

# A Tree and Its Fruit

by J. Glyn Owen

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*The sermon emphasizes the universal principle that the nature of a tree determines the nature of its fruit, and applies this principle to human life, emphasizing the importance of cultivating good rootage to produce good fruit.*

**Duration:** 50:08

**Scripture:** Isaiah 64:6, Matthew 7:28-29, Matthew 12:9-13, Mark 1:27, Luke 4:36, John 3:3, Ephesians 2:8-9

**Topics:** "Fruitfulness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of producing apples in a garden as a metaphor for spiritual growth. He emphasizes the importance of planting good seeds in order to produce good fruit. The preacher draws examples from the Bible, highlighting how Jesus often used everyday situations to convey spiritual truths. He challenges the audience, especially those who consider themselves religious, to examine their beliefs and actions, reminding them that eternal life is a gift from God and not earned through their own righteousness. The sermon encourages introspection and reflection on the quality of one's spiritual fruit.

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## Transcript

It was remiss of me not to thank you for your prayers for us as we have been away on a time of vacation, and I do want to do so just now. It was really wonderful that Mrs. Owen and I were able to leave together this year, and we owe this very much to your prayers for us and for our physical well-being. And the Lord has been very merciful to us.

We went to a land that was warmer than Canada. Let you skeptics listen. It was very warm in England, and not a drop of rain.

I think we did have rain one night when we were fast asleep. But at any rate, the Lord was kind and merciful to us, and we're very glad to be back again. Though wondering whether the Lord is trying to smother us this morning with this humidity that we find a little bit strange after being away from it.

However, He is good and merciful, and we look to Him for His ability to do His will. Now there was a text ringing in my heart before I went away, and it has remained there, and it is to it that I want to turn this morning, deviating from our normal Lord's Day morning ministry at this time. And you will find really the heart of the message in verse 33 in that great twelfth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, from which we earlier

read.

Our Lord Jesus says, according to the New International Version, make a tree good, and its fruit will be good. Or make a tree bad, and its fruit will be bad. For a tree is recognized by its fruit.

Now I would like to place the emphasis upon the first words there. Make the tree good, and its fruit will be good. You have noticed, I'm quite sure, in reading the Gospels, how often our Lord laid hold of something that was very obvious, something that was the focus of attention at that given moment, and employed it in order to enunciate some spiritual principle or truth.

He saw a sower going out to sow, and immediately He fastened upon it and made it a means whereby He spoke of His own work, and of the work of those whom He sent forth to do what He had done, namely, to disseminate the seed of the Gospel, with a view to harvesting in due course. He saw a sparrow fall. He had something spiritual to say about that.

He saw people building houses. He used that too. And He saw someone leaving the ninety and nine sheep that were quite safe in the fold, and going out into a desert place to seek for the one lone sheep that had gone astray, and to seek for it until He found it.

It's a habit in our Lord's teaching ministry to fasten upon something like that, and to make it the basis of a dissertation about spiritual things. Now we have something of that order, not exactly perhaps, but something of that order before us this morning. Our text is an illustration of something that was universally recognized.

You did not need to go to school, to go to college. You certainly did not need to be a graduate of the Jerusalem University or any other in order to understand this. It was universally understood and acknowledged.

What was it? Well, this. That there is an inevitable connection between the fruit that a tree bears, and the tree itself, the nature of the tree. Put differently, it simply means this.

The nature of a tree determines the nature of its fruit. A bad tree, says Jesus, can only bring forth bad, evil fruit. A good tree will bring forth good fruit.

And He turns to some people around them and He says, of course, He says, you simply cannot bring forth good fruit because of the kind of people you are. And He calls them, not very gentlemanly you may say, but I think He had good grounds for doing so. He calls them a breed of vipers.

You cannot bring forth anything good because your hearts are evil, a tree and its fruit. Now, I want to begin with this basic principle and I want to try God helping us. I want us to get hold of the fact that this is a universal phenomenon.

It is a universal principle. It is something that was true yesterday, it'll be true tomorrow. It is true in the north and the south and the east and the west, in all times, under all circumstances, everywhere.

There is a connection that is universally binding between a tree and the fruit it bears. Make a tree good and its fruit will be good. Or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad.

For a tree is recognized by its fruit. A universally binding principle. Now, no one in his right mind would deny this principle.

