

The Fruit of the Land

by Rev. Canon Dr. Dan Alger

Throughout the Scripture, the land and the people are inextricably bound. Adam, and through him all humanity, is created from the dust of the earth. In fact, the Hebrew word for ground or earth is *adama*. The closeness of the people and the land is shown from the very beginning as Adam was made from the *adama*. Adam was then given the command to work the land, keep the garden, and to be fruitful and multiply to fill the earth and subdue it. So, the origins of humanity are in the land, the purposeful work of mankind is to release the potential of the land, and the trajectory of humanity is to grow into a community that shares the land.

This intimate connection with the land and the community is reiterated in God's promises to Abraham as God tells him to go to the land that will be revealed to him and that through him, God will make a people who will possess the land. Again, the land has meaning because of the people who inhabit it, work it, and share life on it, and the value of community is revealed through the import that God places on shared proximity and geographic space.

The fullness of the beauty of God's plan becomes evident as the story of the Scripture reveals that the work of Jesus was to make a people by his grace offered through sacrifice and resurrection, ultimately resulting in a new heavens and a new earth where the people of God live in community with one another, enjoying fellowship with God and inhabiting the renewed Garden. God, land, people--these three are intimately connected in the story of redemption.

We are the people of the story of redemption. We are the church--more specifically, we are Church of the Redeemer. The land that we are purchasing, living, and working on has value because on it we share life together, and through the fruits of our labor, we will show that we are not simply celebrating the concept of redemption, but we are offering actual redemption through Word, Sacrament, and the service of God's people on the land God provides.

Our stewardship of what God is doing in our midst is concerned then with the flourishing of both the physical land and the community of God's people. We give of our finances and our time to purchase and develop the land so that it will bear fruit, and so should we be intentional in engaging in the community that it will be fruit in our lives and our city as well.

We look around our land and literally see the fruit of the land in our farm. We see Lena and her team toiling so that the land will bear fruit and that this fruit might multiply. It takes sweat and time

and skill and effort. Our purpose is for this land not only to bear physical fruit and vegetables, but also spiritual fruit in the multiplying of the Body of Christ, which also takes time and skill and effort.

A farm does not get planted and grow without intentionality: the same is true of being a part of the community of God. Living life as a member of a church family that strives to be deeply rooted in the truth of Christ, growing in our knowledge and love of Christ, and multiplying through the conversion and discipleship of others does not happen by accident. The structures and happenings of our church--community groups, triads, catechesis, alpha courses, summer growth series, volunteer opportunities, youth groups, catechesis of the Good Shepherd, events, trainings etc.--are all avenues of connection for you to participate in the cultivating of community. These are the places where you can dig to plant your roots and bear fruit. Redeemer is not a grocery store where you purchase fruit already cultivated; it is a place for you to grow in your knowledge and love of Jesus and engage in service to him in the world. We want to challenge you to be intentional in your pursuit of community here at Redeemer--make friends, participate in our shared life, let others into your life. You are the true fruit of this land, but it will not be yielded without your pursuit and participation.

One day, when Jesus returns, we will all be gathered in the city of God, set in the center of the garden of God, surrounded by the church--the people of God. Now, as we look around the land that the Lord has provided for us, let us see all of our efforts and shared life here as a foretaste of what is to come. May we live into the call given to us as the people of God on the land of God to be fruitful and multiply as we grow in the image of Christ and bring others to know the glorious goodness of the Gospel.

