John 15:16 16You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will endure

Right now is the time when a lot of people are concerning themselves with the planting of their gardens and when the farmers of our congregation, community and nation are working like wild to prepare and plant their fields. The whole purpose of this ritual of spring is so that in the summer and fall one might enjoy the fruits of the harvest, for either personal pleasure or for the market.

I fancy myself a gardener. I like to plant a garden and grow things, but this year it will be vastly scaled down. You will notice that two of my garden plots have been seeded with grass at this point. I have never been a fanatic about it, but enjoy the hobby in every way. I like to plant a garden because I feel one of the most fascinating things in the world is that little, wonderful seed that God has given us. That seed put into the ground and watered, sprouts, grows, and produces a harvest. That seed fascinates me because that seed, any seed, can and does provide a lesson for the Christian.

The lesson is provided from the fact that the seed, especially as the fruit of the plant, can function as a picture, a symbol or representation of the human being. Let’s consider the words of our text under the theme: **THE CHRISTIAN SEED.**

The first thing that we can realize about the seed is that basically the seed is the fruit or at least a part of the fruit of a plant. The purpose of the seed, or if you would, the fruit of a plant is that this seed pro-create its own kind, that is, as each seed grows its purpose is to become planted that it might grow into a plant that will once again produce fruit or a seed to grow another plant. The interesting part of all of this is that each seed produces only after its own kind. In other words, apples bear apples, wheat produces wheat and oaks produce oaks. There has never been an instance where, say, a walnut grows and produces a banana. Each kind produces after its own kind. That sounds simple but really it is a truth that cannot be overlooked.

Here’s another interesting fact about seeds. Did you know that in order for each seed to produce, that seed must first be the product of death? That’s right. Each seed is a product of death. The plant itself, in this case take wheat, in order to insure the future of the species via the seed needs to somehow die. The wheat grows, produces the seed head and then the plant dies, dropping the seed. The same with a corn plant. The plant must mature, produce ears and then literally dry up or die so that the ear will do the same. Once the seed is dry then it is ready for planting. The same is true of the apple, only in this case it is not the tree that dies but rather the fruit which contains the seed that dies in order for another apple tree to be started. I don’t know of any kind of seed that is fruitful without this process, for lack of a better word, which we will call “death” happening.

By and large plants are capable of surviving themselves, that is, the seed will fall and grow in a very natural cycle. The problem is that sin has become a part of our world and because of that this natural cycle sometimes isn’t the best for the seed. Now, as you can tell by the yards around here, this natural process doesn’t bother the dandelion at all, but then if you think about the corn or wheat seed it doesn’t function so well, naturally. The best thing for a seed, well for a large group of certain seeds, is that they be taken by a farmer or gardener and planted. The farmer will see to ground preparation, proper planting, weed control, fertilizing, and cultivation, not to mention the final harvest. Yes, seeds can survive by themselves but when it comes to the food crop, the good seed, the best seed, because of this world of sin, they never fare that well on their own.

The final consideration concerning seeds it this. There are good seeds and bad seeds. That is just what it implies. Now we could be really simple about this and only speak of the fact that good seed always grows and bad seed never produces anything. That is a type of “good” seed and “bad” seed. But for our purposes we really want to speak of another important factor. Our Lord and Savior has made it clear that there is good fruit and bad fruit when he said this of the false prophets in Matthew (7:15-19 sel): **“By their fruit you will recognize them…So then, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit…”** In this instance recognize that the nuance of the good fruit versus the bad fruit is the issue of edibility. There are certain fruits of this world we can eat and there are lots more fruits of this world that we can’t eat. What we mean is that they are poisonous to us on some level. They can cause sickness or they can even cause death. We need to grasp that there are good and bad fruits or seeds.

Now at this point you might want to ask, “What does all of this have to do with the Christian?” As I hinted before, the seed is an apt symbol or representation of the human. For instance, just as there are good fruits and bad fruits so there are good people and bad people. What we need to do is to determine what the difference is between the good fruit and the bad fruit, between the good person and the bad. And recognize that our most important viewpoint needs to be that of God’s Word rather than that of the world.

To begin, the bad seed might look exactly like the good seed, the bad fruit looks as edible as the good fruit. In other words, there isn’t some sort of visible evidence as to what a seed is. It is the same with humans. The way to tell if a seed or fruit is good or bad, and really the only way to tell, it by what the fruit or seed does. If planted and the seed sprouts and grows that is good seed. If planted and it does nothing that is bad seed. That’s the simplest lesson. In the world of fruits, if that fruit is eaten and it nourishes and supports life it is good but if that eaten fruit causes sickness and death, that is, bad fruit. (Remember in our modern world we have better ways of telling if a fruit is poisonous or not than by having someone eat and then see what happens, but in the ancient world that was pretty much the measure of things. Note that in many cases the ancient world survived on shared knowledge.)

Sound simple? When it comes down to God’s Word it is really laid out that simply. It is God’s Word that tells us that a person who doesn’t bear fruit or a person who bears bad fruit is an unbeliever. Our text is one that simply point this out to us when it says, **“I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit.”** Pretty straight forward. The Christian bears fruit, the Christian produces a harvest of righteousness, the Christian puts their faith into action and produces works of glory and honor to our Lord or produces fruit to the Lord.

