

Sermon: You pick what you plant

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Preached at Village on Antioch. Oct. 31, 2021

Bible passage: Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith. Galatians 6:7-10

I do not know exactly what I do not like about them. There is a lot not to like. Maybe it's the color. It's that odd, bright, reddish purple sitting there on the plate. Or maybe it's the texture I don't like. It's oddly soft when you bite into it. Or the taste. There is this strange taste to it. Or maybe it's the fact that the red purplish juice goes everywhere on the plate infecting the other food. I just don't like them. And while they are present in most salad bars, I have never seen anyone take them.

Beets.

So I was annoyed when I was a kid and we were visiting our grandparents on their farm in Hayward, CA. Grandpa had put beets on my plate and I must have made a face. He smiled and asked me, "What's wrong?" I told him. "Grandpa, I don't like beets." "But beets are good," he said. "No they're not," I replied. "They taste terrible." I remember Grandpa thinking for a moment and then he said, "Oh, that's right. You only have Hawaii beets. You're right. Hawaii beets taste bad. But these....these are California beets. California beets taste good. Taste just like...chocolate!" "These beets taste like chocolate?" I asked, skeptically. "Yes, Rodger," he assured me. "These are California beets. Taste just like chocolate. Go ahead. You try." So I did. And you know what? They tasted just like Hawaii beets. They tasted terrible. I felt betrayed. Later I was talking to my mom and told her that Grandpa had lied to me. Mom smiled and said, "Rodger, why would you think beets would taste like chocolate? Beets taste like beets. Grandpa was just teasing you. He's a farmer. You can't plant beets and grow chocolate."

In his letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul says, "Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. You reap what you sow."

There it is. Here is the rule. You pick what you plant. You reap what you sow. You harvest what you put in the ground. Say it with me. You pick what you plant. You reap what you sow. You harvest what you put in the ground. Say it again. You pick what you plant. You reap what you sow. You harvest what you put in the ground.

Paul is reminding us that God has structured the universe this way. Another way to put it...you get what? What's coming to you. You pick what you plant. You reap what you sow. You harvest what you put in the ground.

Last week our Senior Pastor Tom preached about the reality of climate change and God's charge to us to care for God's good creation. We are stewards of all of creation. God has entrusted all the earth and all its creatures to our care, and it is clear that we are not doing our job well.

There is no room for skepticism any more. The science is conclusive. Climate change is real and happening now and we are the culprit. This is not some natural cycle. The earth is trying to heal but we are doing more damage more quickly and it is devastating mother earth and threatening all her creatures including us.

Paul says to us: Do not be deceived. God will not be mocked. You pick what you plant. You reap what you sow. You harvest what you put in the ground.

You have already heard the data.

July 2021 found the highest concentration of CO2 in our atmosphere ever recorded in human history. Did you hear that? EVER RECORDED IN HUMAN HISTORY. This is not some cyclical event.

The seven last years have been the seven hottest years on record.

Last year, one in 10 persons on this planet suffered from drought, floods, heat waves, extreme weather and/or sea-level rise.

You pick what you plant. You reap what you sow. You harvest what you put in the ground.

This is human caused climate change and we are destroying the very planet God has entrusted to our care. If you and I appreciate and love God's creation at all, we must live differently.

I am one of our boys and one of the many gifts my parents gave us was the love of God's creation. Every summer, we would go camping. It was a marvelous time. One summer we were camping at Mt. Rainier National Park in the beautiful Pacific Northwest and we went for a hike. As was typical, we four boys ran ahead. We thought the goal of a hike was to get to the top as fast as possible. We raced each other and then waited for our parents to catch up because Dad had all the snacks. It took Dad a while to get to us. But the worst was our Mom. It took Mom forever to reach us. The rule was we could not eat snacks until Mom arrived. Finally, we would see her down the trail and we would run to get her and urge her to hurry so we could eat our snacks. We would sit down together and devour whatever she had packed for us. While we were eating, we would ask her what took her so long. She would answer that she liked to look at all the beauty around us. We told her we did, too. We just didn't understand why it took her so long. Then, she would ask us what we thought of the family of marmots. "What marmots?" we asked. In our running up the trail and making a lot of noise, we had not seen any marmots.

She told us about a family of marmots that lived among some boulders about two miles down the trail. She sat and watched them for about 20 minutes. She said they were so funny – especially the babies. “There were baby marmots?” we asked. “Yes,” she said. “And they were tackling each other and playing. They reminded me of you boys.” Then she asked if we liked seeing the beaver dam. She had waited a while but did not see any beavers but she liked sitting by the lake. “There was a beaver dam?” we asked. “Yes,” she said. “The beavers must have created the lake.” “Where was the lake?” we asked. “You didn’t see the lake?” Mom asked incredulously. “How could you miss the lake?” Eventually, we learned from our mother and while we did not take as much time as our Mom, we did slow down some. We took time to see the wonder of God’s creation. Our parents taught us that. They sowed that love of creation in us. My older brother has visited over 50 of our nation’s 63 national parks.

Here’s the rule. You pick what you plant. You reap what you sow. You harvest what you put in the ground.

The Apostle Paul says: So, then whenever you have the opportunity, let us work for the good of all.

Friends, that is our calling. We are to work for the good of all. Here’s the thing about caring for our creation. It is all of our responsibility. All of us have a part to play. No action is too small. From using cloth grocery bags to changing to energy saving light bulbs to eating plant-based diets to driving electric cars to supporting leaders and companies who are working to reduce our carbon footprint. Everything matters because we are to work for the good of all. The time is urgent. This is our moment to show our love for God by caring for God’s good creation. So let us to act as stewards of God’s good creation out of love for God, for all peoples, and all of creation.

Friends, do not be deceived. God will not be mocked. You pick what you plant. You reap what you sow. You harvest what you put in the ground.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.