

“Fruit of the Spirit”
April 24, 2011
Grove Presbyterian Church

It is the horizon land called the land of milk and honey.
A land beyond where we can take ourselves
Not beyond time but inside time
We must be brought.
We cannot bring ourselves
We can take, but we cannot bring
Led by hand, following the pillar of light.
We weak refugees
Famished exiles we
Who here really deserves where the divine truth wishes to take us?
We refugees now have a home

On toward a land of milk and honey.
Rich and flowing
Given without us earning it.

Milk – goats and sheep and cows – it is their natural gift
Drink rich cream deep
Fresh and udder warm
Mother warm
Finally we are fed
Milk moustache grins

Honey – the bees do all the work, busy bees
Buzzing from flower to flower,
Bringing the nectar home
Hives so vast and humming the honey seeps down the bark of trees
All we have to do is scoop it up with sticky hands

Honey and milk
How fitting that if stored in golden pitchers or copper jars, the honey and milk turn sour
How fitting that they are best stored in the most common of vessels, like glass, clay, flesh
Milk curdles quick in the heat, best enjoyed right away, or kept for later when
transformed, churned, to cheese or curd
Honey’s shelf life is indefinite

What a change from the rocky wilderness where we wander now
Stone and sand and dry and dust.
Tired of the barren
Worn out from the wasteland.

The land of promise is promised
What a change from this slavery in which we exist now
Told what to do and when to do it
No day of rest
No freedom of choice
Hopes met with futility
No chance ever to be better than we are now
Curtailed

The land beyond, after the long way.
Where we choose
Where we can be and become
And once there, the chance.
With milk and honey we don't to have to do a thing except receive
Now nourished we will want to cultivate everything
For it is a ripe land
Where we can produce with happy toil what is good.
Ready for those who are ready.

It is a way of living ready for those who are ready.
For those truly ready realize it isn't a place at all.
Not a land but a way.
Not a place, but a new being
Not somewhere, but some-when
The milk of kindness
The sweet honey of God's sweet word
The fruit of the new Spirit overflowing, pouring out
Home never is where but who

New Testament Lesson

Galatians 5: 22-25

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

As is announced, "we are an Easter people living in a Good Friday world."

Today we hear how the former things are gone
The old hatreds and barren resentments
The old pride of military and corporate power and religious arrogance
The old forced regulations and arid laws
The old rigid contempt and self-righteousness
The old prejudices that divide, the tribal feuds
Tricking ourselves out with trinkets and lies
All these acts of an enslaved humanity
All that the cross, the crucifixion is

All these that are death
They may think they win

But the way of the resurrected Christ alone brings promise
The surprising, laughing joke that is resurrection
The new freedom of a recreated humanity
Living by delight of the Spirit rather than accumulating the clog of stuff
The kindness that reconciles, for we are one race
The generous compassion and the humility
The inner work of an eager faith to do the positive
The true power of servanthood, sacrifice, and religion that serves
An authentic love and hopeful forgiveness

We are an Easter people living in a Good Friday world

There are those who talk Easter
Then there are those who do Easter.