Now I think all of us grasp what has just been said. We, as God’s children bear fruit to the glory of his name or we bear good works to the glory of God’s name. Perhaps we should review for ourselves just what God says a good work is. God’s Word describes the good work in this way. First, it is something that is done out of love for God. Second, it is something that is done according to God’s Word. Third, it is something that is the natural result of having a living faith. You can review this truth for yourself if you would just go to your Catechism and look under the section covering the Third Article and the fact that we are “Sanctified to go good works.” You will see all of these truths laid out there for you.

How else can the Christian be portrayed by this seed? Consider that the seed grows after its own kind. Scripture says to us, “**that which is flesh is flesh.”** When Adam and Eve sinned, from then on all humans were infected by that sin. Not just a minor flaw, but a terrible life altering disfigurement! By nature we are sinful. By nature we are dead to the wonders and blessings of God. We are the product of our first sinful parents and have been “after their kind” ever since.

Consider that all the more. Sin made Adam and Eve and all of us, spiritually dead. By nature we are dead to God. Things that are dead don’t do a whole lot. For that matter they don’t do anything and are quite incapable of doing anything, even incapable of thinking about doing anything. So it is when we are spiritually dead. God, however, takes that spiritually dead person and gives them life. He did that when he sent His Jesus into the world. Jesus came into this world to take the dead seed that existed and changed it to the good fruit bearing seed. That is what Jesus was doing on the cross, making us alive to God through the forgiveness of sins that comes by grace through faith.

Our text reflects that truth when it says, **“You did not chose me, but I chose you.”** We have no natural powers to choose God, for by nature we are dead to God and his wonders. We are like that seed. The seed as far as science can determine is dead. There is nothing in a seed that indicates life or that it will grow yet it does and I will tell you it does by the power and wonder of God. God has chosen us. As Ephesians 2 says, **“But God, because he is rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved!”**

God is to us what the farmer is to the seed. The farmer gets everything ready for the seed, plants and completely takes care of that seed. In His grace and mercy God has taken and planted all of us. Not only did He create us, He watches over us, provides for and protects us. God even sent His Son to die for all of us. We have been planted by God so that we might live. We are his wheat sprouted to produce a harvest to his glory. All of this is the work and compassion of God for us.

What kind of seed will we be? Think of the parables of Jesus. Will we be seed that is found in the weed patch? What will make the difference here is the power and wonder of God’s Word. God’s Word is kind of like the tools of the farmer. It is God’s Word that makes the ground ready and gives the ground its nutrients. It is God’s Word that cultivates us, weeds about us, and takes care of us in such a fashion that we will grow and bear the best of fruits for God. That’s why God gives us his Word, that we might beat fruit, **“fruit that will endure,”** that is, the fruit of eternal life and salvation.

But we can ignore God’s Word and get all wrapped up in the ways and attitudes of the world. That world is such that it works at and produces things that nullify the wonders of God or make you think that the wonders of God are not for you at all. God sows only the best of seed but remember that the enemy of God, Satan, sows weed in the field of God. That weed might be the cares and worries of this world. That weed might be the temptations to deny, despise and cast aside the life giving power of God’s Word. We get all wrapped up in things or wealth or gusto or happiness or whatever you want to call it. What I can tell you is if the devil, the world and our sinful flesh can destroy us, it will.

Now what I want you to know is that as I am talking to you today, in my mind, I am putting together a whole bunch of different passages that speak of seeds and fruit and faith and salvation. I think about the fig tree and how the gardener wants to give it another year of care and fertilizer to see if it will finally produce fruit, if not it would be cut down. Note that in that set of verses we never know the outcome, but it tells us of the care our God has for us in every way.

Or again think about the parable of the seeds. The seed snatched by the evil one. The seed that is on rocky ground is called the person who hears the word and rejoices in it, but he does not deeply root himself in the Word and soon withers away. There is the seed planted among the weeds, the cares and concern of life choke the wonder of Jesus out. In all of this Jesus is warning us to stay in Him.

How about the parable of the sower? God’s enemy again sows weeds among the wheat field. For our sake, God lets us grow together so that not a single stalk and head of wheat is lost. What a marvel that is. And I think there are a few other references we could make, but we are running out of time.

Our Savior calls us to bear fruit. We cannot bear fruit without him. Remember John 15 from last week? **“I am the vine, you are the branches. Apart from me you can do no good thing.”** We bear fruit by following, perhaps I should better say, by believing and trusting in the Word of God. By having that Word of God produce in us the fruits of glory and praise to God for his love and goodness to us. Remember verse 8 of John 15? It said, **“My Father is glorified by this; that you continue to bear much fruit and prove to be my disciples.”** There is the twofold nature of bearing fruit. We do so to the glory of God and we do so to help our very selves see that we are indeed God’s children and heirs of eternal life.

May you be the good seed. May you grow strong and true in the faith, nourished by the truth of and wonder of God’s Holy Word. May you bear much fruit, fruit that will endure, the fruit of faith in Jesus Christ our God, our Lord, our Savior who grants this fruit bearing gift. To God be all praise. Amen.