

Isaiah 49:1-7

“Did God Really Say?”

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

January 19, 2020

First Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.

Pastor Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

It’s kind of hard to hear with fruit stuck in your ears. Now, how do I know that? Have I ever had fruit stuck in my ears? I imagine you think that you have never had fruit stuck in your ears. But, I assure you, it’s in there, and it’s stuck.

Humankind has had fruit stuck in our ears for a long time. The serpent said to Eve, **“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”** (Genesis 3:1) **“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate”** (Genesis 3:6).

She stopped up her ears with it so that she couldn’t quite hear the Word of the Lord anymore. For God had said, **“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”** (Genesis 2:16-17).

But Eve heard, **“You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”** (Genesis 3:4-5).

Now, let’s not forget about Adam for he is the one ultimately to be blamed. For he should have stopped Eve, but he didn’t. Instead, he stuffed fruit in his ears, too. The serpent’s suggestion slipped in like an earworm out of one apple and settled in to command their consciousness. That is why to this very day, Adam and Eve’s offspring still ask one another: **“Did God really say?”**

[Did God Really Say: Part One]

Our text from Isaiah this morning has remained unchanged for centuries. Yet, plenty of voices continue asking: **“Did God really say?”**

Did God *really* say, “[He] called me from the womb”? (Isaiah 49:1b) “Did God *really* say that He “knitted me together in my mother’s womb”? (Psalm 139:13) Did God *really* say He “created [us] in His own image”? (Genesis 1:27)

Probably He meant: He “called me a parasite, a tumor, a clump of cells, a blob of tissue.” Or, He meant: “my body, my choice, a private medical decision,” didn’t He? Or possibly: “as soon as the baby forms memories, or whenever the baby reaches viability,” don’t you think? Or maybe: “as long as they planned for the child, as long as they can afford the child,” wouldn’t you agree? Or: “unless deformities and disabilities show up,” am I right?

And, did God *really* say, “a light for the nations”? God says: “*It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth*” (Isaiah 49:6).

Surely, He doesn’t mean that. He must mean: “a light for *most* of the nations” or “a light for *some* of the nations.” Perhaps He means: “a light for those who can communicate” or “a light for the prosperous ones.”

We have already filled every available space in our consciousness with the fruits of indulgence and luxury. We have already jammed our heads all these millennia up with the fruits of accumulating and uniformity.

It seems the fruit has made its way into our veins. In fact, you could say it’s slowly choking our very hearts. Did God *really* say: “*I kill and I make alive*”? (Deuteronomy 32:39)

You see, what we hear is: “we can use death as a solution to difficulty and distress.”

What makes more sense to our fruit-stuffed ears and hearts is: “Don’t legislate your morality”... and “Keep your religion to yourself.” What we prefer is: “As long as you’re not hurting anyone, do whatever makes you happy.”

What we’re quite sure God should have said is: “Love yourself, take care of yourself and accept yourself as you are.”

[Did God Really Say: Part Two]

With our fruit-stuffed ears, we ask did God *really* say: “***All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God***” (Romans 3:23) Did God *really* say: “***If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves***”? (1 John 1:8)

No, the problem must be ignorance, inequality, patriarchy, toxic masculinity!

Did God *really* say: “***Apart from me you can do nothing***”? (John 15:5) Did God *really* say: “***Slave to sin***” (John 8:34), “***dead in the trespasses and sins***” (Ephesians 2:1), and “***the wages of sin is death***”? (Romans 6:23)

Even with the fruit in our ears, we can hear the hearts breaking. Our eyes still can clearly behold the grief and guilt. Since January 22, 1973 with Roe v. Wade, abortion access hasn't solved any problems. Instead, it has multiplied suffering. And more recently, assisted suicide hasn't made any pain go away.

This trauma has raised rates of depression and caused relationship breakdowns.

All this has left is 1.5 billion human beings dead worldwide and more than 60 million Americans. Untold others walk among us wounded and haunted. None of these acts has spared one single soul from the misery and mortality that besets us all. Isn't it time that we take the fruit out and listen to God's Word?

[God Really Did Say...]

Now, God the Father has the perfect implement for getting the forbidden fruit out of our ears – His only begotten Son Jesus Christ.

You see, Jesus turns up the volume of what His fingers formed and His heart's will brought forth. He takes away the bad fruit and in turn, gives us His love.

God really did say “in and from the mother's womb.” The Son of God Himself inhabited the belly of the virgin Mary. Jesus was “***conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary***” (Apostles' Creed).

God created every human being in His image and after His likeness, you and me. Here, God means all humans – age, appearance and ability cannot impair our worth and purpose.

God really did say: “reconciling the world, the ends of the earth, all creation, and whole of mankind.” Jesus – as fully man – was like us in every way. Although He knew no sin, He took on our sin – every single sin of thought, word, and deed – big and little – *including abortion* – to “***make propitiation for the sins of the people***” (Hebrews 2:17). Jesus – the very Lamb of God – humbled Himself to the form of a servant and our human likeness, subject to death, “***even death on a cross***” (Philippians 2:7-8).

Jesus as fully man and fully God bled for our sin. He died for our sin. He paid for our sin. He did this, so that we would be declared justified, righteous, innocent and holy.

Jesus is the Lord of death and the Lord of life. Through His life, death and resurrection, He proves that every human being is precious in His sight.

[The Good Fruit]

Jesus puts the good fruit where it belongs – not in our ears – but in our mouth. Truth tastes sweetest when properly ingested. Here in the Divine Service, Christ is revealed and we receive God’s good fruit!

We hear God’s Word proclaimed and taught as we read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest His Word.

We rinse our ears with Baptism’s assurance that we are indeed, a child of God. We irrigate our very being with Holy Communion’s affirmations – eat, drink Christ’s true body and true blood that gives us forgiveness of sins, life, salvation and strength for our weak faith.

We swallow and savor this comfort, hope and joy, knowing that through Christ, we truly hear God speaking. He is speaking of forgiveness, life and salvation for He has chosen you and me! Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