

The Festival of St. Laurence, Deacon and Martyr
St. John 12:24-26
August 10th, 2025
St. Titus Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Athens, GA
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Michael and All Angels Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Augusta, GA
Pastor Jerald P. Dulas

If It Die, It Beareth Much Fruit

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, ‘Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.’”

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

My dear friends, today’s Propers, at least the readings, all mention the planting of seeds. Our Lord + Jesus in the Gospel today from St. John, and St. Paul in the Epistle, are not just given advice on how to grow things. They are not simply sharing their thoughts on farming and gardening. Indeed, for our Lord + Jesus, this conversation that He is having with His Apostles Philip and Andrew takes place during the week before His crucifixion and death. When He talks about a seed going into the ground and dying, He is talking about Himself. He is talking about His own death.

His death produces much life! It beareth much fruit. He is telling Sts. Andrew and Philip that He will be glorified in His death, for His death will destroy death. His death will bring life and immortality to all those who cling to Him in faith; all those who trust in Him to bring them out of death into eternal life. This is the difference between a seed that goes into the ground and all those who die confessing their faith in the Lord + Jesus. When a seed goes into the ground, as our Lord says, it dies. But in its death, it raised again. It sprouts and grows into a plant, bearing, as St. Paul writes in his Second Epistle to the Church at Corinth, bread for food. But in order for a grain of wheat or barley to produce bread for food, after it has grown into a plant, it must once again die. Wheat or barley or other grains are harvested after the plant has turned from green to brown; after it has died once again. Its life is cut short in order to provide bread for food.

This is not so for we who cling in faith to our Lord + Jesus, and His works and merits on our behalf. When we die and go into the ground, we are immediately united with our Lord in Heaven. On the Last Day, our Lord will once again raise up our bodies and give us new and glorious bodies which we will have for all of eternity. Unlike the grain of wheat which lives and then dies and becomes bread, we will in our glorified bodies live forever and ever, world without end. This is why our Lord + Jesus

says today that the grain of wheat that dies, beareth much fruit. His death produces the fruit of eternal life. For His death atones for the sins of all the world, so that all those that cling to Him in faith, will live with Him forever.

This is the hope that St. Laurence, the Deacon and Martyr, clung to as he was tortured to death. He was placed upon a grill that had hot coals placed under it. According to legend, St. Laurence joked with his torturers, "I am done on this side, you can turn me over now." Regardless of whether it is true or not, St. Laurence recognized that there is a life to come after this one. We have the account from St. Ambrose that records the events that led up to his martyrdom. In August of 258 AD, the Emperor Valerian made a decree that all bishops, priests, and deacons in Rome should be put to death immediately. The bishop of Rome, Sixtus II, was killed while conducting the liturgy in a cemetery. Since St. Laurence was the Archdeacon of Rome, that is, the assistant to the bishop, Emperor Valerian ordered him to turn over all of the treasures of the church. According to St. Ambrose, he requested three days to gather all the treasures, which he was granted.

On the third day, he led in procession to the Prefect all of the poor, blind, and lame individuals of the Church at Rome. These were the treasures of the Church, he proclaimed. He said, "Here are the treasures of the Church. You see, the Church is truly rich, far richer than your emperor!" This angered the Prefect so much that he had St. Laurence grilled to death over hot coals. In his actions, we can learn about faith. He did not fear the rulers of his day. He did not fear death. There was already a decree demanding his death, and yet he still was bold enough to proclaim in his actions that the true Church is not found in material things, but in the people who despite their situations cling in faith to the Lord + Jesus.

They hold fast to the Lord for they have heard from Him, and from the Apostles, that in Him is eternal life and salvation. In Him is life and forgiveness. In Him the dead do not stay dead, but are raised again into eternal life. This is the promise that we have. This is the promise preached to all those who hear about our Lord's death and burial. A grain of wheat may go into the ground and die, but if it does it beareth much fruit. Our Lord + Jesus went into the grave and beareth the fruit of everlasting life.

We have this promise preached to us in the Word of God. But this promise is also sealed upon us, first in Holy Baptism, wherein we are buried with the Christ in His death. Just as He went into the ground and was raised again, just as He was crucified for the sin of mankind. We too, in our Holy Baptism, have crucified the flesh of sin. The Old Adam in us, by Holy Baptism, is drowned and killed. He is dead, the penalty that we deserve has been paid. Therefore, just as our Lord + Jesus raised Himself from the dead, we who are clothed in His righteousness, the righteousness that He won by His suffering and dying for sins He did not commit, will also be raised again from the dead.

This is why we can daily take comfort in our Holy Baptisms, why when we make the sign of the holy cross it is not just an action of our hands, but it is physical reminder that we have been joined to the suffering and death of our Lord + Jesus by the waters of Holy Baptism. When we make the sign of the holy cross, we are declaring that we have been baptized, that is, that we have been crucified with the Christ, we have been buried with the Christ, and we have been raised again from the death of sin with the Christ. It is a sign and seal of our condition. That like the grain of wheat that goes into the ground and dies, it lives again and beareth much fruit. We beareth the fruit of faith, and faith leads us into eternal life.

There we will joined together will all those who have gone before us, dying in the faith, like St. Laurence, and all the martyrs. They have all been dead and buried, and have been brought into the heavenly realm to be with our Lord and Savior forever and ever. On the Last Day, all the dead will be raised and those who died in the faith of our Lord + Jesus will join Him in Heaven with the new and

glorious bodies which He will give to us.

We have a memorial to remind us of this every time we gather and receive from Him His true and substantial Body and Blood, in, with, and under bread and wine. In the Lord's Supper, in the Mass, we again have a sign and seal that we are in Christ. We dwelleth in Christ, therefore, He dwelleth in us. This is true because like St. Laurence, and all the saints and martyrs, we who are poor, miserable sinners hunger and thirst after the righteousness only found in Him. In this meal, He gives us the remission of our sins. We hunger and thirst for it. It is the food of our souls. It is the bread of life for us eaters. For though in the midst of life we be, snares of death surround us. These snares are the result of sin totally corrupting our nature. Sin adheres to us until we are buried in the ground, and these bodies corrupted with sin will be destroyed.

But by our death we will be brought into the eternal heavenly realm to live with our Lord and Savior + Jesus, the Christ, forever. We will be reunited with all the saints and martyrs, with St. Laurence, and all our friends, family, and fellow believers in Christ, who suffered with sin and death in this life, but now will live free from sin and death for all eternity. This is our hope. This is the reason why we can cling in faith to our Lord + Jesus, because like St. Laurence who knew that this life will pass away, so that no matter what happens to this body does not matter, we know that there is a life to come, which will not pass away. For our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, has died and gone into the ground, and after three days, was raised to life again, so that He grants life again to all those who believe on Him.

Therefore, my dear friends in Christ, let us not fear death. Let us cast off the worries of this life and look to the life of the world to come, just like St. Laurence. For we will all die and be buried, but our Lord + Jesus will raise us up from the dead on the Last Day, and we will live with Him forever and ever, world without end. 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 the 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!