

Luke 6:39-49

January 3, 2010 – 2nd SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Three-Way Tie for a Great New Year

✦ **Spectral** (vv.39-42)

✦ **Fruity** (vv.43-45)

✦ **Solid** (vv.46-49)

In the name of Jesus, God's Name for Love, dear children of the heavenly Father:

The Lord's timing is exquisite in such personal ways. I was missing the pj's and "Good-night" prayers of my once little children, when the Lord started giving us grandchildren. Remember the first time those little hands tried to open a present? The little guy doesn't know the concept of something inside. Lots of coaching as he rips the paper into smaller pieces. "Look inside. See what's in there!" Finally the bright eyes light up in ways many people mistake for "Christmas."

"Christmas" lasts so much longer than earthly presents. The gifting began when God gave us His own Son for our Savior. In Ukraine Christians say, "Christ is born. Let us praise Him!" What a timeless Gift from God! Think past the bow in your driveway on four wheels and solid engineering. God ties His love triple tight as we approach the Gentile Christmas of Epiphany on January 6th. Call it a **Three-Way Tie for a Great New Year**. Consider the parables of our Lord to explain **Solid** and **Fruity**. But first...

✦ **Spectral** (vv.39-42)

Look it up. "Spectral" can mean *ghostly, phantom, haunted* – a kind of Harry Potter mentality. But God sent His **Spectral** gift from heavenly heights of *ethereal* beauty as angels sang *Gloria in Excelsis Deo* to the shepherds on Christmas Eve. God gives *supernatural*, **Spectral** sight through His eyes to all who admit their blindness, born in sin. Jesus wants us, His students, to see like Him, our Teacher.

We have a natural problem. God made a Law through Moses: "***Do not...put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD.***" (Leviticus 19:14 NIV) God demands that we see holy like Him. Yet we're so eager to talk – radio, talk shows, email bypassed by FaceBook and Twitter – but do we know what we're talking about? If it's on the Internet, it must be true – right? Even amateurs can fake a picture with someone else's face on someone else's body. Political satire screams with the blind leading the blind. But religion seems even worse. Jesus was warning us about eternal consequences.

He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher." Harry Potter's problem in the supernatural is like that of secular scientists. Seeking information outside of God is the blind leading the blind. One scientist wants millions of starving children fed with "global warming" money. He believes in "global warming"; he just wants the money spent efficiently.

But Jesus warns about eternity after "global warming" explodes in God-ignited global burning on Judgment Day. He's warning us about our blindness from a plank of self-righteous judging. "***Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.***" He may need your help, but in love as the Lord's Apostle Paul counsels: "***Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.***" (Galatians 6:1 NIV)

✦ **Fruity** (vv.43-45)

On today's Activities Page is what Garrison Keillor might call, "Good church basement humor." It's under "Regifting – The gift that keeps on giving." If you got something not quite right for Christmas,

why not regift it to the St. Croix LHS Silent Auction? Rules include: “4) Please, no fruitcakes.” Ah, the lowly fruitcake. In my youth I so enjoyed them, not realizing possible regifting.

In God’s **Three-Way Tie for a Great New Year** Jesus wants us **Fruity**, but not like fruitcake? The processed sugar of human intelligence cannot nourish and heal like fruit from God’s trees. Jesus explains with simple pictures. Don’t go looking for grapes on thorn bushes. **“Good fruit”** is useful, decent, moral and excellent. A clerical collar does not give anyone the right to go “fruity” on godless immorality. In true love God’s Son says, **“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”**

So if your mouth is full of cursing, what’s in your heart? With His Word, God wants us to take faith into our hearts up to God, and good works out of our heart down to our neighbor. Focusing on bad fruit of others will miss sins of ours. Listen to the whole list and God’s Christmas Solution: **“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”** (1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NIV) **Awesome Three-Way Tie:**

✦ **Solid** (vv.46-49)

People in the Pacific Northwest think they’re sitting **Solid** since hurricanes and tornadoes are far away. But what about the line of volcanoes called the Cascade Mountains, able to blow anytime like Mount Saint Helens? Things always look good while the sun is shining. But in a neighborhood like Hugo after a tornado some houses are standing, others are disasters in the pond. How you build makes a difference. But even if you’re a contractor, how do you build eternal souls you cannot see or touch?

That’s God’s priceless gift wrapped in a **Three-Way Tie for a Great New Year**. Sloppy building won’t do. Your everlasting soul needs the Master Builder to go to work and supply stout materials in Word and sacraments. Only Father, Son and Holy Spirit can outfit your soul for heavenly mansions.

Talk is cheap, especially in religion. Jesus asked, **“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”** Lots of listening without much doing? Judas Iscariot comes to mind. How quickly the traitor disciple destroyed his own life after three years of opportunities to hear God’s Word directly from Christ. How many of our adult or teen confirmands have lost their spiritual house for not building on the Rock?

Quiet weeks of winter lie ahead. Will they be lost and lonely? Not if you stay close by your Savior. It’s time to reinforce your faith foundation. Time to sit quietly by in Bible study and prayer as God the Spirit seals the doors and windows of your heart against cold winds. He will light the fire to warm your soul. Storms and floods strike without warning. But building on God, or better, when God builds you, nothing can shake your life. You can be like the shipwrecked boy rescued and asked, “Didn’t you tremble all night long?” You can answer, “Sure, I trembled, but the rock never trembled once.”

Tied to Christ, have a **Great New Year**. And as Martin Luther concluded: This sermon is now in your ears. May God bring it also to your hands and feet as we pray to God for grace. ¹ Amen.

¹ *Sermons of Martin Luther*, “POSTIL.” John N. Lenker, ed. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY: A Lesson on Mercy. The Mote and the Beam, Luke 6:36-42. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, re-printed 1988, Vol. IV, pp. 97ff.

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New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church
180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126