

# Lenten Service Week 4

March 17, 2021

Sermon by Rev. Zachary W. Johnson

Hill Avenue Grace Lutheran Church

Pasadena, California

Jesus is the Word of God incarnate; the Word made flesh. Through the gift of baptism, we are forever tied into the death and resurrection of the Word. Just as the Word falls into the ground and dies, so too do we die; but, just as the Word then sprouts from the ground and bears much fruit, so too do we sprout from the ground and bear much fruit. The fruit is the Word. It brings good news to others so that they come to believe in the Word made flesh.

In our reading, Jesus specifically talks about the seed that is a single grain of wheat falling into the earth in order to die and bear much fruit. I find this interesting because, as we all know, wheat is harvested and used to make flour. That flour is often used to make bread. Jesus is the bread of life.

Often, we will find wheat bread on our altar tables, ready to become the body of Christ in, with, and under the bread. When we eat the consecrated bread, we consume the body of Christ. The Word then becomes a part of our very being. We are one with the Word made flesh.

The Word made flesh sprouts and grows in us and it becomes the fruit of faith, the fruit of discipleship, and the fruit of forgiveness and grace. It is the fruit of faith, for it grounds us in the hope of the promise of resurrection. It is the fruit of forgiveness and grace, for it grounds us in God's unbreakable love. It is the fruit of discipleship, for it grounds us in the teachings of Jesus so that we may be free to follow his example. The fruit that blossoms in us is used by the Word to spread its seed to others, so that they may be sowed in their fertile ground in the hope that they too will bear much fruit.

The more the fruit of the Word grows in us, the more fruit we will have to share with the world. This is where the care of the gardener comes into play. The gardener is our relationship with Jesus. The stronger our bond, the more the fruit will grow. Gardening the relationship between ourselves and Jesus is why we go to worship on Sundays, it is



Hill Ave Grace  
Lutheran Church

why we devote intentional time to prayer, it is why we study the Bible and it is why we love and serve neighbor.

The hymn that we sing tonight is titled *“The Word of God Is Source and Seed.”* The words of this hymn inspire us to an understanding that the Word made flesh is the seed that blossoms into the fruit that leads us to rejoice in the Lord, *Gaudeamus Domino!* It is the seed that blossoms in order to remind us that the Word has the power to heal and mend, even when our bones are bare and dry. It is the seed that blossoms so that we remember and believe in the passion of Christ, which brings us freedom from the grave.

The refrain of this hymn is translated for us to sing: *“In the Lord let us rejoice!”* It is a fitting refrain after each verse, for it is in our rejoicing that we come to understand the fullness of the fruit that is the Word made flesh. The rejoicing is a fitting end to each verse, for it is our rejoicing the Lord’s resurrection that gets final say. It is the rejoicing that we will find in the heavenly courts as we spend all of eternity with God.

We must remember that the seed continues to grow in us. The fruit bearing season ever approaches, as we return to watch Jesus live and love and die. Then, as the sun rises on the third day, we will indeed rejoice in the Lord; we will indeed spread the seed of good news to the world.

Amen.