I've never met anyone who wanted to. I certainly haven't met anyone who's been able to do so. Its truth is too evident to be denied.

The nature of a tree determines the nature of the fruit on its branches. You must cultivate good rootage if you want good fruit. Root and fruit are most intimately and inherently related.

Now, the universally evident principle brought out here by our Lord is practiced everywhere. For example, you may think this morning of a man or a woman, for that matter, in any part of the globe, north or south, east or west, black or white, rich or poor, matters not. These four people, these four imaginary people, want to produce apples in their garden.

I'm assuming that they have a garden, of course. They want to produce apples. What are they going to sow? What are they going to plant in their garden in order to produce apples? Certainly, they won't plant gooseberry bushes there.

I don't care whether they live in the north, the south, the east or the west, whether they're poor or rich. They don't need to go to school. If they want to produce apples, they're not going to plant gooseberry bushes, nor pear trees, nor banana trees, or anything else.

But simply, apple trees. It is only an apple root and an apple tree that can produce apples. Indeed, you can take the principle further, as our Lord apparently does here.

If you want to produce good apples, you must plant a good tree. You must have a good tree that has been cared for, looked after, and so forth, and cultivated. Golden, delicious apples.

That shows my favorite apple. You have to bear your heart every now and again. Well, golden, delicious apples don't grow on every apple tree.

They only grow on a golden, delicious tree that has the right root and has been cultivated accordingly. This is a universally evident principle. The Apostle Paul refers, you remember, also in a different context altogether, but he refers also to this same principle.

He says, whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. It's the same principle, basically. Now, there is a spiritually evident application to this.

And it is to this, of course, that we are coming. Jesus proceeded here in the context to apply this basic principle to the moral and spiritual realms, when he went on to say, and I quote, out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him.

And the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. Verses 34 and 35. Now, notice that.

Jesus fastens not so much upon the evident works and deeds our hands may perform, but he fastens here upon what we might easily pass by, upon the words we utter, our speech, what we say, what we think, and what we say. He proceeds to say that this principle explains men's speech. What we say, says Jesus, is determined at a deeper level than our mouths.

It's not simply that our lips and our mouths happen to formulate a particular set of words. What you say, my friend, this is what Jesus comes to tell us this morning, what you say, your speech, comes from the depths. It's the overflow of the person within.

Now, what is true of speech, of course, is true of action generally, but Jesus fastens on this because this has so much relevance in this particular context. Why do some men swear and curse and whine and whatnot? Well, it all comes from the depths. Why are some men and women so gracious in their speech, so kind, so helpful, so generous, so wise? Well, the answer is the same.

It comes from the depths. It's the quality of the tree. Let me repeat.

Our speech, our words are produced and their quality is determined by the nature of our own hearts. God deems this so basic that according to Jesus, we shall ultimately be judged by our own words. Now, I'm not so sure that any of us really take this seriously, but the connection between the words of our lips and the quality of our soul, the condition of our spirit is such that when the day of judgment comes, God says, you'll be judged by what you say because what you say is absolutely indicative of what you are.

The quality of your soul, the condition of your soul will have been expressed over a lifetime of 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 years by your words and your utterances. What you say and have said will stand as a testimony against you, indicating whether the tree of your life was good or evil. My dear friends, I wonder where we will stand.

I tell you, says Jesus, that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken, for by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned. Our speech, our words are an infallible indication of the quality of our inner life. What we think in the depths of our being, what we imagine, what we dream about, what going on inside of us in the very depths of our being determines what the lips say and our attitude in saying what we do.

Jesus has said this in many places and in different ways. I don't want to go after other illustrations of it now, but let me just remind you of this. He said earlier on concerning false prophets that would emerge after his day, by their fruits you will know them.

And this is as true and as applicable to us today in the 20th century as to those who first heard the message in our Lord's day and age. There is a connection universally acknowledged between the root and the tree, the quality of the tree and the fruit it bears. Now I want you to notice how this really explains many things in this particular context.

You apply this text, you apply this principle rather, and you will see that it explains so many things. Apply this for example to our Lord Jesus himself. In this context as you heard from the reading, if you are not already familiar with the passage, you will remember that among other things the leaders of the Jews charged our Lord Jesus that he was really able to do so many mighty deeds such as exorcising demons.

He was able to do these things not because he was a good man, not because he was the Son of God, not because he was the Messiah, not because the Spirit of God was upon him. Oh no. He was able to do these things said these strange men and women of his day, these perverted men and women of his day.

