

Bearing Fruit

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HOLY FAITH EPISCOPAL CHURCH
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PRAYER:

Father we ask for Your anointing on us this morning. Place Your anointing on me as Your messenger today. You have called us to bear much fruit, but the sad truth is that many Christians are not bearing any fruit. Teach us today that we are your friends and, as your friends, we need to be bearing fruit. Show us, through Your Word, how to accomplish this. Open our eyes so that we may see Your Word. Open our ears so that we may hear Your Word. Open our minds so that we may understand Your Word. Open our hearts so that we may receive Your Word today.

AMEN

One of the most powerful prayers in the midst of suffering that has been written was uncovered from the horrors of Ravensbruck concentration camp. Ravensbruck was a concentration camp built in 1939 for women. Over 90,000 women and children perished in Ravensbruck, murdered by the Nazis. Corrie Ten Boom, who wrote *The Hiding Place*, was also imprisoned there. The prayer, found in the clothing of a dead child, says:

“O Lord, remember not only the men and woman of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all of the suffering they have inflicted upon us: Instead remember the fruits we have borne because of this suffering, our fellowship, our loyalty to one another, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart that has grown from this trouble. When our persecutors come to be judged by you, let all of these fruits that we have borne be their forgiveness.”

What a powerful prayer of forgiveness and what a profound way to think of the meaning of

suffering! This anonymous child and all the women in that concentration camp had borne the fruit which their suffering had produced. It is remarkable that this child in the midst of her deepest suffering, at a time when her body was failing for lack of food, nutrition, showers, and physical abuse inflicted by the Nazis, that she would ask God, through prayer, to forgive those who imprisoned her, who mistreated her, who abused her, and who rejected her.

How many of us would have the courage to go to the throne of God in prayer and ask the Lord, from deep inside of our hearts, to forgive those who have caused pain and suffering in our lives? Our first reaction is to seek revenge, and to ask God to inflict suffering upon that person or to even cause that person's death.

I don't know when this child wrote this prayer that was found in her clothing. Perhaps she wrote it months before she died and used it to build up her faith in God, to gain strength to face the days ahead, or to obtain courage to live one more day. Perhaps this lovely child wrote this prayer a few hours before she died to express to others, to us, what was in her heart before she took her last breath. But the fact of the matter is that it is not important to know when she wrote this prayer or the motive behind its composition, what's important is the fact that this child left behind a powerful and heartfelt prayer that teaches us the kind of Christian life Jesus wants us to live.

Listen once again to a portion of this child's prayer: "But do not remember all of the suffering they have inflicted upon us: Instead remember the fruits we have borne because of this suffering..." The fruits that came out of the suffering were fellowship, loyalty to one another, humility, courage, generosity and greatness of heart. All these are the fruit of the trouble this child and all the women in that concentration camp endured during the holocaust.

In his letter to the Galatians Paul says in 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control." Are we allowing the Holy Spirit to produce this kind of spiritual fruit in our hearts? Are we manifesting God's love to one another? Is the joy of Christ's salvation in our hearts? Do you trust Jesus enough to take care of your situation so that you can enjoy His peace and be a peacemaker among his people? Are you producing fruit for Christ?

Luke tells us 13:1-9 that Jesus shared the parable of the fig tree with his disciples. In this parable our Lord Jesus Christ made a strong point, which is, that every tree that does not produce fruit will be cut off. He said that for three years the owner of the vineyard came looking for fruit and did not find any. You see, the owner of the vineyard in this parable is God, the gardener is Jesus who intervenes for us, and the fig tree is the church, not the building, but you and me. So here is the question, what kind of fruit has Holy Faith produced in the past three years?

If God, who is the owner of this Church, comes today looking for fruits, would HE be able to find any? If God makes the decision to close this church because we were unable to produce the kind of Spiritual fruit he expects us to produce, would Holy Faith be missed? Would the people in Port Saint Lucie miss the church located at 6990 S. Federal Highway? Would Jesus say to His Father, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down?" Luke 13:8-9. I believe this is exactly what Jesus is saying to our Father in Heaven right now on our behalf.

Now, let's say that Jesus is giving Holy Faith one more year to produce the kind of fruit God expects us to produce, what shall we do? Here are a couple steps we need to take in order to produce the kind of fruit Jesus expects:

1. Surrendering.

- a. We need to surrender our lives to Christ. If we don't surrender more and more of our lives to Christ then we will not produce any fruit of the Spirit. In order to produce the kind of fruit Jesus wants, we must surrender our wills, ambitions, identities, and life.

2. Sharing.

- a. Some people say, "Well, I don't have anything to share," Today I am letting you know that you do have something to share with others. You have a story to share, a Savior to share, a life to

share. When we begin to share Jesus with others, the Lord will see that this fig tree, known as Holy Faith, is producing fruit for His kingdom, and the result will be that there will be so many people coming to our church, we will have no room in this building to accommodate them.

3. Celebrating.

- a. When we celebrate Jesus in our hearts we produce fruit. We must learn to celebrate the God we claim to love. The worship we offer to Christ should always be a celebration, so that the fruit we produce in celebrating Jesus here at Holy Faith are fruits of joy and love!

4. Serving.

- a. Serving is the result of having accomplished the previous three: surrendering, sharing, and celebrating. Our passion will be to serve others when we are surrendered, when we are sharing Christ, and celebrating Him. Jesus served – that was His life. It ought to be ours as well.

Conclusion: Jeremiah Says in 17: 7-8

“Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. ⁸ They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.

Jesus says in John 15:16 ¹⁶ “You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.”

Church, we were not planted here to be a Christmas tree, decorated beautifully, with expensive ornaments and heirlooms; we are not here to look good in the eyes of all the people who drive by on US1. NO, we were planted to produce fruit for God’s kingdom and if we are not capable of producing, in a year, the kind of fruits that Jesus expects to find in this church when He comes,

then, Holy Faith will be cut off from Port Saint Lucie, from this Diocese, and from this world and the saddest part is that it will also be cut off from God's Kingdom. Jesus has already intervened for us this year, now it is up to each one of us to bear fruit---love, kindness, joy, peace, and faithfulness.

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