty. Second, we have applications that have certainty. How does our Lord want us to apply what he has just told us? He just tells us. What does he want us to do with this?

I think it is straightforward, don’t you? I mean, the only way you could miss the application is if you don’t want to see it. The only way this could be confusing. The only way that we could turn this certainty into a probability, a possibility or even something that doesn’t happen at all, the only way we could ever take what Jesus has said and make it uncertain is if we don’t want to see it or we don’t want to believe it.

What do we gather from this? Well, first application: The quality—because Jesus is obviously not talking about trees and bushes, is he? He is talking about people. So we can say this. The quality of the fruit tells the story of the life. The quality of the fruit tells the story of the kind of person we are dealing with. Is it good fruit or is it worthless fruit? Discover that and you will discover what kind of tree you have.

Now how do you measure what is good and how do you measure what is worthless? Good by what standard? Well, obviously by the standard of God and that is measured by the standard of Scripture. A good self examination question as you examine the reality of your salvation, whether the Lord has really saved you or not would be this. Does my life

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<sup>14</sup> Luke 6:45.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

produce good as measured by the Bible? Present in my life do I see good as it is measured by Scripture? Good motives, good desires, good ambitions, good deeds, good words. Another way we could state it is good is measured by the standard of eternity. Is my life, is the Lord producing in and through my life that which will have eternal value? Am I living a life that is really earth bound? Or does my life say that I am heaven bound? My desires, earthbound or heaven bound? My ambitions, what I really want to achieve with my life. I mean, if I could just grant you tonight what you really want, are your ambitions set on eternal value, everlasting value, a life that counts for Christ? Or would there be something else I would grant to you. Successful business, great sports career, fame. What do you want?

So the first application is the quality of the fruit tells us what kind of tree we have, a good one or a worthless one. Second application, the presence or the absence of what is natural to whatever it is I am claiming tells the true story of my life. The presence or the absence of what should be expected based upon my profession according to Scripture, what should be expected, the presence of it or the absence of it tells the true story of my life.

Think about what you are claiming, Christian. You claim to have fellowship with God. you claim to be a new creation. You claim that God by his power took you from the dominion of darkness and transferred you into the kingdom of his beloved Son. You claim according to Scripture that you once were a slave to sin and to the powers of darkness. We all walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, but God who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any many should boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. That is what we are claiming. So that now we are free.

Whoever the Son sets free is free indeed. This is what we are claiming. We are claiming that we love God. We are claiming that we love his people. We are claiming that we love his Word. We are claiming that we have the love of God for lost sinners. We are claiming that we have a burden for the world.

Now I ask you. According to Scripture, if that is the kind of tree you are, if that is the kind of bush you are, the kind of vine you are, what should be expected to appear in the life? And if what you claim to be, if what we should expect for what you claim to be, if that is absolutely, glaringly absent from your life what conclusion should be drawn?

If you claim to be a fig tree, where are the figs? If you claim to be a grape vine, where are the grapes? It makes sense for the figs to be absent if you are a thorn bush. It make sense for the grapes to be absent if you are a bramble bush. But it makes no sense for the fig tree to have no figs and for the grape vine to have no grapes.

Which leads to a third certain kind of application, the quality of the fruit tells the quality of the life. The presence or absence of what is natural to what you are claiming tells the true story of the life.

The third application. What comes out of the man tells the story of what is within in the man. The heart tells the truth about your nature. We have got to begin with the heart. And I warn us from Scripture that it is possible to clean the outside of the cup and to still be full of death. It is possible to be like a white washed tomb. It has been cleansed. It has been washed to be presentable on the outside only to be full of dead men's bones. It is possible to be like a pig that is washed and yet when you set it free, it runs right back to the mud because, you see, though you washed it, it is still a pig. Or to be like a dog that will return to its vomit, because, as disgusting as that is, that is what dogs do. What comes out of your life tells the truth about what is inside your life.