He was able to do these things because he was in league with a prince of devils or demons, Beelzebub. Now notice they attribute every good thing that Jesus said and every good deed that Jesus accomplished not to God, Father or Son or Holy Spirit or to a good man even, Jesus of Nazareth, but they attributed the good deed to his alleged league and association with the very prince of hell and of darkness according to their theology. Now let's apply this test.

If it is true that by their fruits you know them, if it is true that it is only a good tree that can bring forth good fruit. What does that say about the Lord Jesus himself? Well let's examine the fruit of his life. What kind of fruit did he bear? What kind of things did he do? What kind of words did he say? What was his influence? Now really I'm opening up a theme which is too large and too big for one sermon or one day.

You can follow this and you can pursue it at your own time and I tell you it will be a most profitable one. What kind of things did he do? What was the fruit that was evident in his life? Well just take what we have here. The Holy Spirit of God has inspired Matthew to bring together a number of things which are most helpful and most suggestive.

Take the first earlier than the passage that we had for our reading this morning. You go back to chapter 12 and to beginning with verse 9. You have an incident here in the synagogue. Going on from that place Jesus went into their synagogue and a man with a shriveled hand was there looking for a reason to accuse Jesus.

They asked him before he did anything, they asked him, is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day? You see they had an inkling already in their hearts that the Lord Jesus couldn't look at this man with a shriveled hand without doing something to help him. What a marvelous testimony to the grace of the Son of God. Before he did anything, before he said anything, they must have seen his eye fall upon this dear man who was so very self-conscious of his physical deformity and they thought he's going to do something.

And they were getting angrier, more and more angry all the time. And then they posed the question, is it easy right they said that a man should do something of this kind on the Sabbath day? Jesus replied in a very simple way, but it's a very challenging, it's deceptively challenging as far as they were concerned. He said, well now you good people, he says listen, here you are on your farms.

If a sheep falls into a pit on the Sabbath day, what do you good people do? Do you leave the poor sheep there or do you do what Moses commanded you to do? Do you go immediately and rescue the sheep even though it is a Sabbath day? Of course you do. Now says Jesus, if it is right to rescue a sheep from a pit on a Sabbath day, surely it is even more legitimate to rescue a man from the very slavery of Satan, be it Sabbath or not Sabbath. For a man is made in the image of God an immortal.

A man is made to live forever. Eternity is in his soul. He will be lost or he will be saved.

Surely, surely he says you're inconsistent and irrational here and unbiblical here. The fruit Jesus bore, he proved to be good. Even by comparing it with something that they themselves did, he confounded them.

He said, you people would say it's a good thing to rescue a sheep on the Sabbath day. If it's a good thing to rescue the sheep on a Sabbath day, it's a better thing to rescue a man be it Sabbath or no Sabbath. You know, it wasn't safe to enter into an argument with Jesus of Nazareth.

He never got away without being made aware of the folly of your speech and the foulness of your spirit. They did not. Again, Jesus healed, we are told in verse 22, a demon possessed man who was both blind and mute so that he could both talk and see.

This is very wonderful really. We must come back to it on another day to see how here we have three miracles of divine mercy rolled into one. Salvation from demonic power, the gift of speech returned, and the gift of sight renewed.

So you have salvation from the power of Satan and the ability to see and to speak all given by one person at one time. It included both physical and spiritual aspects. Now, Jesus overheard some of these people.

And what he overheard was this. Some of them were asking, is not this the son of David? We've never seen things like this happen before. This is not an everyday event.

We've never heard the high priest speak words that had such consequences. We've never heard anyone among us doing this kind of thing. It's altogether different from what we've known in our past experience.

Is not this person the son of David? That is the Messiah, the promised Messiah, the deliverer, the Savior that God had promised, greater than David, greater son, great David's greater son, and Savior of men. And they began to question. You see, they were putting the scriptures together and relating the scriptures to life.

And they came to conclusion, it must be him. Yet they just posed the question. They didn't come to the conclusion at that point.

Hearing some of the witnesses asking that, the Pharisees, the Pharisees were absolutely angered. That anybody should think that Jesus of Nazareth can possibly be the son of David and the Messiah. And so, you remember what they did.

I've already referred to it. It's in this particular context that emerges. They couldn't deny the miracles.

