

Scripture Reading:

Luke 6:20 “Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said:
"Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are you
who hunger now, For you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For
you shall laugh. 22 Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they
exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of
Man's sake. 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is
great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.

24 But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation.

25 Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the
false prophets.

43 "For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.
44 For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from
thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. 45 A good man out of
the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil
treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his
mouth speaks.”

Jesus Talks of Woes and Bad Fruit

We are looking at the teachings of Jesus commonly referred to as The Sermon
on the Mount, which as we discussed last week were probably given by Jesus
many times over His three years of public ministry. Matthew records a very
long version and Luke records a shorter version for his orderly account.

Both begin with a series of blessings and end with a call to obedience so we
can be like the wise man who dug deep and put his house on a firm foundation.

Both accounts have at the center a call to obey the 2nd great commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves, being perfect or merciful as our Father in Heaven: We will look at this call to show love and mercy in detail next week.

This week we will look at the bookend sections of Luke's account that discuss things we don't always pay a lot of attention too! Jesus pronounces woes for those who are not blessed with the gift of faith and shows that only bad fruit can result from a bad tree. On both sides of the central teaching of His sermon, Jesus shows the contrast that we see in humanity from Genesis to Revelation.

From faithful Abel and proud Cain just outside the garden: To the White Throne judgment where Jesus puts His sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left:

- The sheep who "inherit the kingdom prepared for them from before the foundation of the world"
- The goats who will depart into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Jesus contrasts blessings with woes and good trees with bad trees to underline the importance of understanding this central theme of God's story of redemption:

- The righteous & the ungodly

Matthew gives a longer list of nine blessings with Jesus giving the contrasting woes during the final dissertation against the Pharisees and Sadducees in chapter 23: I will commend these as your homework!

In the sermon that Luke records, Jesus gives four of the blessings matched precisely with four woes:

- Let us listen carefully this morning and be ready to do the lessons we learn from these contrasts:

Blessed are the poor... [humility]

... yours IS the kingdom of God

Woe to the rich... [pride]

... they have their reward

Blessed are the hungry... [seeking]

...they shall be full

Woe to those who are full... [of themselves!]

...they shall hunger

Blessed are those who weep...

[Having God's heart]

...For they shall laugh

Woe to you who laugh now...

[eat, drink and be merry!]

... you shall mourn & weep

Blessed are those who are reviled

[as they treated true prophets]

... your reward is great in heaven

Woe to those who men honor...

[as they treated the false prophets]

... the prophets of Baal should have come to their minds and ours!

I Kings 18:40 "And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!" So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there."

Making the wrong choices can have very serious consequences!

- What I want to make sure that we understand once again this morning is the fact that Jesus is not introducing some sort works righteousness into Paul's Gospel of Grace!
- These blessings are REAL blessings and these woes are REAL woes, but Jesus goes on to make clear that it is NOT the result of human effort or even the lack of human effort.

In verse 43 He says "a good tree does not bear bad fruit nor a bad tree bear good fruit"

As we discussed when looking at many detailed applications last week, we do NOT hear and obey the words of Jesus so we can be a branch in the vine, or as He says here to be a good tree.

We hear and obey BECAUSE God has given us the free gift of grace and made us good trees.

- This is Paul's point in Ephesians 2:10 after clearly stating that we are saved by grace through the gift of faith when he says "we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them!"
- Or as Jesus teaches us here today – He creates good trees that produce good fruit!

In other words, we love God because He first loved us: This is the Good News of the Gospel and all else is a heavy yoke indeed.

- Next week we will reach the climax of this sermon and the high calling that God has for His children.

What we must see this week is that we are called to this obedience because God has chosen us to be His Saints, His children, members of His Church, the glorious Bride for His Son!

- That is what it means to be a good tree and good trees produce good fruit.

We have been baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We have confessed our sins and heard the assurance of our forgiveness declared from God's Word by God's servant and now we are instructed and called to live as who we are!

IF this is where you are sincerely this morning then you have no fear of the woes that Jesus has pronounced:

- You are not "rich" because you have laid down your pride and humbly bowed the knee to Jesus as Lord.
- You are not full, but know that you hunger and thirst after the righteousness of God's Kingdom
- You do not laugh with the world but groan with the very creation "waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" When we will stand face to face with Jesus able to fully laugh and rejoice in all that He has given us!

