

Bear Much Fruit

5th Week of Easter – John 15:1-8

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit.”

Vineyards have become very popular in the rich and fertile soil of Iowa. Driving across the state, the expansion and popularity of this industry is evident. The vineyard growers of Jesus' time would not have had the modern and systematic cultivation that are in place on the hillsides of Iowa. Nonetheless, the goal was the same....bear much fruit.

So it is not surprising that Jesus uses this image for his discourse on nature of discipleship this week. Cultivation of the vineyard was the work of many. Jesus saw the work of the gospel as having the same dimension. The gospel is to be spread through the on-going work of the communal and divinely-grounded nature of his community of disciples.

As his disciples, we must be rooted in Jesus for our faith to bear fruit. We cannot carry on the gospel by our own will and determination. It takes divine grace and grounding for us to accomplish the work that is set forth for us in our baptismal call to proclaim the Mission of Christ to the ends of the earth.

So what does Jesus mean for us to bear fruit? Interestingly, the fruit that Jesus is talking about is not about our success or our personal ambition and gain. This is not the gospel of prosperity where those who are faithful received financial security. Rather, the fruit Jesus is referring to is the proclamation of the gospel. We are called to be the witness of Jesus as the one true Master, the one true Vine.

“Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into the fire and they will be burned.” This seems like a harsh and unrelenting punishment from a loving and gentle Jesus. However, Jesus is challenging us to realize that we do nothing on our own. To believe in our own personal accomplishments will end in our own destruction. This is because our true calling is to glorify God, not ourselves.

“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.” The goal Jesus announced to his disciples is the same goal for us. As his followers, we are to bear much fruit!

Happy Easter!


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