What is the true condition of your heart? Has it been transformed? I mean look at Scripture and then examine, allow the Lord to examine the thoughts and the intentions of your heart and ask: Is there really love for God present? Love for his people present? A desire to be rid of sin and to walk in obedience, is that present? Do you really want to please the Lord? Do our really want to deal with your sin? Do you really want that Christ would be magnified in your life? Is that the truth? Or is it just something you have learned to talk about around church?

The heart tells the story of the nature and then you say, "Well, I don't really know where my heart is at." Well, the mouth tells the story of the heart. Just listen to what you talk about. Just listen to what your life is focused upon.

Should it not be disturbing when someone says they are a Christian and they never talk about Jesus Christ? They say that they have eternal life and they never talk about the Bible. They say that they have eternal life and they never talk about eternal things.

Where did the spiritually dead condition of the Pharisees get manifested? Was it not their speech on many occasions? Hateful speech, judgmental speech. If you want to know the connection between these verse and the previous ones, it becomes plain, doesn't it?

A person who is habitually judgmental, consistently condemnatory, substituting their standards for the standards of Scripture, what does it point to? It points to an internal problem that has to do with salvation.

Out of the mouths of the Pharisees came the plans to murder Jesus.

"If we let this man go on like this, everyone is going to believe in him and we are going to lose our place."

They just told us who they are. They just told us where their focus is.



“Have we not said rightly that you have a demon? Have we not said rightly that you are a Samaritan?”

Out of their mouths came their own judgment if they would just listen.

If you begin to pay attention to what comes out of your mouth what will it say about your spiritual condition? Because it is not going to lie. Out of the man’s treasure house comes his treasure, good or evil, based upon his heart, which is just the reflection of his nature.

Which leads to the third thought tonight. We see statements of certainty which lead to applications that are certain. The third thought tonight is, then, let’s beware the deadly myth of uncertainty. In the face of all of these certainties, I we believe Jesus, in the face of all of these certainties, are these persistent arguments that these things are not really certain.

Now let me give some careful qualifications. What we are talking about tonight and we can say this from Scripture, what we are talking about tonight is not that we measure what we are talking about by the standard of perfection. Can we be honest enough with ourselves to admit that none of us loves God the way we should. In fact, some of us would hopefully be honest enough to admit that all of us, our love for God is woefully substandard. Is that not right? So we are not talking about a measure of perfection. Nor is the measure one of equal abundance. When you talk about fruit we are told in Scripture that some 30, some 60, some 100 fold. You are going to have people who are more fruitful than other people, yet truly born from above, truly converted.

When we talk about fruitlessness what we are talking about is glaring absence. I mean there is this glaring absence of any evidence that the Spirit of God dwells in the life. And this is what is frightening in my mind. This is what is frightening. We have people coming from a theological point of view where they actually try to argue that those there be this absence of fruit, this glaring absence of fruit, no one should ever wonder whether or not that person has truly been converted because with their lips they have called Jesus Lord.

What is frightening about that is our Lord himself tells us that there will be many on that day who said, “Lord, Lord,” but won’t enter the kingdom of heaven.

In fact, what does it say in verse 46?

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”<sup>16</sup>

So we are not talking about perfection here. We all stumble in many ways. In fact, we need to remember that not only is sanctification on this side of glorification, not only is it progressive, it will always be, on this side of glorification, incomplete. We will not know sanctification in its completed sense until we see our Savior face to face. We will always be dealing with sin, confessing sin, repenting of sin. We go on repenting. The Lord

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<sup>16</sup> Luke 6:46.

brought us to repentance when we trusted in his Son. We go on repenting until the day we see our Savior face to face.

Our sins to us are large. Our sins to us are grievous. We realize that if we are not saved by Christ, by his merits, by his righteousness, by his obedience, we will not be saved. If I have to be saved by faith in Jesus plus my obedience, I am lost. On my best day I am lost. I am saved by Christ and by Christ alone. But to tell me that the Lord has saved me and I don't really love him, to tell me that he has saved me and I don't desire to please him, to tell me that he has saved me, but I don't relate to him as my Lord, to tell me that he has saved me, but I am deaf to his Word, to tell me that he has saved me, but there are not desires that go on in my heart that cannot be explained by me, for though I would wander, he works in my heart to keep me on the path, to tell me those things aren't true, is to ask me to disbelieve what the Bible teaches about salvation, which means that the folks who would contradict the words of Jesus here, they are engaged in a deadly and foolish line of argument.

