

Church service on October 6th, 2024 in Leipzig - Thanksgiving: Psalm 104, 24 - Apple sermon by Pastor Konrad Rönnecke

" How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.." Psalm 104,24

Dear congregation, I have brought a festival preacher with me today: He is an apple. (The apple is introduced). Every apple is a miracle of God's creation. Every apple reminds us of God, the creator and sustainer of the world. And that is why an apple can give us a very important sermon. As soon as you look at the apple, hold him in your hand, smell him, listen to him or even bite into him, it is like reading a sermon - what does the apple thus teach us?

Botanical: The apple belongs to the rosewood family. There are around 20,000 types of apple. Through intense cultivation, the apple varieties have been refined more and more: There are sweet and sour, juicy and dry apples, early and late varieties, red and yellow, storable and apples that can be eaten immediately. You can even drink apples. My grandfather ran a small cider press on the side. The apple juice was bottled. And he had labels printed for it. They said: "In every apple, let me tell you, there is 100 days of sunshine." An apple like this is a small power station, a power bank. But above all: every apple is a miracle of God's creation: "Lord, how great and numerous your works are! You have wisely arranged them all, and the earth is full of your creatures." I want to use apples to illustrate how great God's works are, how wisely they are arranged.

1. An apple like this is no coincidence. An apple doesn't just fall from the sky. Or else you would see a lot of bumps. An apple doesn't just appear suddenly, out of nowhere. Every apple has a story: At the beginning there was a small bud, then the blossom (show the blossom remains) and the fruit develops from the fertilized blossom. At first it is tiny, but over weeks and months it matures into a beautiful apple. We humans are not just here by chance. Every person is a thought, a gift from God. I read somewhere: "Whoever meets a small child meets God in the act." For this reason alone it is right to stand up for life, including unborn life. Because every person is unique. No one is the same as another, just as no two apples are the same. This is simply ingenious. Every person is unique, important and valuable, wanted and brought into being by God, equipped with special skills and gifts, just like the very different type of apple. We would be missing something, we would be poorer if you didn't exist. The 'Apple Preacher' tells us: It is no coincidence that you exist: you are wanted by God, unique and valuable.

2. An apple like this has to ripen. Before an apple can be harvested, it has experienced and endured a lot. What do you think an apple has experienced in its life? - Rain and storms, sunshine and dark nights, cold and heat, hail and drought. Sometimes these events leave their mark. This can be seen on the skin of the apple. For example, spots or a small puncture may appear. This indicates that there was not only sunshine and happy times. And yet: All of this was necessary, all of it was important so that the apple could ripen, big and juicy, beautiful and tasty.

For me, this is also a parable for our lives. Let's look at the past year: despite a beautiful summer, not everything in our lives was sunshine and joy. Of course, we have experienced some beautiful things. But there have also been difficulties and worries, hardships and sadness, anger and loss.

Nevertheless, dear congregation, it was often the difficult things that we had to bear that made us grow and mature. For example, an exam that we failed. Nevertheless, I did not give up and did not avoid an awkward situation. I bore the burden patiently and did not shake it off. And in doing so, we gained experience. Our lives have gained depth. We have matured; also in our faith in Jesus Christ. Because nothing in our lives is a coincidence. God the Lord wants us to become ever more intimate, ever more firmly connected to him. And even difficult things in life can renew our prayer life and strengthen our faith. The apple tells us: sunshine and rain, good and difficult times are there for us to mature, to become big and strong in our bond with Jesus Christ.

