

**Living among the Bible's Trees:**  
**Good Trees Bearing Good Fruit, Bad Trees Bearing Bad Fruit**

Lent Midweek 5

April 1, 2020

**Greetings from Pastor**

I am praying that you all are safe and sound. I want you to know that we now have a Facebook account. You may find us at "Trinity Lutheran Church Taylorville Illinois." Messages and updates will be posted there during this time of uncertainty. Be patient as I am a novice at this and just discovering all that this social media offers.

God Bless and keep you all in His grace. And may the following Word of God keep you in the one true faith till we gather again or till we gather in the presence of Christ in His mansion.

**As We Gather**

The trees of the Bible help us realize why we need a Savior, how God provided a Savior for us in the person of Jesus Christ, and how the saved lives of repentant believers look. Today we consider how we are like the fruitless trees mentioned throughout the Bible. They cannot bear good fruit, for they are bad trees. Without God's re-creating us, we are no better than the "brood of vipers" who opposed our Lord. But the Word of God, our new birth in Holy Baptism, and the forgiveness coming in the Sacrament of the Altar changes us to be good trees. And thus we are able to produce the good fruit of the Spirit.

+ PREPARATION +

**Hymn** *Fruitful Trees, the Spirit's Sowing LSB 691*

- 1 Fruitful trees, the Spirit's sowing,  
May we ripen and increase,  
Fruit to life eternal growing,  
Rich in love and joy and peace.
- 2 Laden branches freely bearing  
Gifts the Giver loves to bless;  
Here is fruit that grows by sharing,  
Patience, kindness, gentleness.
- 3 Rooted deep in Christ our Master,  
Christ our pattern and our goal,  
Teach us, as the years fly faster,  
Goodness, faith, and self-control.
- 4 Fruitful trees, the Spirit's tending,  
May we grow till harvests cease;

Till we taste, in life unending,  
Heaven's love and joy and peace.

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### Invocation

P In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
C **Amen.**

### Opening Sentences

*Psalm 1:1–3; 96:12–13; Isaiah 61:1, 3*

P Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord.  
C **He is like a tree planted by streams of water.**

P The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; . . .  
C **that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord.**

P Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord,  
C **for He comes, for He comes to judge the earth.**

### Confession and Absolution

*Psalm 80:19; Isaiah 61:1, 3*

P Let us confess our sins to God, our heavenly Father.  
C **Heavenly Father, we confess that we are bound to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have “eaten forbidden fruit” in our thoughts, words, and deeds. We have not produced spiritual fruit in keeping with the new life You have won for us. For the sake of Jesus’ sacrifice on the tree of the cross, grant us Your forgiveness. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts! Let Your face shine, that we may be saved! Amen.**

P After His triumph over Satan’s temptations in the wilderness, Jesus went to the synagogue in Nazareth and announced that the prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled in Him. The prophet had written, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me . . . to grant to those who mourn in Zion . . . a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”

As a called and ordained servant of Christ I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

### Psalm

*Psalm 148; antiphon: v. 13*

P Let them praise the name of the Lord,  
for His name alone is exalted;

His majesty is above earth and heaven.

P Praise the Lord!

! *Praise the Lord from the heavens;*

@ *praise Him in the heights!*

! *Praise Him, all His angels;*

@ *praise Him, all His hosts!*

! *Praise Him, sun and moon,*

@ *praise Him, all you shining stars!*

! *Praise Him, you highest heavens,*

@ *and you waters above the heavens!*

P Let them praise the name of the Lord!

C **For He commanded and they were created.**

P And He established them forever and ever;

C **He gave a decree, and it shall not pass away.**

! *Praise the Lord from the earth,*

@ *you great sea creatures and all deeps,*

! *fire and hail, snow and mist,*

@ *stormy wind fulfilling His word!*

! *Mountains and all hills,*

@ *fruit trees and all cedars!*

! *Beasts and all livestock,*

@ *creeping things and flying birds!*

! *Kings of the earth and all peoples,*

@ *princes and all rulers of the earth!*

! *Young men and maidens together,*

@ *old men and children!*

C **Let them praise the name of the Lord,  
for His name alone is exalted;  
His majesty is above earth and heaven.**

P He has raised up a horn for His people,

C **praise for all His saints,**

**for the people of Israel who are near to Him.  
Praise the Lord!**

**Let them praise the name of the Lord,  
for His name alone is exalted;  
His majesty is above earth and heaven.**

### **Passion History Reading:**

#### **The Death of Jesus**

<sup>45</sup> Now from the sixth hour<sup>[f]</sup> there was darkness over all the land<sup>[g]</sup> until the ninth hour.<sup>[h]</sup> <sup>46</sup> And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” <sup>47</sup> And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” <sup>48</sup> And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. <sup>49</sup> But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” <sup>50</sup> And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

<sup>51</sup> And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup> The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, <sup>53</sup> and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. <sup>54</sup> When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son<sup>[i]</sup> of God!”

