

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity Sunday  
St. Matthew 7:15-23  
July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Augusta, GA  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Every Good Tree

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

### **Sermon Text:**

“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”

### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Whose mercies are new unto us every morning and Who, though we have in no wise deserved Thy goodness, dost abundantly provide for all our wants of body and soul: Give us, we pray Thee, Thy Holy Spirit, that we may heartily acknowledge Thy merciful goodness toward us, give thanks for all Thy benefits, and serve Thee in willing obedience; through, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Every good tree can only bear good fruit. Every bad tree can only bear bad fruit. Therefore, one can tell a good tree from a bad tree by its fruit. Every good tree bears good fruit because of its Root. A good tree has a good root. Every good tree has its Root from the stump of Jesse. The Root that forms from the stump of Jesse is the Son of God, the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. The Anointed One of the Lord God—the Messiah, the Christ—is the root of every good tree. If a tree does not have as its root the Lord + Jesus, it is a bad tree.

Our roots have been established by the Lord + Jesus. We are good trees because we hear the Word of the Lord in its truth and purity, and receive the Sacraments according to Christ’s institution. These things have been established for us by the Prophets and Apostles and Evangelists of the Old and New Testaments. The Prophets and Apostles and Evangelists all prophesied and preached about the Messiah. They all proclaimed the coming of the Root of Jesse. No prophecy or preaching produces good fruit if it does not point to the Christ, the Son of God. This is how we know a good tree, because of its fruit. The fruit that every good tree produces is from the preaching about the Christ. If preaching does not point to the Christ—to what He has done for us—it will only produce bad fruit.

This is how we tell the false prophets from the true prophets of the Lord God. For false prophets will point to everything but the Christ. Oh, they may give Him lip service—saying His Name every once in a while—but their entire message preaches something that is foreign to the teachings of the Apostles and Prophets and Evangelists. False prophets will give us all the philosophies and ideals of the world. They will proclaim a bunch of self-help mumbo jumbo. They will tell you how to be a better person. Or

give you a motivational speech. They will encourage you in all the ways of the world; to make friends, influence people, become rich and famous. The false prophets will give you only ways in which to improve your lives in this world. They will not preach about sin. They will not preach about death. They will not even proclaim the resurrection of the dead, or the life of the world to come.

They live in this world, and consider this world to be the beginning and end of the purpose of the Church. Such preaching only produces bad fruit. Why? Because such preaching is anthropocentric. It is centered on man; it is centered on this world. Such preaching causes people to look at themselves and examine themselves not as poor, miserable sinners who deserve death on account of their manifold sins and trespasses, but rather as patients in therapy who only need to repair one or maybe two bad traits about themselves for them to live better lives in this world. This is bad fruit because it corrupts people into thinking that they can save themselves by just being a better person. This is bad fruit because it does not allow sinners the chance to repent of their sins. They are only allowed to look inwardly and judge themselves worthy because of their good traits.

Every bad tree will be cut down and thrown into the fire, our Lord + Jesus says in today's Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. Bad trees do not get a pass. They are not looked over and determined that there might be some redeeming quality in them if only some small tweaking took place. No, bad trees are destroyed in fire. This alone should tell us the seriousness of this business of good and bad trees. That bad trees are destroyed by being cut down and thrown into the fire should wake us up to the fact that what preaching we hear is important. What goes into our ears can lead to life or death. Therefore, beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing.

False prophets wear sheep's clothing because they come pretending to be your friend; they come pretending to give you good things. They preach what you want to hear. They pump you up and tell you how good of a person you are. They point out all the things that your sinful nature wants to hear so you are drawn away by their preaching. It makes you feel good about yourself. But our Lord + Jesus tells us that such false prophets are really ravening wolves. They destroy the sheep. They create trees with bad fruit. They lead people into Hell. They keep those who listen to them away from the gates of Heaven.

True prophets and preachers proclaim into our ears the things we do not necessarily want to hear. Who really wants to hear that he is a poor unworthy sinner? Who wants to hear that he is deserving only of death and Hell? But every good tree in order to bear good fruit must hear about these things, for in hearing about these things we establish a good root. Every bad tree establishes its root upon its own works and abilities. Every good tree has its root from the stump of Jesse. Every good tree has as its root the works and merits of the Christ. Our foundation is grounded in the Root Who is the Lord + Jesus.

Any preacher who does not point you to the Christ is a false preacher, and should be marked and avoided at all cost. The Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists all preached into their listeners ears the coming of the Savior of the world, the Christ of the Lord. The Old Testament prophets prophesied about the Savior Who would come into this world and redeem mankind from all their sins and trespasses. The New Testament Apostles and Evangelists preached about the Christ Who had already come down from Heaven to take upon Himself our flesh. They preached about the Son of God, Who was the Lord + Jesus, Who dwelt among us in order that He might fulfill perfectly the whole will and Law of God. They preached about the Redeemer of the world Who suffered and died on the tree of the holy cross, and Who rose again from the dead on the third day as a testimony to the justification of all those who cling to Him in faith.

Therefore, my dear friends, beware of false prophets who would give you only your works and abilities, for these things cannot save you. Your works only produce bad fruit. Your works make you a

bad tree. Every bad tree will be hewn down and thrown into the fire. Listen instead to those preachers who proclaim into your ears only the Christ, the Son of God, the Rood of the stump of Jesse, Who came to redeem us all from sin and death. He gave His life for us as a ransom so that we might have eternal life with Him in Heaven.

For every good tree has as its root the good and gracious works and merits of the Christ. Every good tree is grounded in the Savior of the world. If our roots are not established in the works and merits of the Christ, we produce only bad fruit. Every good tree is grown from the Root of the Son of the Lord God. We have our life and being because of what the Lord + Jesus has done for us. He made a cutting of Himself and grafted us into Him. He joined us to Him so that we grow and have our life from Him. For He does not desire our destruction. He does not want us to be hewn down and cast into the eternal fires. He wants us to be and remain with Him in Heaven for all eternity.

This is why He has placed us into the Vineyard of the Church. Here in this garden of the Church, He tends and prunes us with the preaching of the Law—that we are full of sin and deserving of death and damnation—and He nurtures and waters us with the good news of the holy Gospel—that He has fulfilled the Law on our behalf and suffered our punishment on the tree of the holy cross. Here in this garden, we hear the pure preaching of the Word of God and receive the Sacraments according to the Christ's institution. Through these means every good tree is nurtured and cared for, and produces the good fruit of faith in the Christ alone.

Every bad tree produces only the fruit of unbelief, for a belief in one's own works and abilities; a belief that tweaking one's behavior will produce good fruit is only the lies of those wolves in sheep's clothing. Such preaching only leads to destruction and fire.

My dear friends, listen rather to the preaching of the Lord + Jesus from today's pericope from the Evangelist St. Matthew. Every good tree is a good tree because of its root. Every good tree has as its root the Son of Jesse—the Son of God—the Lord + Jesus, the Christ. He would have us trust in Him and His works and merits alone, and not look to our own working and striving. For He has already accomplished every good thing that we need to inherit eternal life. Cling in faith to Him. Cling in faith to His promise that in Him is life and salvation, and you will find for yourselves the good fruit of faith that leads you into eternal life with Him and all the saints and angels. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

#### **Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

#### **The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*