

Devotion for the Fourth Wednesday of Easter

Psalm 50:1-15

The Mighty One, God, the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets.

From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth.

Our God comes and will not be silent; a fire devours before Him, and around Him a tempest rages.

He summons the heavens above, and the earth, that He may judge His people.

Gather to me my consecrated ones, who made covenant with me by sacrifice.

And the heavens proclaim His righteousness for God Himself is judge.

Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel and I will testify against you: I am God, your God.

I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, which are ever before me.

I have no need of a bull from your stall or of a goat from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.

If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?

Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you will honor me.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen

Old Testament Reading: Leviticus 16:1-24 *The Day of Atonement*

New Testament Reading: John 15:1-27 *The Vine, The Holy Spirit*

The Lord's Vineyard

God is very big on vineyards. The house of Israel was described as the Lord's vineyard. He wanted it to produce the sweet grapes of faith and faithfulness and the good wine of love and compassion, but instead it produced the sour grapes of sin and disobedience and as a result was forced to drink the bitter wine of punishment. God wants us to produce the sweet wine of compassion, love and faithfulness. By this we show ourselves to be Jesus' disciples.

We produce the fruit of salvation through our relationship with Jesus. Jesus is our connection to the Father. We live with God only through our relationship with Jesus. Through Jesus we receive the Holy Spirit and the spiritual blessings of forgiveness, healing and peace. Through Jesus we receive the individual gifts and talents that we might serve God. God both gives us the abilities and the opportunities to serve Him. He is the vine. We are the branches.

The branches are the means by which the vine extends itself. Through believers Christ reaches out into the world that He may draw more people to Himself through faith and bring them to His Father in peace. Since His return to heavenly glory, Jesus is present to the world through the church. Jesus is present to the church through His word, through the sacraments and through the fellowship of the body of believers. We are the branches through which Jesus reaches out to the world. We are the branches through which He supports each part of the body of believers.

Jesus wants us to bear the fruit of good works, as much as a vine-dresser wants the branches to produce an abundant harvest of good grapes. To this end He blesses us with the Holy Spirit who connects to Him through faith and empowers us to service with His gifts that we might produce much fruit. This fruit is the produce of thankful hearts. This fruit is faithfulness to His commands, faithfulness to His word, love for fellow believers and faithfulness in sharing the faith with other people.

"HARK, THE VOICE OF JESUS CRYING" (Public Domain)

Hark, the voice of Jesus crying, "Who will go and work today?"

Fields are white and harvests waiting—Who will bear the sheaves away?"

Loud and long the Master calleth: Rich reward He offers thee.

Who will answer gladly saying, "Here am I, send me, send me?"

**If you cannot speak like angels, If you cannot preach like Paul,
You can tell the love of Jesus, You can say He died for all.
If you cannot rouse the wicked with the judgement's dread alarms,
You can lead the little children to the Saviour's waiting arms.**

**If you cannot be a watchman, standing high on Zion's wall,
pointing out the path to heaven, offering life and peace to all,
with your prayers and with your bounties you can do what God commands;
You can be like faithful Aaron, holding up the prophet's hands.**

**Let none hear you idly saying, "There is nothing I can do,"
while the multitudes are dying and the Master calls for you.
Take the task he gives you gladly, let his work your pleasure be;
Answer quickly when he calleth, "Here am I, send me, send me!"**

Prayer: ATTRIBUTED TO FRANCIS OF ASSIS

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is discord, union;
Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light; Where there is sadness, joy;
Grant that we may not so much seek To be consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand; To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life!

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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 and the power and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen**

The Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Benediction

Psalm 85:10

"Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky."

Conclusion: The more fruit a branch produces the more it is established on the vine. Producing fruit strengthens our faith and binds us more closely to Christ our Saviour.