That's very significant. They didn't try to say all this is a fake. They didn't attempt to say, now that man has not got his sight.

It's a joke. They didn't say that man is not speaking. They could hear him speaking, I suppose.

It was all surreal. They couldn't deny the reality of the miracles. But what can they do then? Oh, they were cunning.

Satan is cunning. He may be doing it, but he can only do it because he's in league with a prince of demons. Jesus made mincemeat of that unreasonable response.

He says, if that were so, he said it would mean simply this, that Satan's kingdom is already divided against itself. And a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand very long. It'll soon crumble.

And that was so evidently untrue. No, no, he says, it's not that. You know that.

If you want to burgle a house, you've got to first, you've got first to bind the strong man who keeps the house. And it's only then you can go in and burgle it. I have burgled Satan's household.

And the very fact that I have snatched from his hands this dear one and returned sanity to him and liberty to him means this, that whether you like it or not, I have the power, I have the authority to do it and have done it. What does this principle say then in relation to Jesus? You see, the fruit of his ministry was so evidently good. On the physical plane, on the moral plane, on the spiritual plane, on the intellectual plane, he was able to explain, he was able to bring understanding as well as do that which was gracious and healing and satisfying for men.

He met the needs of men on all levels. Surely that is good. And that good fruit of his good life can only mean that in the depths of his being, he is a good tree.

Evil fruit does not grow on a good tree. The evil tree cannot produce good fruit, says Jesus. Now let me apply the principle to very briefly to those making the charge against Jesus that he was doing what he did in league with Beelzebub, the prince of demons.

Apply this same principle to them without going into the details now. Let me just refer again to something which we've mentioned before. Just this one thing, this unwillingness to concede the truth, to concede the obvious, this determination to wriggle out of the obvious fact that Jesus was doing what he was doing in the power of God and going so far as not only refusing to accept the inevitable logic of it, but even to attribute goodness to an evil source.

What kind of a tree does that fruit grow on? Well the answer is obvious of course. This kind of thing can only come from hearts that are sorted by sin, hearts that are spoiled by Satan, hearts that are darkened and evil and iniquitous and bound and lost. So Jesus said to them unhesitatingly, as I have indicated already, you brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? You cannot acknowledge the truth even though it's evident before your eyes.

Why? Because you're evil. You cannot confess me to be the son of God. Why? Because your hearts are evil.

The God has come down and the kingdom of God is among you and I do these things by the Holy Spirit among you. You will not, you will not acknowledge it. No amount of persuasion, no amount of pressure, nothing short of the power of God changing your hearts can cause you to acknowledge what is true and what is obvious.

Your heart is bad. A connection universally binding, an application of the principle that was immediately revealing both of the goodness of the Lord Jesus and of the evil of his enemies. But I want to move one step further.

I want us to look at some implications that are personally challenging as we consider all this. You know, it's all very well for us to be sitting in a reasonably comfortable church, two thousand years after the event, sitting in judgment on these ancient Jews and saying some terrible things about them, even though those things are true. But dare we ask whether we would have acted any differently if we were in their shoes in those days of long ago? You see, you examine this passage in terms of principle and you will see that Jesus is doing two things.

One, he is undermining their authority. Two, he is showing up their hypocrisy. And this is the question I want to ask you to consider this morning.

What kind of foot do you bear when Jesus challenges your authority and when Jesus reveals your hypocrisy, when Jesus challenges your authority? Now, this is the main thing that has been happening in this context. You see, before Jesus came, these scribes and Pharisees and their fellow travelers, they were really the ecclesiastical intelligentsia. They were the leadership of the church of the day.

They occupied the first place. They had the authority. They were trained.

They were accredited. They carried the key that capacitated them to teach anywhere the things of God. They were supposed to be the exponents of the law and of the prophets.

And some of them were given the special power to apply the law and the prophets to life in general. You see, they were the important people and they were very rarely challenged. Sometimes, I'm quite sure there were people who disobeyed them, who didn't follow what they said, but they were very rarely challenged.

To challenge them was to ask for trouble, because they were accredited. And to challenge an accredited leader and teacher in Jewry was something terrible. You suffered the consequences.

And in consequence of that, you see, they were honored. They were feted. They were the important people.

And then came this man from nowhere, from the backwoods, from Nazareth of all places, a little unknown place. And someone was able to ask, can any good thing ever come out of Nazareth? Nazareth has never produced a prophet. Nazareth has never produced a political leader.

