

The Fruit of Faith

John 15:1-8

The Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 3, 2015

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Ok. Let us make sure that we know what Jesus is talking about when He talks about the vine.

First of all, He is the true vine. That means that all other vines are reflections of Him. A vine growing in a vineyard gives life to its branches. It does not give life to its branches in and of itself. It is not a true vine. Jesus is the true vine. It gives life to its branches because it is a reflection of Jesus who gives life to His branches. Jesus is the true vine. All other vines are reflections of Jesus. That means that when you look at the branches of a vine, you are looking at your own reflection.

Now secondly, there are two kinds of branches. There are branches who bear fruit and there are branches that do not bear fruit. Branches that bear fruit are pruned. God the Father does the pruning. He prunes the branches so that they may bear even more fruit.

The branches that do not bear fruit are taken away. God the Father takes them away. They are gathered and thrown into the fire and burned. Jesus does not say who gathers them. Jesus does not need to say who gathers them. What difference does it make who gathers them? They do not bear fruit. Since they do not bear fruit God the Father has them cast into hell.

Ok. So we want to be a branch in Jesus that bears much fruit. How do we get that done?

That brings us to our third point. The branches that remain in the vine bear much fruit. Just as the branch of a vine does not bear fruit unless it stays in the vine so also we do not bear fruit unless we remain in Jesus. Just as a branch that remains in its vine bears much fruit so also we will bear much fruit if we remain in Jesus. As long as we remain in Jesus and Jesus remains in us we will bear much fruit. The Father will prune us and we will bear even more fruit.

Ok. So how do we remain in Jesus? Is that some kind of metaphysical thing? No. Jesus tells us how we remain in Jesus. He says that if we remain in Him and His words remain in us we will bear much fruit. The Father will prune us and we will be even more fruitful. It is not a metaphysical thing. It has to do with His words.

How do the words of Jesus remain in you? Well, they remain in you in a number of different ways. The most important way that the words of Jesus remain in you is when you attend the Divine Service. The liturgy and my sermon are organized to contain the words of Jesus. If they do not contain the words of Jesus, you need a different liturgy and a different preacher. So you are remaining in Jesus and He is remaining in you right now!

In addition to the Divine Service there are all kinds of ways that the words of Jesus remain in you. There are daily devotions where you read a portion of the Scripture on your own and pray to Him. There are family devotions where the head of household has the family read the Scriptures together as a family at meal time or some other convenient time and you hear the words of Jesus then. There are devotions that Luther suggests in the catechism that are an easy way of keeping the words of Jesus with you. If you use the catechism's suggestions you will wind up memorizing some of the words of Jesus and then they are with you all of the time. No one can take the words of Jesus away from you if you have them memorized. You can put a CD of the words of Jesus in your CD player in your car and listen to the words of Jesus in the car. You can download them to your portable device and listen to them wherever you are. You can listen to them when you exercise. You can listen to them in the tractor. I could go on and

on. But when the words of Jesus remain in you, Jesus remains in you. When Jesus remains in you and you remain in Jesus you bear much fruit. Apart from Jesus you can do nothing. That is to say that apart from the words of Jesus you can do nothing. If you cut yourself off from the words of Jesus and do not listen to Him, you are cutting yourself off from Jesus. If you cut yourself off from Jesus you have no life in you. You will not bear fruit. God the Father will take you and cast you into hell.

If the words of Jesus remain in you and you remain in Jesus, you will bear much fruit. You will ask the Father whatever you want and it will happen.

And that's the fruit!

In other places in the Scriptures the fruit that God produces in our lives are good works. Take Galatians, chapter five, for example. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self control. Those fruits are virtues that produce good deeds. They are fruits in and of themselves and they produce other fruits, the good deeds that spring from love, joy, peace, patience, and all of the rest.

The fruit that Jesus zeroes in on in John, chapter 15, is prayer. When the words of Jesus remain in you and you remain in Jesus, ask whatever you want and it will happen for you. What is that you want? Well, you want whatever it is that anyone wants when the words of Jesus remain in them and they remain in Jesus. Whatever that is, is what you want. Ask whatever you want and it will happen for you. In this the Father of Jesus is glorified. That is to say when you ask and the Father in heaven does whatever you ask, the Father in heaven is glorified. The fruit that God and His Son, Jesus Christ, produce in you is prayer. It is in prayer that the Father in heaven is glorified. When He answers whatever you ask, He is glorified.

