

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E.
Schultz**

October 9, 2016

**Pentecost 21. Eisenach Series
John 15:1-8**



15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 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. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain 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. ⁶ If 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. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This 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:

There is garbage everywhere! If you take the by-pass onto Highway 26 south of town there is a whole bunch of garbage in the ditch. Square yards of Styrofoam – in the ditch – along with plastic bags and crumpled papers. By my mail box are cigarette filters. Cigarette filters from down the street. If you just leave them – they will eventually wash down the street drain another

50 yards down the street. If they remain wedged in the cracks in the street they will “melt” in about 31 years. I will be going on 100 years old – by then! There are cardboard beer cases – full to overflowing with empty beer cans and paper soda cups from fast food restaurants. There are white kitchen garbage bags full of garbage – neatly fastened at the top and thrown into the ditch. It could be worse. In Beirut in Lebanon – they haven’t had garbage pickup since sometime in July. There are literally places where it looks like there was a blizzard – snow white bags of trash piled high – with bugs and mice and rats – and a horrible smell of rot and decay! How horrible is that?! As impossible as it is – for us to get rid of all the garbage – all the trash – all that is spoiled and rotten and ruined – it is even more impossible for us to get rid of all our sins. Only Jesus could do that – and only Jesus did! This is an essential aspect to why we come to Church. We come to Church to confess our sins – and to hear the priceless good news that Jesus took them all away. Part of Scriptural worship is to rightly divide – that is rightly discern Law and Gospel. Both! We don’t come to Church simply to be encouraged to be nice. The old Major Burns to Major Houlihan – *“It’s nice to be nice to the nice!”* First comes Justification – guilt and confession and forgiveness. Then comes Sanctification--putting our faith into practice. Then and only then – come fruits of faith. Today God’s Word encourages us:

Remain In Jesus

- 1. Planted**
- 2. Pruned and**
- 3. Productive!**

Context! When I was little I often wondered – why are there 4 Gospels? Why not just 1? Why are there 4 Gospels? Each Gospel has a different perspective! Each Gospel has a different emphasis.

All of them point to Christ crucified and risen. Do you know the differences? It's important! The Gospel of the tax collector Matthew begins with a genealogy. **"A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah whose mother was Tamar..."** Judah...part of Jesus' family tree. Judah...Jesus is called the Lion of Judah. What do you know about Judah? You can read about Judah in the book of Genesis – just after Joseph is sold by his brothers to Midianite slave traders and merchants. Then they took Joseph's coat of many colors – or a coat with big sleeves – a fancy and expensive coat – and tore it up and dipped it in goat's blood and told their aged father that some wild animal must have come and eaten Joseph. Then comes the sad chapter about Judah. Judah married a Canaanite woman named Shua and they had sons – sons named Er and Onan and Shelah. They did not fear, love and trust in the LORD above all things and their life reflected it. Er married a woman named Tamar. Er was wicked in the LORD's sight – so the LORD put him to death. Back in Old Testament times – if a man died – his brother would marry his widow and have children to keep his family name alive. Er's brother Onan was also wicked and the LORD put him to death. Judah didn't let his 3rd son Shelah marry Tamar – lest the LORD put him to death, too! What was Tamar to do? She pretended to be a woman selling "hugs and kisses." Her father-in-law Judah didn't recognize her – and offered to pay for "hugs and kisses". The price--a young goat. As a security deposit – Judah gave her his seal – his signet – on its cord and the staff in his hand. They had "hugs and kisses" and Judah went on to celebrate sheep shearing by Timnah. **About three months later Judah was told, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of**

prostitution and as a result she is now pregnant," Judah said, "Bring her out and have her burned to death!" As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law, "I am pregnant by the man who owns these," she said. And she added, "See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are." Judah recognized them and said, "She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn't give her to my son Shelah." And he did not sleep with her again. When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand, so the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his wrist and said, "This one came out first." But when he drew back his hand, his brother came out, and she said, "So this is how you have broken out!" And he was named Perez-(*which means breaking out*). Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out and he was given the name Zerah-(*which means scarlet or brightness*).

Matthew's Gospel begins with Jesus' family tree... Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah whose mother was Tamar..." Are we supposed to know this? It is part of God's Word – preserved for thousands of years. The Gospel of Matthew says again and again, "**Thus was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophets!**" People familiar with Old Testament Scripture would have rejoiced in the fulfillment recorded in Mathew.