Nazareth has never produced anybody of significance. And then there comes this nobody from Nazareth. And he begins to show that he has authority that these other people didn't have.

When he spoke, he spoke. Now, I don't say this. They said this.

He speaks as one having authority. And not as the scribes and the Pharisees. They said that, not me.

And when he uttered his word, the blind received their sight. And the deaf heard again, just because he commanded them to hear. Even the dead came out of their graves when he called Lazarus, come forth.

Lazarus came out of the grave. The dead came to life. He had authority, you see.

His word was powerful, and all its effects were good, redemptive, and gracious. Now, as time passed, Jesus gathered around him a whole crowd of people who had witnessed some of these things. Not all of them, I don't suppose.

Many of them had witnessed two-thirds of the miracles performed by him. But someone in the family had been healed, or a neighbor had been healed, or someone had come under the influence of his authoritative word, and the demon possessed had come back to sanity, and a new way of living. And so these people began to flood after him, and they looked upon him as the only one that had authority, and they contrasted him with the scribes and the Pharisees, and said, never man spake like this man.

We've never heard it like this. Nothing like this has ever been heard among us. Nothing like this has ever been seen among us.

Now, now my friend, listen. You see what's happening? The very authority that Jesus was gaining by the good fruit of his word and his work was undermining the authority of the scribes and the Pharisees. And if things are going to be allowed to go on in this direction sooner or later, it's, it's going to lead to a collision.

Something terrible is going to happen. Have you ever known that? Have you ever known the Lord Jesus to challenge your authority? How do you react? What do you say? What do you think? How do you react when Jesus says, man you're wrong? Let me give you an illustration of what I mean. Maybe someone

here this morning you were brought up in a Christian church, perhaps, or you may not have been.

But you've always thought that if you did your little bit, if you paid so many dollars for your goods, and you paid your bills in time, and you were reasonably kind, and you didn't, you didn't lose your temper with people, and you walked a fairly straight line, you've generally thought, well now that's all right, I'll, I'll be saved. God will not turn me out of his kingdom. God will not keep me from his heaven if I walk a reasonably straight line, and I'm better than so and so.

And then God comes to you in his word and he says, man, you must be born again. See, that's what happened to Nicodemus. Jesus came with his authority to the authoritative teacher in Israel, the teacher, and he said to him, man, you don't know anything about it.

You're going to start again from scratch. You have got to be born again. How do you react? Now you good people, especially if you're religious, especially if you read your Bible habitually, and you pray before you go to bed, and you love the hymns of Zion, and you come to church not only on a Sunday morning, perhaps on a Sunday evening, and you even perhaps go to a prayer group.

Now that's, that's, that's amazing. And you even do that. And you think that all these things added together will give you positively a place in the kingdom of God.

God cannot say no to you, but the word of Scripture comes to you and says, eternal life is the gift of God. All your righteousnesses are as filthy rags. They come to naught.

In the balances of God, all that you're depending upon is naught, nil, nothing. Now how do you react? Now what are you saying in your soul? Is the fruit good, agreeable? Do you concede to him his God-given authority? Or do you try to make a case against him, and you bring some counter charges against him, or against his people, or against his church, and you try to wriggle out of it in some way or other, in order, you see, to establish your authority over against his? I find so many people doing that. Do you know why they do it? Because their hearts are evil.

And there is only one answer to that, and it is this, is to have a change of heart. My time is gone, almost, and therefore I want to hurry to say two things, in closing. Two things, and they're very simple, but I think that they're very important.

One, the basic need of our world today, is the need for hearts made new. Make the heart, make the tree good. I don't care whether you think of men in distant places or near.

It really makes no difference. Whether you think of the cultured or the illiterate, it makes very, very little difference. Oh, I know we need education.

I know we need our political programs. We need medical programs. They all have their place.

But unless we can make the tree good, then our healthy, and wealthy, and educated society is becoming increasingly ungovernable. And not only is democracy going out to the door, but something evil is coming in through the back door. Men and women, our nation, and the nations of the West, are becoming ungovernable.

And whether you've got liberal, or conservative, or anything else in power, we are moving into a time, and an era, and a situation when men cannot be governed anymore. And there is only one thing that will make

them governable, a change of heart. We are coming up to a general election.

