

**“...but if it dies, it produces much fruit.”**

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

*Once upon a time, Catherine Marshall wrote an article entitled, “**When We Dare to Trust God.**” It told how she had been bedfast for six months with a serious lung infection. No amount of medicine, treatments, or prayer helped. She was terribly depressed. She wrote:*

*“One day, someone gave me a pamphlet about a woman-missionary, who had contracted a strange disease. This missionary had been sick for eight years and couldn’t understand why God let this tragedy happen to her. Daily, she prayed for health to resume her missionary work. **But** (and there’s that proverbial **BUT** in life!), her prayers went unanswered.*

*One day, in utter desperation, she cried out to God:*

**‘All right, I give up. If you want me to be an invalid the rest of my life, that’s your business!’**

*(ASIDE: Within two weeks, she was fully recovered!)*

*I laid down the pamphlet. I was deeply troubled by the strange story. It didn’t make sense. Yet, I could not forget that story.*

*Then, one morning, I cried out to God in words very similar to the missionary’s:*

**‘God, I am sick & tired of asking you for health. You decide if you want me healthy or not.’**

*It was at that very moment, I later realized, that my health began to return to me.*

*I share the story of the missionary-woman and Catherine Marshall with you because they illustrate, precisely, what Jesus is talking about in today’s Gospel from St. John, which I just read to you.*

*What, precisely, do they illustrate that Jesus is talking about in St. John’s Gospel you ask?*

**Well, I’m glad you asked that question!**

*They illustrate the oft, illusive teaching of Jesus that ‘...unless a grain of wheat dies, it remains just a grain of wheat ...and it cannot bear fruit.’ Or, to put it another way, unless we die to our own will, we cannot bear fruit for God!*

*Had the missionary **not** died to her own will and said, **“Alright, God, I give up,”** she probably would have remained an invalid. Instead, she got well and bore fruit.*

*Had Catherine Marshall **not** died to herself and said to God: **“God, you decide what you want,”** she probably would have remained sick. Instead, she got well and bore fruit.*

**Note Well:** *had neither recovered, that would have been **OK** with them, too, as they had, both, totally and completely resigned their fate to God...either way, one way or the other!*

*HERE, my plot thickens. Both of these stories now transport us to the Garden of Gethsemane.*

*During Our Lord’s agony there, he cried out to God:*

**“Father ...not my will ...but your will be done.”** *Lk.22:42*

*Had Jesus **NOT** died to his will in the garden that night, like a grain of wheat... you and I would **NOT** be saved from our sins this day!*

*Such stories: the missionary, Cath. Marshall, Gethsemane-Christ--they teach us that we must be willing to die to our own will if we wish to bear fruit for God. They teach us that we must be willing to trust God and put ourselves in his hands if we wish to gain eternal life. That does NOT suggest that we give up our responsibilities to try our very best to do his will as we perceive it. In other words, it does NOT mean that we should sit back, go on ‘spiritual-welfare,’ and let him do the rest. NO, it means we must do our absolute best to serve him and THEN trust him to do the rest—when we can do no more. Then, bend our will to his; die to his will. THAT’s when we place ourselves, totally, into his hands.*

NOW—concretely, what does all this mean for you and me in everyday life? Imagine, if you would, these possibilities:

**Suppose**, just suppose, our marriage is falling apart and we need help, BUT...are too proud to ask for it. Of course, this presupposes we both want to live out our vows. Then dying to our own will means dying to our own pride and seeking that help.

Or, just **suppose** close friends tell us we are developing a drinking problem, BUT...we keep denying it, in spite of growing evidence. Dying to our own will means admitting there is a problem, seeking medical help, & whatever else is necessary to bend our will to God's, i.e., to the truth!

**Suppose** a family member has hurt us and we are holding a grudge against him/her. Dying to our own will means forgiving that person from the heart and treating him/her with love once again or, at the very least, with common civility. You see:

Dying to our will is NOT **easy**; no one ever said it was.

The missionary didn't find it easy to tell God she'd accept whatever fate he decided for her.

Marshall didn't find it easy to tell God she'd accept whatever fate he decided for her.

Jesus didn't find it easy to agree to do whatever his Father wanted him to do.

**BUT** ...all three, having done all they could possibly do, put themselves, totally, into his hands. They died to themselves and, as a result, bore much fruit for God.

So, this is the Good News of today's Gospel that, once we've **exhausted** our perception of God's plan for us, we then put our lives in God's hands and ... 'let go and let God' ...do with us as he wishes.

This then is the Good News of today's Gospel, that, if we imitate the grain of wheat AND die to ourselves, we will bear much fruit and gain eternal life!

I close with this prayer:

**God our Father,**  
**As we prepare to break bread together at your table, help us realize that,**  
**had not the grains of wheat been ground into flour,**  
**and, had not the individual grapes been crushed into juice,**  
**we would not be able to share this holy meal...of his body & his blood.**  
**Help us to imitate the wheat and the grapes**  
**and offer our lives to you**  
**for whatever use of them**  
**you wish to make.**  
**Amen.**

May our almighty God, our Abba, bless you...  
the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.