

Produce Fruit For The Father

Love is blind. How many people out there have done rash, blind, foolish acts for no other reason than that they were in love. But, I'm sure that, as you are there sitting in your cushy pews, you have never done something foolish in the name of love, have you? We can laugh to ourselves, because we know just how blind love makes us. I was talking to a mom who has a girl in kindergarten. The little girl had a boyfriend. They were walking down the hall together looking into each other's eyes and they walked right into the wall. Then, one of the other moms said: "Oh, who hasn't been there and done that?"

In the words we look at this morning we see that sort of love. We see an embarrassing, foolish sort of love. We see a love which doesn't make sense. We see a love which also doesn't give up, even when it is clear it isn't working. Jesus tells us: *“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. 34 When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.”*

Look at the work this master puts in. He plants a vineyard. He puts up a wall, a winepress, even a watchtower. He rents it out and then goes away. And here is where he shows his strange and foolish love. Harvest time comes. He sends a few servants to get his fruit. But what happens? Do they give him the fruit? No. They torture one of the servants and kill the other two. At this point, we would expect that the master of the vineyard would have enough. We would have thought that he would punish the farmers. But he doesn't. His love is so foolish that he sends *more* servants. The farmers treat them the same way. And the master's conclusion is the same. Instead of seeing what the servants and the farmers already know, that these farmers are wicked men. Instead the master *chooses* to think the best of the situation. He chooses to think that *he* was the one who was in the wrong, not them. And so, he chooses to send his son. And what's his reason? He says *‘They will respect my son’*.

His love is awkward when he sends the first servants. It's embarrassing when he sends the second group of servants. But, when he sends his son to them knowing how he treated the servants, what other word could we use except 'foolish'? How stupid could this master be? How foolish could he be? But, that's what love does. It makes us fools. It makes us blind. *That* is the sort of love this master had.

That is the parable. But what does the parable mean? We don't have to guess too much do we? God had sent one prophet after another to his people. But, what did his people do with these prophets? Did they rejoice at hearing God's truth? Did they repent and rejoice in the forgiveness the lord had given to them? Did they produce fruit for their master? No. They ridiculed, tortured and killed the prophets. The writer to the Hebrews tells us: *“35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. 36 Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. 37 They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— 38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. Heb. 11:39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. 40 God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.”*

They did all of these horrible things to the servants of God. And they were just about to kill Jesus, the Master's son. The sincerity and foolishness of the love he had for the Pharisees was not enough to melt their hatred for him. Instead, the Father's foolish love was fuel for their hating fire.

Indeed, his love is foolish. But Jesus asks the Pharisees a question: *“Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?”* And, even the Pharisees know what is right. Even *they* know what is just. They tell him: *“He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,”* they replied, *“and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”* And then, Jesus tells them the truth they need to hear. In the parable, they aren't the servants. No, they are the wicked farmers who rent the property and act like they own it—the ones who aren't the masters, but kill the master's servants, even the son of the master himself.

God spoke clearly to the Pharisees through this parable. And he speaks clearly to us today. Our sin is that we don't read God's word. And when we do read it, we don't read it deeply as food for our souls. And we show this

by some of the questions we ask. For all of us there are people we do not understand why God would let *that* sort of a person in his church. In his church there are people who lie, hurt, harm—people who have lust, arrogance, pride, wrath and selfishness. Why would God love *them*.

The answer is clear. Our Father *chooses* to be foolish with his love. The best example of that is ourselves. If we looked into our hearts, we would see that there have been far too many times we have not been the servants in this parable, but rather the tenants, the wicked farmers. Far too many times we have not produced the fruit in our lives that our Father has asked us to. Far too many times we have not listened to our friends, family and pastor who have shared God's word with us. Yet, our master is foolish in his love. He forgives our sins by allowing his son, his only son to be punished in our place.

We might ask: "How could God let *that* person into heaven?" But, we also ask another equally shallow question: "How could a God who says that he's good send so many people to hell?" Before you look at his judgement, look at his love. Look at how foolish and patient it is. How many times and in how many ways did he reach out to his creation, asking, begging, pleading that they would turn from their sin and to him? None of the Pharisees would stand up for the farmers in this parable. But who will stand up for them on Judgement Day? Who will stand up for them when God has reached out to them countless times in love. And, in return, they reached out to him to kill his Son. Who will stand up for them when he sends them to hell? The answer is clear: No one. Our Father is foolish in his love. And he is final in his judgement.

So then, my fellow farmers, let us see the great love he has for us. Let us see how patient and sincere and foolish his love for us is. Let us take from our Father the fruit he gives to us. Let us learn again and again, in so many different ways what sort of master we have. Let us learn what sort of master he is, because there will be so many times Satan will lie to us. Satan will tell us that God is sinful in letting sinners into his heaven. He will tell you that he is unloving in judging those who rebel against him. Take, my fellow farmers. Take all you can from God's word and grow in it.

But don't just take. Also give. Produce fruit for your Father. As you see his enduring, foolish love for you, give thanks. Give thanks with your voice and songs. Give thanks with your words and actions. Give thanks with your energy and your lives. Produce fruit for your Father. His love is foolish. His judgement is final. Amen.