

Foundations and Fruit

Luke 6:43-49

Cradock Presbyterian Church

June 9, 2013

Well, it happened again. Somebody got hold of a gun, showed up in the middle of a community, and started shooting people at random. It was in Santa Monica, California, near a small college, on Friday. Four victims are dead; several others are injured and in hospitals. One of the dead included a 68 year-old grandfather, who was doing nothing more than driving down the street. What kind of people do these things? Jesus said, "Each tree is known by its own fruit." Each person who does things like in Santa Monica reveals what sort of foundation was laid in his life. Because what lays at your roots determines what kind of tree you'll be, and what kind of fruit you'll produce. Listen again to this quote from Jesus: "The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks." The good treasure of the heart comes from a good foundation, and in turn allows what is good to flow into it more freely. The evil stuff – well?

See, a foundation is that base of rules and assumptions about life that we all have. Your parents taught you most of that; they got it from their parents, and also from their church, from which you also got some of your foundation. We get that foundation added to and enhanced by many things in life. I'm glad we've got our Little League people here today, because baseball, like other sports, teaches you to play by the rules. Not just rules like in the rulebook, but also learning how to do things right. You also learn

that hard work is necessary; if you do work at the game, you produce some “fruits,” as Jesus talked about. You produce base hits and runs batted in and wins.

Fruit is always produced. But only if those trees have a “good foundation.” Trees produce fruit if they have good soil, if they’re planted right. If they’re not planted right, which means deeply enough, they’ll be uprooted easily; they might also not get enough nutrients to bear fruit. Fruit trees, like people, like baseball players, need a good foundation. THAT is the reason these two stories are together in Luke’s gospel: the roots of a tree are like a foundation. You learn a lot about a tree by its fruit, but also by how it’s planted.

First, though, let’s talk about fruit. Fruit is what *you* produce; it’s not limited to those things you grow in the ground or on a tree and then you eat. “The fruits of your labors” is a phrase you hear used a lot, and it really means something. If you’ve labored well, you’ll produce *something*, and it’ll probably be good. If you’ve been smart, and followed the rules, you’ll produce lots of good fruit. If you’ve been careless, or lazy, what then? Sloppy work produces no fruit or poor quality fruit, bad fruit. And if the tree isn’t planted deep enough, it might just die.

Think about the Tower of Pisa. You all know about that, right? It’s known the world over as what? “The *Leaning* Tower of Pisa.” The Tower of Pisa is not built on a good foundation; the foundation when they built it was only 10 feet deep. So the Tower now leans about 17°. The lean is increasing about 1/20 of an inch a year. The predictions were that it would fall over by 2007; it’s still standing, but you know that some day, unless the Italian government does something to it, it will come crashing

down. It just doesn't have a deep enough foundation to survive. You know what that demonstrates? That the fruits of your labors are directly affected by how you approach those labors. And how you approach your labors has everything to do with your own foundation.

So: fruit trees and towers have this much in common: they both need to have deep foundations, or they will meet their demise, never mind not being useful, not bearing fruit. Guess what: the same is true of people. If you don't have a good foundation, you'll never produce much of anything. You'll be "unfruitful." If you don't pay attention, and dig your foundation deep by accepting all the learnings that come your way, then you'll have a leaning, ready-to-crash tower of life; you'll have barren trees, full of leaves but no fruit.

As I said, there's a reason the story about the houses follows the one about the fruit you produce. Jesus says, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you?" Then he makes the connection for us between bearing fruit – which means hearing his words and acting on them – and having a good foundation. "I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them." Then he tells the story of the two houses. I laugh sometimes when I remember that the Good News Bible, when it first came out, wasn't only translated into English, it was translated into lots of other languages. The version for Holland had the first, better house being built on sand! That's because in that part of the world, wind was a big issue, not water; so houses would be built so that a portion of the lowest floor was below ground, with sand piled up all around the house. The other house in the Holland version was built on

rock, which meant strong winds could get under it and lift it up! What Jesus was saying is simple: you have to take care of what's at your foundation, whether of a house, or a tree, or your life. If you don't, you can't survive when the forces of life come up against you; if you can't survive, you can't bear fruit. Here's a key learning for you from all of this: Jesus said, "The one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house."

All right. What is OUR foundation? Have we built a foundation of hearing Jesus' words and acting on them? Our scripture clearly tells us: this is the way we build a foundation for life. Once we get our foundation, of listening and following Jesus' words, then we begin to produce good fruit. Because if we listen and do, then our hearts get filled with the treasure of Jesus' words. And that just adds to, strengthens, the foundation. If that's so, then we already know that we'll be producing good fruit, since the kinds of things God has given us for our foundations are good. We know that the things God keeps revealing to us, as we live, are good. But do we act on them? Are they really what we base all of our action from? So I challenge you to think about your own foundation. On what do you build your life? You know, foundations are underneath of buildings. Underneath it all, what's most important to you? Finally, think about the words of Jesus, and how you turn them into action. Are the things you do good fruits? What exactly is it that we're offering to God?