

Sermon 8th Sunday After Trinity, 2 August 2020
Romans 8.12-17 and Matthew 7.15-20
Revd Kathryn Waite

‘Ye shall know them by their fruits’

This week has been a good gardening week. Like lots of people we planted quite a lot of seeds during lockdown. The fact that I have been at home so much has meant that the plants have been watered much more regularly than they often are –and this week I have been harvesting some of the fruits of my labours

[I have some pictures of some of our harvest and I wonder whether you know whether they are fruit or vegetables?

First an easy one – beans

Blackberries and redcurrants - fruit

Third one – tomato which I am sure most of you know is ...botanically a fruit not a vegetable because the seeds are on the inside, contained within a ripened ovary of the flower. Although most chefs would call tomatoes veg. Even the US Supreme Court was asked to make a ruling and in 1893 ruled that tomatoes are vegetables – so you right if you said fruit or vegetables

And last one – two conjoined cucumbers – which are also fruit because again the sees are on the inside.

Well done to those of you who got all of those correct and I hope I haven't caused too many debates about vegetables and fruit

Vegetables and fruit...

In informal worship this term we have also been thinking about fruit too, different kinds of fruit, the fruit of the spirit – faithfulness, joy, kindnessand there are of course more mentioned in Galatians chapter 5, love, peace, forbearance, goodness, gentleness and self-control.....]

In our gospel reading which is part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was telling the crowds of people gathered that it is by the fruit of the spirit or how we live and work and interact with others that the fruit can be seen, fruit that can be seen by others.

Jesus is warning people about false prophets – people who stand up and speak what they say is God's word, but they have not heard from God. They say, 'thus says the Lord'. But their words are not God's

words. They are people who are ready to take advantage of others. Jesus compares them to a wolf in sheep's clothing, although that just makes me think about the story of Little Red Riding Hood and conjures up the image of the wolf dressed up in clothing. Dressed up, but not terribly well disguised as grandma. We all know the story what big eyes you have grandma, what big teeth you have... But Jesus was talking about wolves that really did look like sheep. Jesus' advice as to how to distinguish between real sheep and wolves, or true preachers and false preachers is to look at how they act – do they metaphorically skip around the field like sheep or are they prowling ready to pounce?

In the same way it is important to look at people's lives - do they really do they act with integrity, are they kind and compassionate in the way they interact with others.

These are the kinds of question that we should ask of anyone who stands up and speaks - are they really God's words? Are they biblical? Are they spoken with integrity? I think it is important to say, that none of us who stand up at the front of church, or speak on zoom, are perfect, please don't put us on pedestals, we are only human like everyone else. We are far from perfect and have our own failings, we simply try to do things in God's strength not our own, and are in need of your prayers.

All leaders to have to lead by example, especially in the military government or public life and there have been a number of examples recently of those who have flouted the rules, and of course Dominic Cummings and the Mayor of Luton spring to mind.

But how we live our lives is important for all of us, whether or not we consider ourselves to be leaders. I wonder whether others can see by the way we live that we love Jesus and follow him? Is there something about us that is attractive to others or do we just put people off wanting to know more about Jesus. We need to be rooted in God by praying and reading God's word, the Bible, regularly so that we bear fruit. And God's desire is that we all bear fruit – the fruit of the spirit - faithfulness, joy, kindness, love, peace, forbearance, goodness, gentleness and self-control.

This week as perhaps you pick some of the fruits in your garden or allotment or eat a piece of fruit, take a moment to wonder how you demonstrate God's love and ask for the Holy Spirit to give us the gifts that we each need.