3. An apple like this is not there for its own sake. Every apple is a small house. - Cut open an apple - There are 5 little rooms in every apple. And in every little room there is a kernel. Do you know the children's song "an apple is a funny invention, there are five little rooms inside, just like in a house"? We humans are not called into life for our own sake either. We are born into a family. God has put us in a class, in a workplace, in my church community. We are there for each other and should give honor to God, the Creator and Savior Jesus Christ. God has made us rich, not so that we can accumulate more wealth or use everything for ourselves. God has made us rich so that we can share, so that we can pass on whatever we have. There are enough possibilities and opportunities for this: for example, Bread for the World, the food banks in our country, Hope for Eastern Europe, Lutheran Church Mission, community, the church building projects... Dear congregation, God is not stingy. We can see that today when we look at the gifts on the altar. And that is just a small part of what we have at our disposal every day. God the Lord is concerned to make us happy and grateful. The Viceroy of Thuringia Elisabeth (1207 - 1231), who took political responsibility as a young woman and died at the age of 24, is said to have answered the question "How can we help the poorest of the poor?" with: "We have to make people happy." And she worked hard to achieve this goal using all her strength and resources: she fed the hungry, helped orphans and ensured that those who sought her help also heard about the good news of God in Jesus Christ. In the hospital that she founded in Marburg, there was a chapel for prayer and in every sickroom there was a cross with Christ in front of it. The apple with its little rooms tells us: I am not here for my own sake. God has entrusted me with people for whom I am there, for whom I fold my hands; a community that waits for me; brothers and sisters; a neighbor who is grateful for a kind word... .

4. Fourthly the apple teaches us something inconspicuous, inedible and yet so important. Maybe you can think of it yourself? - The stem. As children we made a paintbrush out of it.

The fact that an apple is created, that it ripens, that it gives shelter and is there for others, all of which would not be possible if it were not for this small part, the stem.

The stem is the connection to the tree. Through this small stem, everything that is needed for growth and prosperity is transported into the apple. The stem provides support; firm support in storms and wind, in hail and sunshine. The small stem is strong enough to hold the apple, which can easily weigh 200g or more, to the tree. What holds us, dear congregation? What holds you, dear friend? Don't we humans also need support in the ups and downs of our lives? Who carries you when the storm of life howls? When fear and sadness and loss grab hold of our lives? Who holds us when overflowing joy makes us fly away in ecstatic forgetfulness and carelessness?

Like an apple holds the tree, we too need to be connected to the source of all life. And the source that gives us life, fulfillment and strength is Jesus Christ. "I am!" says Jesus: "I am the bread of life. I am the water of life. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the light in the darkness of the world." - "I am!" says Jesus. Perhaps we think, that the Prayer before meals: is senseless. Perhaps we think, praying the Lord's prayer in service over and over again does not achieve anything. Perhaps we think, the little wafer and the sip of wine at communion are effectless. It's all so inconspicuous, so little and small. What can it do? Can it help me, give me support, give me life in it's fullness? Oh yes! dear congregation! It may seem unspectacular and little to us. But the grace before meals, the service, the Lord's Prayer, Holy Communion, the word of devotion - that is always strong enough to keep me with Jesus Christ; to connect me to the life and power of the risen Lord. As inconspicuous as the stem may seem to us: it gives us support. It is the connection to life, just as the grace before meals, the service, the Lord's Prayer, Holy Communion, the word of devotion is the connection to Jesus Christ.

When you pick up an apple, let yourself be reminded: 1) It is no coincidence that I exist: God wanted me. 2) Sun and rain, happy and difficult things make me become mature. 3) We are not just there for ourselves. 4) Even if it seems small and inconspicuous to me: prayer, the Lord's Prayer, church services, and Holy Communion keep me with Jesus Christ, like the stem keeps the apple on the tree.

"Lord, how great and numerous are your works! You have arranged them all wisely, and the earth is full of your creatures." Amen. Pastor Konrad Rönnecke

Kinderlied: In meinem kleinen Apfel

Text: bei Else Fromm in einer Liedersammlung für Kinder, 1905 / Melodie: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and common time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the lyrics: "In mei-nem klei-nen Ap-fel, da sieht es lus-tig aus, es". The second staff contains the melody for the second line: "sind da - rin fünf Stüb - chen grad' wie in ei - nem Haus." The melody is simple and characteristic of a children's song.

2) In jedem Stübchen wohnen zwei Kerne braun und klein. / Sie schlafen dort und träumen vom warmen Sonnenschein.

3) Und alle Apfelkerne, die haben diesen Traum, dass einst aus ihnen werde ein neuer Apfelbaum.

4) Wenn wir den Apfel essen, dann kommen sie heraus. Wir tun sie in die Erde im Garten vor dem Haus.

5) Dann wird aus jedem Kerne ein Baum, der wächst heran. / Ein Baum mit grünen Blättern und vielen Äpfeln dran.

6) Sie träumen auch noch weiter, gar einen schönen Traum, / wie sie einst werden hängen am schönen Weihnachtsbaum.