Now far be it from me to veer and to influence you politically. That's not what I want to do. I pray that all of us will be thinking seriously about this, about principles that are involved.

Deep principles, moral principles, principles that are going to effect tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow. And come to our decisions in the light of the throne of God, and know what we're doing, and doing it in the faith that we do His good will. But now listen, unless men's hearts are going to be changed, the time may be coming very near when another form of government will be necessary in a land like Canada.

And it will not be democratic. And the only thing that will hold this back is, if the hearts of men can be made governable, if the tree can be made good. The other thing I wanted to say follows naturally from that.

The prime business of the church of Jesus Christ is simply this, it's to make the tree good. See it doesn't really matter, it doesn't really matter what else we may be good at, unless we can make the tree good. We may be great at making friends, bringing people together to sit together around cups of coffee, cups of tea.

And they may go dancing with coffee to hell. And the whole universe is falling on top of us. We may be able to organize this and organize that.

We've got our committees galore. But unless you and I can change the hearts of men and give ourselves to this as a whole community of redeemed people, brothers and sisters, we're not doing what God has called upon us to do. It's not enough just to preach, it's not enough just to talk.

We must be about the business of making the tree good. You see no one else can do this. Your politicians can't do this, save only as private individuals if they're Christians, not as political movements.

Your educators cannot do this, save only as private individuals if they're Christians. Others can't do this, save only as individual Christians. But this is the business of the whole church.

I don't care who you are this morning. I don't care what church you belong to. If you have repented of your sin and you've come to Christ and you own him as your Lord, my friend, it's your business and mine.

And whatever else you were doing from Monday morning to Saturday night is only secondary to this. This is the prime business of the church. It's to make the tree good.

We need the power of God upon us. I need it, you need it, you good members of Knox, all of us need it, that we may see this, that as a team, as a community of people, we should be wrapped up together in this holiness, sacred crusade, not just counting scalps and heads. So-and-so has made a decision, that's all right, but we need to make the tree good.

And we need to be involved in a ministry, not only from the pulpit but close at hand, that enables the tree to be changed and transformed, that it brings forth nothing but good. That's the task of the church. That's the task of the church.

Oh, God knows how far short we fall of it, how very far short. But here is our calling. I ask you before God this morning, what is your reply to this kind of challenge from our Lord's Word? Make the tree good, and you will make its fruit good.

Do you want to see a society that is God honoring? I know you do. Do you want to see men in every segment of society, through legal profession, the medical profession, and all the professions, the teaching profession, go down the lines, go throughout society? Do you want to see men who are God honoring? You've got the key, Christian. We as a church of Jesus Christ have been given the good news of the Savior, who is able to make men new, for if any man be in Christ Jesus, there is a new creation.

Old things are passed away. All things have become new. There is a new creature.

We have, by the Word of God, we have the means whereby the old nature can be dealt with, and the new nature can grow and blossom and flourish and increase in strength and in stature, until at the day of Christ we shall be like unto Him. Oh, glorious gospel! Oh, wonderful Savior! People of God! Let's put ourselves afresh into His hands today, which is a sultry summer day, in many ways akin to many a Lord's Day and many a Sabbath Day in Galilee long ago. It's the day when Jesus calls us to this holy, this high task, not to entertain sinners on their way to lostness, but to save them, and by the grace of God, be the agents of renewal in thought and heart and spirit, until they grow up into the fullness of the stature of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let us pray. Lord God Almighty, we bless Your holy name for this Word of Yours that has given us by the Holy Spirit. We thank You that the Word written and the Word incarnate, both the product of the Holy Spirit, for Jesus was conceived in the Virgin's womb, and the Word of Scripture was conceived likewise of Him.

We thank You that the Holy Spirit has given us such a Word to direct us. You know, Father, how in our heart of hearts we respond to You when You challenge our authority and say to us that we are wrong or show up our hypocrisy. Grant us a heart that has been so radically changed that at every turn we shall be prepared to honor You and worship You and trust You and obey You, whatever You say, and accept Your judgments as final and adequate for all time.

Oh Lord, hear us for ourselves, individually, for our families, for our nation, for the world of nations. And we pray, O Spirit of God, that in these days of decadence and spiritual darkness, You will again come to Your church and enable us, Your people, to engage more fully and more adequately, and if it please You, more successfully in this business of making the tree good. For the glory of Your great name.

Amen.

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