

LeMay Family Bible Study

February 7, 2022.

Title: First Fruits

Scripture Text:

1 Corinthians 15:20. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

Ex. 23:16. Celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the first fruits of the crops you sow in your field.

Jer. 2:3.

Reference Scriptures: Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:15

Content:

When Paul said Jesus is “the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20), he was drawing an analogy between the Old Testament offering and Jesus’ resurrection. As the Old Testament first fruits symbolized and consecrated the entire harvest that was to follow, Christ’s resurrection was the foretaste of the resurrection of all believers yet to come. His resurrection is our assurance that one day all believers will be raised from the dead and will receive new, resurrected bodies.

When Jeremiah speaks of first fruits, it is a symbolic reference to the children of Israel, who viewed as God’s first, to be set aside for himself. But the fact that Israel was God’s *firstfruits*, but not His *only* fruit, also shows the anticipation of other peoples and nations coming to the Lord, eventually.

The tradition of sacrificing the first and choicest crops were as a demonstration of devotion to God, by the children of Israel. It was also a act of acknowledgement that they were God’s chosen and set apart people. Giving the first and the best portions of the harvest as an offering to God, was acknowledgement that all the harvest—in fact, everything they had—came from God and belonged to Him.

In the New Testament, Paul's references to first fruits are to those that were new converts. This is Paul's distinction of those who had recently become followers of Jesus Christ, as the product of the early church, and Christ ministry. It is a metaphor for the products of the early church and Christ's ministry.

I can recall the times that I'd led someone to Christ, and the of times that I've been used to exhort someone or to admonish them, into an awareness of who they are as a believer and or just as a human being. I am grateful that I've had a hand in producing 4 of the most wonderful young people, ever to walk the face of the earth.

I know that I have cultivated good things and characteristics in my children and I believed that they have and will continue to multiply those seeds. The fact that I have that faith can be compared to what Jeremiah was saying about the children of Israel. **He understood that they were the chosen ones, yet that they weren't the only ones who would be called God's people.**

In God's own loving way, he provided a way for human kind to be reconciled to him, through his son Jesus. In this way, God shows humanity what he considers, first fruits. In that he gave his best; his only begotten son. It would therefore seem reasonable for humankind to give their best to God, with their families, their employers, etc. Given the example that God has given us, like Paul says in Romans 12:1, "this is your reasonable service."

So, as I considered and contemplated the content of this study and the aforementioned content, I found it particularly intriguing that **God had chosen to set aside a group of people for himself, but that the children of Israel were not the only people that he'd preordained to accepted into the fold.** I realized that the gentiles weren't an after thought, but that the Gentiles were viewed as adopted children.

It was also striking to me that the children of Israel recognized and acknowledged that God was the source of their provisions and they paid homage to him, with their sacrifices; *their first fruits*.

I've often correlated the act of giving the 10th of my finances with that of giving my time, my physical and mental labor. I think it's just as important and meaningful to show my appreciation of the gifts that God has given, with others through acts of kindness, charity and by performing things for them that they couldn't do for themselves, or that I do with more efficiency.

I feel as though the gifts and talents that I have at my disposal are for giving, sharing and to bless others with. Most importantly, those that are close to me. **Charity begins at home.**

When developing the narrative for this lecture I found the most tangible and relative example of my capacity to give of my first fruits, would be that of giving them to my children and to my fiancé. They represent the ones that I love the most and that I feel that I should strive the hardest for.

The irony of it all is that with children; it's a trade off. They give me joy, but there's no initial reciprocity from an infant in the form of fiscal resources, a youth, etc. It isn't until they are able to contribute to the financial status.

In that case of my fiancé it's the polar opposite. I feel as though I'm not only paying it forward but that I should also give her the very best that I can and with all that I have to give her. It's a joy for me to serve her and it's a pleasure also.

I know that there are times and things that I do that she conveys her appreciation for what I am able to do, and she always says that she's impressed and satisfied with what I do. This reminds me of the children of Israel in that they offered the best of their crops and their livestock. Because they revered God and they recognized that their blessings came from God.

There was also an expectation that there would be new mercies and greater blessings in harvests to come. This was their faith in action and a direct correlation to what Jeremiah said about them. In that there was an expectation that others would be grafted in to the fold.

Just as Jeremiah prophesied that there would be others would be coming into the fold, my fiancé also has demonstrated through her acts of faith and verbally, that she has grown to become one who believes that there are good things to come for us.

This new faith that she has is a direct response to how I have been responding to the circumstances that have been going on in our lives; things that have transpired and things that we both have faith that are coming. She shows me day by day, much like the way that the children of Israel gave their first fruits to show that they believed that their efforts show their thanks giving, for things to come; things that were unforeseen.

In my case I don't have to guess and I don't have to wonder. The things that my love has shown me, over the span of our relationship have proven to me, time and time again how much she loves me.

And although I cannot compare God's love for man to my fiancé's love for me, I have an earthly demonstration of what it looks like, through her. So, I give her my first fruits, because she's shown me so much already.

She's revealed her heart and her soul to me. I know where she's coming from. And I know her intentions and it makes me want to give her my very best. Whether I'm making her a soothing cup of her favorite warm beverage, or I'm just listening to her. I want her to know that my time is hers, first in the morning and last thing at night.

My money belongs to her; my first fruits are hers because she's given me the life that I have now. The luxury, the pleasures of having a wonderfully warm and generous woman to share love with, is mine now.

So, I acknowledge that my blessings come from God, through her. I understand that my calling as an exhorter starts and ends with my ability to be a good husband and father. Giving them my all, all the time is giving my first fruits. Listening to my love, the way that God listens to me and responds, is giving her my first fruits. Being in the moment and staying still, is the job. Being present and patient and compassionate, and learning all that I can about how to her is giving my first fruits.

The similarity that exists between the children of Israel and my giving of my first fruit to my love is that we expect that there will be fruit that is birthed from my efforts in our grandchildren. The hope and the expectation is that they will see what a flourishing loving family life, looks like.

My hope is that the next generation will be able to relish our giving our first fruits to each other, with our love and through our constant focus and adhering to the blessing that is before us. And that is, to build a legacy of love and harmony. One that isn't self-serving and one that gives our first fruits.

This is the faith that children of Israel demonstrated when they offered their first fruits. The faith that says there was going to be blessings for them in the future, and also appreciation for where they were presently.

Questions:

- 1) Why did God reject Cane's offering?
- 2) Describe what Paul meant when he says, "but now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruit of them that slept."
- 3) What kind of sacrifices does God honor?
- 4) What is the difference tithe and offerings?
- 5) Who was the first to pay tithes, in the bible?
- 6) Who do you think of, when you first come to consciousness?
- 7) What is a way that you feel a woman can give her husband, her first fruit?
- 8) What is a way that you feel a man can give his wife, his first fruit?