The Gospel of Mark...is only 16 chapters long. It is very much to the point. In the Gospel of Mark Jesus called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "**If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his \dagger and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of me**

and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

The Gospel of the Physician Luke – for which our congregation is named – is different from Matthew and Mark. Luke was not one of the 12 disciples. Luke was not an eye-witness to all that Jesus began to do and to teach. Luke wrote, **"Many have undertaken to draw up on account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.** Luke – the physician was moved by the Holy Spirit to write about many of the miracles of healing Jesus performed. Luke also records many of the parables – the earthly stories with heavenly meanings – teaching stories about the Kingdom of God!

On the way from the upper room where they have just celebrated the Passover. From the upper room where Jesus established Lord's Supper – on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus will pray with such earnestness that his sweat would be dark with blood – Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God. Not a place – not a kingdom of taxes and roads and trade and armies – but His rule of forgiving love in our ♥s! Jesus said, **"15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 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."** Jesus is the Vine – we are the branches! We are connected to Him—every time we read our Bible or our Meditations or our Forward in Christ. We are connected to Jesus every

time we come to Lord's Supper—every time we come to Church to hear God's Word! We are connected to Jesus every time we come to Sunday School or Bible Class. Every time our children and grandchildren come to Trinity St. Luke's or Lakeside or Luther Prep or Martin Luther College or Wisconsin Lutheran College or Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary—where every single class is taught in the light of God's Word!

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 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. More fruits of faith. More love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control! These are sweet fruits of faith that only Jesus can cause to grow and increase – more and more and more and more in our ♥ and in our life! 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. ⁶ If 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.** Alive in Christ is to stay connected to Jesus – to grow and increase in love and action! Remain in Jesus and bear much fruit! There are opportunities the Lord Jesus provides – every day! You can be encouraged in your making grapes – through God's Word. Like reading *Meditations*! Did you read *Meditations* the last week in September? It was about the *Rich Man and Poor Lazarus*! What a powerful teachable moment – the rich man who wanted Lazarus to dip his finger in water – to cool his tongue – in the torment of Hell! The poor man who had the one thing needful – faith in his ♥ worked by the Holy Spirit – so he is in Heaven forever! Did you read *Meditations* last week? Jesus' disciples said to the Lord, **"Increase our faith!"** More faith comes through the Gospel – more of God's Word! At the bottom of each page of *Meditations* it

says in italics” Bible reading: Isaiah 49-53. You could do that! Isaiah 53, **⁴ Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.** Read just a few chapters of God’s Word – on your *Nook* or *Kindle* – and in 3 years you will have read your Bible cover to cover. This year for Christmas get a new Bible – a Holman Christian Standard Bible or a NASB or a 2011 NIV. And before you know it – the Evangelical Heritage Version – the Wartburg Project Bible will be available. What better way to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation – than to read your Bible! You can copy a verse on a recipe card and clip it to your visor in your car – and read it when you stop at intersections on the way to work – and memorize a whole bunch of Bible verses – each week. And that will make your life even more productive – in fruits of faith! And Jesus will be glorified!

Jesus said: ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. Love one another. Jesus said again and again, **“Everyone will know that you are my disciples – my students and followers and imitators – if you love one another!”** To love one another is to forgive one another. Last Sunday was the 10th anniversary of a man named Charles – 32

years old – who went into a one room Amish school. He tied up 10 little girls and shot them all. Five went home to Heaven and five were horribly wounded. Charles died that day, too. If you were a parent of one of those little girls – would you be able to forgive the man who took your little girl from you in such an inexcusable and horrible way? Would you be filled with a bitter anger against Charles’ Mom for raising such a son? One of the very first things the parents of those murder victims did – was seek out Charles’ mom to tell her, “We forgive your son and we forgive you!” How could they? Only because Jesus in their ♥ made them strong enough to forgive! The parents didn’t just say, “Oh, I forgive you!” They actually came and built a sun room onto Charles’ mom’s house--the *home* of Charles’ mom. And they literally painted above the sliding glass doors the word

Forgiven! It would be a struggle every single day – if you were the parent of a little girl who died – if you were the parent of a little girl who was wounded – and now suffers the physical, mental and emotional harm from your wounds! It would be a struggle that only the Holy Spirit could win. To stay each day – by grace alone – connected to Jesus – the vine – planted – pruned – productive to the glory of the crucified and risen Christ. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony P. Schutt

