



St. Michael and All Angels.

The Collect.

O EVERLASTING God, who hast ordained and constituted the services of Angels and men in a wonderful order; Mercifully grant that, as thy holy Angels always do thee service in heaven, so, by thy appointment, they may succour and defend us on earth; through Jesus Christ or Lord. *Amen.*

2 In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. (Isaiah 4:2) 1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: 2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; 3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: 4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. 5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. (Isaiah 11:1-5) "...behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. 9 For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. 10 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree. (Zech 3:8-10) Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD (Zech 6:12)

If we distinguish between Vines and Trees, we will observe that the vine correlates to the branches on trees, but on a Vine, the branches stem from the trunk of the vine. Christ is both the root and branches of the Tree of Life for He is that Tree of Life in all its Perfections. He provides all nutrients and provisions necessary to make a wholesome and bountiful fruit; however, if the fruit fails, it fails of its own depravity and not of God's provision. My wife has a persimmon tree (of the Asian variety) in our back yard. If conditions are ideal, the tree produces wonderful, large persimmons that

are delicious to eat, and perfect in appearance. She watches the tree constantly as the fruit ripens. Unfortunately, she is not the only one who is watching. Birds and squirrels also are watching to get to the ripened persimmons before their rightful owner can take possession.

These little thieves are much like the "little foxes" of sin spoken of by Solomon in his Song. They do not take much of the fruit. They just peck a small part, or bite a tiny bit from near the base of the stem – then the whole fruit is ruined. These fowl of the air (Matt 13:32) are those little demons that come to live in the branches of the church to destroy her fruit. God has better plans for us than to have us fall victim to the deceits of the world and the weakness of the flesh.

Christ is our all-sufficient Branch. He is the conveyance whereby the juice of life flows from the Root of the tree, up the trunk, and out the branches to the fruit. If worms interdict the flow of nourishment by eating away at the life-juices, the fruit will suffer want. If the tree suffers draught, water must be provided for survival of the fruit. God provides an abundance of the Water of Life to us so that none need famish of thirst. If the Water gives out, it is because we have refused to drink of it.

Christ is like unto that Branch that proceedeth out from God the Father. A Branch is always reaching out, and that is what Christ is doing for us. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* (John 3:16) As the only Begotten of the Father, Christ is of the same substance of the Father, just as a Branch is of the same substance with the Tree. If your new bible identifies Christ in any other way than only Begotten Son, please throw that bible away and get a REAL one.

The fruit of a branch or vine must always exhibit the same nature as the tree or vine from which it derives life. Christians, being the fruit of the Garden of God, must bear the nature and likeness of God, our Maker, in the same way that a Black Corinth grape is distinguished from a Concord grape – by the vine which has provided it life. If we are called Christians, we should act, look, and feel like Christians. When a stranger meets us, he should have no problem in recognizing that we are fruit from our Maker's Vine.

If we spring from the Vine itself, we should become branches providing life to the fruit. Our lives should be fruitful and honoring of the Vine from which we, ourselves, draw and transmit life. Woe be unto us if we fail to produce abundant fruit in our lives: *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.* (John 15:1-8)

Beware of false and evil fruits! We all produce some kind of fruit – either good,

or bad. We must often stop and consider the kind of fruit we are producing. Is it the kind of fruit that makes joyful the heart of man, or is it the kind of fruit that takes away joy, that does not promote life and faith of the fruit? What has been your fruit today? Does it possess the same character of the One you profess to emulate?