

POSSIBILITY PARABLES:

Passion Fruit I

April 3, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – *The Year of the Lord’s Favor* (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

As the world begins awakening from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “the year of the Lord’s favor” is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new *possibilities* with God this Lenten season and always.

Reflect on this Scripture: Luke 6:43-45

⁴³ *“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴ Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. ⁴⁵ A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.*

This Week: Luke 6:43-45

This parable is also found in a variety of contexts, biblical and extra-biblical. In Matthew in particular, this parable is related to the warning concerning false prophets. They will be known by their fruit. The metaphor of fruit for the character of one’s deeds is also found in the Old Testament (see Jer 17:10; 21:14). Luke does not relate the parable to the problem of false prophets, however. Instead, he speaks to the truth that what is required of a disciple is not cosmetic alteration, even removing a log from one’s eye, but a genuine goodness of heart. There is a consistency between who one is and what one does, the inner and the outer, the invisible and the visible. The former will inevitably be exposed by the latter. Discipleship, therefore, requires not just good deeds. It requires integrity and a purity of heart such as one sees in Jesus himself.

The basic parable is stated in vv. 43-44, a variation of Matt 7:16-17. The nature of the tree determines the quality of its fruit. Similarly, each plant bears its own kind of fruit; thorns do not bear figs, nor briars grapes. The parable then shifts through two variations. First, the corresponding elements of good person and good (deeds) are introduced, and the person becomes a storehouse of good or evil deeds. Then, the connection between heart and mouth is introduced at the end of v.45 (see also Mark 7:14-23; James 3 esp. vv. 10, 12, 13, 17). What we say is a reflection of who we are – i.e., what is in our heart. Or, as John Nolland put it, summing up the entire parable: “Whether one likes it or not, what one produces is finally a product of what one is.”

-Adapted from The New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary, IX, p. 151.

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Given Jesus’ tree analogy (*each tree is recognized by its own fruit*), what spiritual fruit do you need to produce most right now? (Perhaps think of the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control –Galatians 5:22-23).
2. Jesus remarks that grapes don’t come from an uncultivated briar patch. What spiritual ‘briars’ have you noticed in your own life these days?
3. How are you cultivating a more fruitful life? In other words, what spiritual disciplines are most helpful for you at this time (for example, John Wesley recommended prayer, Scripture reading, worship, Holy Communion, Christian community, fasting, works of mercy)?
4. Consider your last few days. How did you store up good in your heart (v. 45)? Did your conversations reflect the good that you stored up?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC
2. Prayerfully reflect about what you will do with your **Lenten Seed Gift** during this season. We invite you to let us know what you decided so we can celebrate the collective ‘harvest’ of grace on Easter Sunday!
3. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Luke 6:45 ⁴⁵ *A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.*