Now, two things. Both of them have to do with some habits of thinking that we have.

First of all, God does not listen to anybody. In other words He does not make the promise to just anybody that whatever they ask will happen for them. He makes that promise to those for whom the word of Jesus remains in them and they remain in Jesus. God does not answer just anybody.

Under the influence of egalitarianism we have been tempted to believe that God will answer just anybody. No, He won't. The promise to do whatever we ask for is not given to everyone. It is given to those in whom the words of Jesus remain and He remains in them.

Now, you could argue that a person is not going to pray unless the words of Jesus have come to him and remain in him and he remains in Jesus. That is a valid way of thinking. But even if it were true, that everyone who approached God in prayer did so because the words of Jesus remained in them and they remained in Jesus that would not mean that God the Father answers just everyone. It would still mean that He answers only those in whom the words of Jesus remain and they remain in Jesus.

There are people who believe that they are praying in whom the words of Jesus do not remain and they do not remain in Jesus. Their requests will not be granted. They will not glorify the Father in heaven. The fruit of prayer glorifies the Father in heaven. Anyone who wants to glorify the Father in heaven will listen to the words of the Son of the Father in heaven. Don't listen to the Son and why should the Father in heaven listen to you?

Secondly, the answer to prayer is what glorifies the Father.

If there is something about which a person who has the words of Jesus in them wants to pray and they pray for it and the Father gives it, then the Father is glorified because it is the Father who gives it. When a person who has the words of Jesus in them prays for something it is obvious to others that He is

praying to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has the words of Jesus in him. He is praying to the Father of Jesus. He would not be praying to anyone else. Then when the Father does what the person who has the words of Jesus in them asks for, then there is no one to thank except the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When there is no one to thank except the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to thank, then the Father of Jesus is glorified. The fruit of remaining in Jesus is prayer and prayers glorify the Father of Jesus.

Suppose you prayed for someone who is sick and the sick person got better. The only reason the sick person got better was because you prayed for them. The reason that you prayed for them is because the words of Jesus remain in you and you remain in Jesus. Therefore the sick person got better because of what Jesus did for you. The Father listens to those who have the words of Jesus in them. Therefore it was the Father of Jesus who answered the prayer and healed the sick person in response to the prayer. Therefore only the Father in heaven can take credit for the healing that the sick person received. Therefore the Father is glorified. That is how the Father is glorified when you ask for whatever you want and it happens.

This brings us to the "power of prayer." This is a phrase that I hear a lot of Christians using these days. There is nothing wrong with the phrase in and of itself. But I am curious why a bunch of people who have the words of Jesus remaining in them and they remain in Jesus would use this phrase and not something like, "the power of the Father."

I think that when many of us say, "the power of prayer," what we really mean is "the power of the Father." If that is the case, why not just say, "the power of the Father"? When someone sick for whom you have been praying gets better, we sometimes say, "It's the power of prayer." What we mean by that is that our Father in heaven gave a favorable answer to our prayers. If that is the case why not simply thank the Father in heaven? In other words when someone for whom you have been praying gets better, why not say, "Our Father in heaven is merciful and kind," or "It is the power of our Father in heaven that made this man better"? Would not those statements bring more glory to the Father than simply saying, "the power of prayer" or "I believe in the power of prayer." If you use the statement, "the power of prayer" around unbelievers, are they going to know that you mean the power of your Father in heaven or will they suppose that you believe in the power of your own prayers as if your efforts are what made the sick person well and not the blessings of our Father in heaven? Are we talking about "the power of prayer" so that we don't have to talk about our Father in heaven because talking about our Father in heaven is uncomfortable? If it is, why is it uncomfortable? Are we ashamed of our Father in heaven and so we focus on our prayers instead of focusing on Him? Consider your own hearts in this matter and think about it the next time you use the phrase, "the power of prayer." What do you really mean by that? And if what you mean by that is salutary do the people around you really know that is what you mean by that? There are so many unbelievers these days that it is hard telling that they can even figure out what you mean by that. It is best in glorifying the Father to be plain and give thanks to Him.

So when you are praying for a sick person and the sick person gets better remember to glorify your Father in heaven in front of people so that they know the source of healing and look to the Father for healing themselves. In this way they will glorify the Father as well and the glory of the Father will increase. You will bear good fruit.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.