When you declare that a person's quality of fruit has nothing to do with their spiritual condition, when you declare that salvation is of a certain nature, but then what is produced in the life is of an entirely different nature, when you declare that someone should feel comfortable and safe based upon their lips, based upon their words, when their life is headed in a completely opposite direction of what they say, is to engage in a deadly, foolish line of argumentation. It is not what Jesus said.

So what is the wise, last thought, what is the wise response to this evidence? How do we respond to our Lord's words? We will deal with this in depth next time, but notice what he says.

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them...”<sup>17</sup>

Right? Come to him, believe him, follow him.

“... I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.”<sup>18</sup>

What is the well built house? The one where someone comes to Jesus, believes him and follows him.

“But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Luke 6:46-47.

<sup>18</sup> Luke 6:47-48.

<sup>19</sup> Luke 6:49.

What characterized the ruined house? It had no foundation. There was a willingness to hear, but there was no belief. And there was no obedience. There was no belief and you didn't build your life on his Word. You were a hearer. You were a listener.

Are there some of those people here tonight? I want to tell you I love you. I want to tell you I don't want to see you perish. But without question there has to be someone here tonight that is you. You will sit and listen just fine. You have heard the words of Jesus your whole life growing up in your family. Your mom and dad, perhaps, they taught you the gospel. You know it. You can repeat it. But let's look at your life. Look deeper. Look into your heart. Do you really love the Lord? Do you really hear him? Do you believe him? Are you following him? Do you believe that you can be a certain kind of tree and the quality of the fruit is entirely different, you can possess a certain kind of nature, but what would be expected is entirely absent, that you can have a good nature and a good heart, but what comes out is evil?

So what I say to you tonight is this. Believe Christ. Don't argue with the evidence. Believe him. Believe it tells the truth about your condition. And ask yourself why is he telling us this. The evidence is not given to produce despair. It is not for you to say, "Oh, my. This is so discouraging. I mean, look at my life and then look at my profession and what am I to do about this?" It is not just to produce despair. It is not meant to shut you off from Jesus.

"I guess the Lord just hasn't saved me."

Now that is not what it is meant to produce. This is meant to rescue, to wake you up from a deception. It says to you, "Hear Christ. Come to Christ. Build your life upon Christ. Believe in him. Seek him with all your heart."

And that is what I beg you to do. If there is anyone in this room this night who has a house that will one day be ruined if you continue on the pathway that you are on, my prayer for you is that tonight you would hear him, you would come to him, you would believe him and you would build your life on him. You would trust him for life.

To every child of God in this place even as we learned this morning, let us hate sin. Let us be thankful for the person who would be ready and willing to pull the splinter out of our eye, even if they have a beam in theirs. Let us understand that this is not home. We are pilgrims passing through. Jesus is our life.

We should be able to say with the apostle Paul:

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."<sup>20</sup>

Let us live for Christ, whatever it means, whatever changes have to occur, whatever repentance has to be engaged in. Wherever our life must be turned in the direction of

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<sup>20</sup> Philippians 1:21.

truth, let us turn from our sin to follow our Savior. And in that way the fruit, what is produced, what comes out will say, "There really is eternal life in that person."

And in that way your own heart will be assured before God.

Let's bow together for prayer.

*Father, thank you for your gracious warnings. Thank you that you care enough about men that you would rescue us from our own deception. Help us, Lord, not to believe a myth that a tree or a bush would never bear fruit that is not in keeping with its nature, but that somehow in the lives of men that can occur. Let us hear our Savior and believe him. Let it not move us to despair or to inaction, but to run to the Son of God and to trust him. I thank you that Jesus has done everything necessary, Lord, to save us. We joyfully confess that we are not saved by our works. We are saved by your Son's work. We praise you for the gift of righteousness that is given to every one of your children the moment they trust in your Son. You are both just and the justifier of the ungodly. We thank you for his in Jesus' name. Amen.*