

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church

Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz

Confirmation, Easter 5 May 6, 2012 John 15:1-8



"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

Thomas Austin "Amarillo Slim" Preston Jr. died last Sunday. Amarillo Slim called himself the world's greatest gambler! Amarillo Slim once won the world's poker championship. I don't know much about playing poker – but I think it's fun to watch. I like how they take a two stack of poker chips – and slide them together into one – and then pull them apart into two stacks again – and then back into one. I like how they peek at their cards – then in a moment know whether to fold or call or raise. I like when they are all in – pushing this huge clump of stacks of chips to the middle of the table. I like how they sit there – absolutely expressionless – and at the same watch for the other guy's tell – that almost imperceptible move – a movement of an eyebrow – or the fast blink of an eye – or the twitch of the corner of the mouth – a nervous tick of a single finger – that gives away a good hand or a bad hand or a bluff! Learn the other guy's tell – and you will go home with all his chips! Gambling! Some people gamble with cards or slot machines or roulette wheels. Some people gamble with their immortal soul – the highest stakes humanly possible! They gamble with eternity! Maybe there is no God – no final day of reckoning. Maybe – just maybe – when you die – that's it! It's the end – the forever pushing up the proverbial daisies! Maybe – just maybe there is a God – but he's going to judge our life on the basis of weighing our good and our bad behavior. And when on the scales – if the good we did outweighs our bad – even by the most narrow of slivers – we get to go to Heaven and not Hell. That's a gamble, too. The fact is – the Scriptural truth is – Jesus died on the cross to wash away all our sins. We are saved by grace through faith for Jesus' sake. It is because we are saved by Jesus' suffering and death on our behalf we can talk about living our faith. This Confirmation Sunday Jesus talks about our faith in action. God's Word says:

Jesus Is The true Vine

- 1. Remain connected to Jesus**
- 2. Bear fruit that glorifies Jesus**

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on – part of the very important things Jesus said on his way from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane. This year we are reading from the ILCW – Inter Lutheran Commission on Worship – series B. This year we are reading from the Gospel of John 22 of the 52 Sundays – almost half of the Sundays of this year – 22 out of 52. Easter Dawn – and 6 of the 7 Sundays of Easter – Pentecost and Trinity Sunday – all the way to *Last Judgment, Saints Triumphant and Christ the King* – with Jesus' permission we will read from the eye witness account of the Gospel of John! John 14 – some of the most comforting words in all of Scripture. **"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house; otherwise, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going. "Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, I am the way – and the truth and the life!"** John 14:1-6

Jesus liked to say *I am*. Does that make you think of the LORD – all capital letters? The Great I AM – the one who changes not – the same yesterday and today and forever? Jesus said, **"I am the Good Shepherd."** Jesus said, **"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full!"** Jesus says here in chapter 15, **"I am the true vine,--the real deal – the genuine vine – not looking like a vine – but the real thing-- and my Father is the gardener – literally the one who tills the soil – cultivates the ground – pulling weeds and watering and fertilizing the vines – so they bear lots and lots of fruit!**

² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. Where there is faith – there are fruits of faith. No faith – no fruit! It's as simple as that. In the sermon on the grassy hillside Jesus said, **"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."** Matthew 7:15-20 Trees and vines that are unfruitful are good for nothing except to become firewood! Imagine the unquenchable flames that will be the forever torment – of those who die in their sins! Only the Holy Spirit – working through the means of grace – enables us to bear fruits of faith – that give glory to our Savior! The apostle Paul wrote to the people in present day Turkey – **the acts of the sinful nature are obvious – sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;--God's gift of "hugs and kisses" perverted and abused – idolatry and witchcraft – the dark arts – the mediums and psychics – Satanism and the voodoo of Haiti – then sins of fighting – hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy;--drunkenness – the abuse of alcohol and drugs and tobacco – orgies and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**

⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. *Remain in Jesus – His word remains in you—then ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you!* It's all because of Jesus' blood. Did you hear about Oetzi—the man who was found in a glacier in Italy some years ago? Oetzi—some 46 years old—arthritic with some very serious gastro-intestinal issues—was apparently murdered—shot in the back with an arrow—some 5,000 years ago—then preserved in a whole mountainside of ice! The answers—they say—are to be found in the smallest samples of blood. Again and again—it boils down to the blood! The whole question of whether Oetzi died right away—or after several days—can be answered in light of the blood at the site of the wound! Jesus' blood—shed on a Roman cross—just outside the city walls of Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago—paid for the sins of Oetzi and your sins and my painful failures! The more we read our Bible—come to Church—study God's Word in Bible Class—have family devotions—talk about Jesus in our day to day life—the more connected we will be! Our faith will grow. We will bear more and more fruit!

It is tempting to think of today as a kind of graduation. Last night we asked you all kind of questions as we reviewed. Today you wear a gown—and walk in as a class—and get a certificate and gifts from your family and people who love you. The fact is—it's not a question of being smart enough to be confirmed—to come to Lord's Supper next Sunday. One of my roommates at Northwestern College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary had a confirmation student who was such a good memorizer—he memorized the six chief parts. He memorized the *Ten Commandments, The Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, the use of the Keys and Confession, the Sacrament of Holy Communion, the Nicene Creed, Luther's morning and evening prayers and the Table of Duties*. He memorized them all! Do you know the *Table of Duties*? It's all about the roles and responsibilities of **Husbands**—to be considerate of their wife—and to treat them with respect—the way you would be careful—not because they are weak or breakable—but because they are so precious—like the finest crystal! **Wives** love your husband the way Sarah loved her husband Abraham. **Fathers** don't exasperate your children—make your demands so impossible your children despair of ever pleasing you. **Children** obey your parents—in the Lord—that you may enjoy long life on the earth. **Employees**—obey your boss—not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve whole-heartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people! **Employers**—treat your workers in the same way. Don't threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in Heaven. **Young people**—be submissive to those who are older. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God opposed the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourself, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. And **widows**—who are in genuine need and left all alone—puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. Then the word **for all**—love your neighbor as yourself. This is the sum of all the commandments! Continue praying for everyone! This one student recited all that—from beginning to end. It took him almost 15 minutes—from the first commandment and what does this mean to love your neighbor as yourself. Wow! That was really something! The problem is—he doesn't come to Church any more! That's the danger—to stop reading your Bible—stop reading your Meditations—to stop coming to church and to stop coming to Lord's Supper! Only Jesus can

keep you faithful—and he will. Jesus is the Vine. You are the branches. He will enable you to make lots of grapes! Amen!

Pastor Anthony E. Schultz