<sup>55</sup> There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, <sup>56</sup> among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

#### **Jesus Is Buried**

<sup>57</sup> When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. <sup>58</sup> He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. <sup>59</sup> And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud <sup>60</sup> and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. <sup>61</sup> Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

#### **The Guard at the Tomb**

<sup>62</sup> The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate <sup>63</sup> and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ <sup>64</sup> Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” <sup>65</sup> Pilate said to them, “You have a guard<sup>[j]</sup> of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” <sup>66</sup> So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

L O Lord, have mercy on us.  
C **Thanks be to God.**

**First Reading**

*Galatians 5:1, 13–25*

<sup>1</sup>For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

<sup>13</sup>For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup>For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>15</sup>But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

<sup>16</sup>But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

<sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. <sup>19</sup>Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup>envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup>And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

<sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

L O Lord, have mercy on us.  
C **Thanks be to God.**

**Second Reading**

*Matthew 7:15–20*

<sup>15</sup>[Jesus said:] “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

<sup>16</sup>You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup>So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup>A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.

<sup>19</sup>Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup>Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

L O Lord, have mercy on us.  
C **Thanks be to God.**

**Responsory**

*Isaiah 11:1, 10; 1 Peter 2:24*

P There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a Branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

C **Christ Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree,**

**that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.**

P In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—  
of Him shall the nations inquire, and His resting place shall be glorious.

C **Christ Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree,  
that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.**

P There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a Branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

C **Christ Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree,  
that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.**

### Sermon

#### *“Fruit Trees”*

Which one is not a fruit: apple, peaches, walnuts, peanuts or oranges? The answer is peanuts. All the others are considered fruit since they grow on trees. Walnuts are considered “dry fruit.” I didn’t know this. But it makes sense. One can recognize the tree by the fruit it bears and this is true of walnuts.

According to our reading from Matthew 7, we, Christians, want to continue to bear fruit in keeping with our faith in Christ Jesus. Yet, we find ourselves bearing fruit that indicates that we are diseased. There is a blight that infects the fruit we produce. When we desire to produce fruit such as trusting in God above all things, praying unceasingly, hold God’s word sacred, honor authority, befriend our neighbor, cherish our spouse, help others keep their property, speak well of others and encourage others to remain faithful, we find that we do the opposite.

This blight is our sinful nature. It is a nature that we inherited from our parents, and especially our first parents, Adam and Eve. It is a nature that is in opposition to the approach and even more so to the indwelling of God the Son and Holy Spirit in our hearts. It is a nature that delights in producing bad fruit.

But we hate this fruit. Why? This hatred toward sin is but one of the fruits which the Holy Spirit produces within us. Now I am using the plural of fruit to indicate a number of different good works the Holy Spirit produces. There is the fruit of the Spirit which all believers possess, such as love, joy, peace, love and forgiveness. But back to the fruit that people see when they look at us.

We desire to produce fruit in keeping with the Spirit as before mentioned. This is good and right in the sight of God. Yet, it is important that we recognize and confess our limitation and our utter inability to change the type of tree we are, diseased and dead.

If we do not recognize this, we will drive ourselves to despair or worse, arrogant self-righteousness. The latter is a greater danger. Self-righteousness does not see the need for help from anyone else. Despair can lead us to cry out for help.

When we acknowledge the truth we cannot change the type of tree we are, we are open to hear God's comforting words. It is by the Holy Spirit who makes you the type of tree God wants you to be, alive and bearing much good fruit.

This change that takes place within us is possible by another tree, the tree on which Christ died. It was upon the cross to which Christ carried our sin, our bad fruit along with the rotten wood of the tree. There He became the disease tree that needs to perish and be cast away. He became for us the tree that needs to be cut down and burned. He became for us the tree that would no longer produce good fruit.

In doing this for us, He, who rose from the dead, can now by the power of the Holy Spirit produce and declare our fruit good. The fruit that we by faith in Christ want to produce is acceptable to the Father because His Son was and is still today acceptable to Him. Christ is the good tree. Because of Him, we are considered good trees, trees that produce good fruit.

When we see the fruit of our sinful nature hanging around us, we go quickly to Christ and repent. "Forgive us, Lord, for fruit that is foul and rotten. Remove them from our lives. Quickly produce within us the peace and joy of your forgiveness which moves us to produce good fruit. And may that good fruit be seen by others to identify us as belonging to the tree of Life, Jesus Christ. "

Go, and in the grace of God continue to be trees which produce good fruit, looking always to Him as the one you made us to be good trees in His sight.

