

Friday, July 31, 2020

**A grain of wheat = much fruit**

**- Pastor Hank French**

*“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (John 12:23-24).*

With this text, the focus of John’s Gospel shifts from Jesus’ public ministry to his fast-approaching death and resurrection. When Jesus says that “the hour has come for the son of man to be glorified,” he means that he will soon be crucified and that his death will glorify him. His death will bear witness to his majesty, his faithfulness, and his love and compassion for all to see. And it will change things.

Jesus previously told the crowds, “I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again (John 10:17-18). In John’s Gospel, Jesus is not a victim. His life is not taken from him, he lays it down for the beloved—for all of us, the beloved of God. And, in the resurrection, he will take up his life again—for all of us, the beloved of God. And it will change things.

Jesus uses a powerful word-picture to explain what his death is all about and what it accomplishes. “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” Any farmer would know this to be true.

In this word-picture, obviously the grain of wheat is a symbol for Jesus. He will die. But his death is not a tragedy; it will bear much fruit.

The fruit born from that “single grain” is a symbol for all the Christian communities of faith that will be established following his death and resurrection. And they will change things. In time, communities of faith spread across the globe, witnessing to Jesus faithfulness, love and compassion through their own faithfulness, love and compassion.

First Lutheran Church is among the fruit that grew from that one “single grain”—Jesus. And through our faithfulness, love and compassion—mirroring that of Jesus—we keep the change going.

Prayer: Loving God, thank you for that “single grain” who was willing to lay down his life and then take it up again so that a multitude of communities of faith could continue the work that he began. Amen.