- You do not seek honor among men: You don't fear the scorn of man because you do not fear those who can kill the body and nothing more, but Him who can cast body and soul into hell!

Are there warning here for us?

- There certainly are, because if we see these wrong priorities in our lives we should repent at once.

C.S. Lewis called pride the greatest sin and rightly so: When we think we are rich in what we have or do, then we must realize that we are in danger of exchanging the rewards of heaven for a little morsel today.

When we are tempted to think that we have all we need or have matured in the faith to a very comfortable level then we have ceased to seek after righteousness and may soon forget our first love!

When we laugh at and enjoy the sinful things of this world or indulge our own sin nature then it means we have failed to sorrow over the lost and risk losing the real joy we are offered by our Lord.

And finally, if we see ourselves being honored by men it is likely that we have ceased to be the faithful witness that God has called us to be: Better to be reviled for telling and living the truth than to be honored because we have become a false prophet.

- These should be stark contrasts in our minds and our lives: If they are not, then we have likely allowed the noise of the world to drown out what Jesus would have us hear today:

Remember, the wise man hears the sayings of Jesus and DOES them.

Those who are in Christ are the good trees and we should produce good fruit: NOT because we want to BE good trees but because we ARE good trees!

As we read in verse 45 this morning, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

Listen to how God explained the Good News, the Gospel, through the prophet Ezekiel, not once but TWICE stating it this way:

- “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”
- Only God can change the heart!

As the Disciples listened to these blessings and woes from the lips of Jesus, I am pretty sure that Psalm 1 came to their minds...

As it should also for us!

- Psalm 1 clearly outlines the contrasts we have seen today and uses the image of a healthy tree planted by the water as a picture of the faithful Saint:
- We will sing this Psalm as our hymn of response but before we do, carefully listen to and ponder these familiar words:

Psalm 1 “Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;”

[as we saw this morning, blessings await those who avoid the woes of the world: The proud, the shallow, those who ridicule our Lord]

2 “But his delight is in the law of Jehovah, And in His law he meditates day and night.”

[hungering & thirsting for righteousness]

3 “He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.”

[the good tree produces good fruit]

4 “The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.”

[all the world’s wisdom and treasures will come to naught...]

As King David saw in Psalm 73: God will cast the wicked down to destruction –

Or as Jesus said about the house on the sand “the ruin of that house was great!”

5 “Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

- From faithful Abel and proud Cain down to the sheep and goats separated at the final judgment we see all of humanity divided into only these two camps: The righteous and the ungodly

In a few moments God will invite us as His children to feast with Him at the Lord’s Table: To partake of the bread of life! As we do we will sing a very appropriate hymn, both for communion and this sermon...

“How Sweet & Awful is the Place”

We don’t sing these hymns just to have something to do while the bread and wine are distributed – It is a part of our worship and they should be sung as prayers sincerely lifted up to God in heaven!

How sweet and awful is the place
With Christ within the doors,
While everlasting love displays
The choicest of her stores!

While all our hearts and all our songs
Join to admire the feast,
Each of us cry, with thankful tongues,
“Lord, why was I a guest?

“Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter while there’s room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”

It was the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly drew us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.

Pity the nations, O our God!
Constrain the earth to come;
Send Thy victorious Word abroad,
And bring the strangers home.

We long to see Thy churches full,
That all the chosen race
May with one voice, and heart and soul,
Sing Thy redeeming grace.

May these words be our heartfelt prayer this week as we serve our Risen and
Reigning Savior!

Communion Meditation:

Proverbs chapters 1-7 present choices –
Two path to follow – Wisdom or folly

Prov. 8: Jesus is presented as Lady Wisdom...

Proverbs 9: “Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars;
2 She has slaughtered her meat, She has mixed her wine, She has also furnished
her table. 3 She has sent out her maidens, She cries out from the highest places
of the city, 4 "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" As for him who lacks
understanding, she says to him, 5 "Come, eat of my bread And drink of the
wine I have mixed. 6 Forsake foolishness & live, And go in the way of
understanding.”