T AMEN T

**Series Hymn**

*Among the Bible's Trees*

Among the Bible's trees we live.  
How true they grow, as well they should.  
From them may we this Lententide  
Learn how our Lord died for our good.

The fruit we bear betrays our sin:  
Diseased within, we cannot love.  
We use our freedom as excuse  
And heed not prompting from above.

But by God's pow'r we are renewed,  
With fruit to share in ev'ry need  
And in sweet joy, peace, faithfulness  
A harvest raise to God indeed.

Lord Jesus Christ, God's only Son,  
Whose body hung on Calv'ry's Tree,  
O living Word, Your sacrifice

Pardon proclaims eternally.

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**Offering:** (*You may mail to, drop off or when we gather again in His Name at the church.*)

*Psalm 96:8–9*

- P Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name;  
C **bring an offering, and come into His courts!**  
P Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness;  
C **tremble before Him, all the earth!**

**Offertory**

*LSB 192*

- C **Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.  
Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free spirit.  
Amen.**

**Prayer of the Church**

- P Let us pray for the Church here and around the world, and for people everywhere in their various needs.

For everyone weighed down by their bondage to sin and an inability to stop sinning by thought, word, and deed, let us pray to the Lord.

- C **For the sake of Christ's sacrifice on the tree of the cross, heavenly Father, open their ears to hear the Gospel anew; free them to live before You in Your kingdom.**

- P For everyone who has fallen prey to society's distorted morality, let us pray to the Lord.

- C **For the sake of Christ's sacrifice on the tree of the cross, heavenly Father, surround them with faithful and caring members of the Body of Christ; call them back in repentance and hope.**

- P For those who keep the peace at home or are deployed abroad, for those who provide care and guidance in relationships, finances, and health, and for those who respond to natural disasters and crises of various sorts, let us pray to the Lord.

- C **For the sake of Christ's sacrifice on the tree of the cross, heavenly Father, accompany them with Your Holy Spirit; protect them from harm, and give them wisdom in all circumstances.**

- P For ourselves and the Church around the world as we seek to produce true spiritual fruit, let us pray to the Lord.

- C **For the sake of Christ's sacrifice on the tree of the cross, heavenly Father, assure us that we are Your pleasant planting; forgive our errors and send us to**



**serve in faithfulness and love.**

P These and any other things You would have us ask, heavenly Father, grant to us for the sake of the sufferings and death of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

**Lord's Prayer**

C **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.**

**Hymn** *“Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle” LSB 454*

- 1 Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle;  
Sing the ending of the fray.  
Now above the cross, the trophy,  
Sound the loud triumphant lay;  
Tell how Christ, the world's redeemer,  
As a victim won the day.
- 2 Tell how, when at length the fullness  
Of the appointed time was come,  
He, the Word, was born of woman,  
Left for us His Father's home,  
Blazed the path of true obedience,  
Shone as light amidst the gloom.
- 3 Thus, with thirty years accomplished,  
He went forth from Nazareth,  
Destined, dedicated, willing,  
Did His work, and met His death;  
Like a lamb He humbly yielded  
On the cross His dying breath.

4 Faithful cross, true sign of triumph,  
Be for all the noblest tree;  
None in foliage, none in blossom,  
None in fruit thine equal be;  
Symbol of the world's redemption,  
For the weight that hung on thee!

5 Unto God be praise and glory;  
To the Father and the Son,  
To the eternal Spirit honor  
Now and evermore be done;  
Praise and glory in the highest  
While the timeless ages run.

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### Collect from Sunday

P Let us pray.

Almighty God, by Your great goodness

C **mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved  
evermore in body and soul;**

P through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the  
Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

### Collect for Peace

P Let us pray.

O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, give  
to us, Your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be  
set to obey Your commandments

C **and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in  
peace and quietness;**

P through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the  
Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

### Benediction

P The blessing of God Almighty—who created you, forgave all your sins, and  
strengthens you for service in His kingdom—be upon you now and forever.

C **Amen.**

**Hymn** “*Abide with Me*” LSB 878

- 1 Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.  
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.
- 2 I need Thy presence ev’ry passing hour;  
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter’s pow’r?  
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?  
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.
- 3 Come not in terrors, as the King of kings,  
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings;  
Tears for all woes, a heart for ev’ry plea.  
Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me.
- 4 Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day;  
Earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away;  
Change and decay in all around I see;  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.
- 5 I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless;  
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.  
Where is death’s sting? Where, grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still if Thou abide with me!
- 6 Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;  
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.  
Heav’n’s morning breaks, and earth’s vain shadows flee;  
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

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**Dismissal**

- P Go in peace as you serve the Lord.  
C **Thanks be to God.**

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