

Message

Saved to Bear Fruit

It will soon be time for harvesting fruit around here. Strawberries are already in season. Sweet cherries are scheduled to come in, in mid-June. Sour cherries in early July, Peaches in August. Apples in August and September. If you are someone who likes to pick and store fruit for the winter, the busy season is coming. That is, if the trees and vines do what they are supposed to do. It is disappointing to look forward to having fruit and then discovering that the trees or vines just did not produce. Where we live, the weather can wreak havoc with fruit harvest. A late frost while the blooms are pushing can be devastating. No fruit means loss for the grower. Some of the trees may be nice to look at, but their real purpose is to produce fruit, and if there is no fruit, they have not fulfilled their purpose.

Last week I began a series of sermon studies looking at this passage from John 15. We are going to continue to look at this chapter over the next several weeks. I believe it contains important information for us as followers of Jesus. It helps us to know what the life of a Disciple looks like. That is a word that we use often to talk about followers of Jesus. **Disciple** does not just refer to the 12 men that Jesus chose to be with him. All who choose to follow Jesus are **Disciples**.

We are primarily looking today at the first 8 verses, the Word picture of a Vine and Branches that Jesus paints for us. **Why does Jesus tell this parable?** I believe that the simple answer is that he wanted to emphasize **the importance of producing fruit**. Branches exist for the purpose of producing fruit.

This passage takes place on the night Jesus would be betrayed. It is the night that Jesus ate the Passover with some of his followers.. He had washed their feet. He gave them the experience of the Bread and the Cup. He spends several hours with them teaching them. As He has been teaching, he has made reference to **a time of separation** that is about to come. He talks about **going to His Father's house** to prepare a place. He will be leaving them. But **they will be staying in this world**. The disciples had not anticipated this time of separation. They expected that Jesus was going to set up an earthly kingdom and that they would be involved in ruling with him. But Jesus tells them something different. In his teaching, particularly in this chapter, Jesus is teaching them what their lives should look like after he is gone. He does not expect them to be sitting around waiting for Him to come back. They are to be active. **Their task will be to produce fruit**. We continue to live in this period of separation. Jesus is in heaven and we are waiting for his return. But we have a task to be occupied with while we wait. It is the same task that Jesus assigned to those who were gathered in that room with him that night.

Last week we introduced the parable. There are several characters in the parable. **Jesus is the Vine. His Father is the Gardener**. It is the work of the **Gardener** to choose a vine, to prepare the soil, to plant the vine and to care for the vine in order for it to be productive. The vine has a purpose as well – to produce branches that will produce fruit. The **vine** will be responsible for carrying the life giving sap to the branches so that they can produce. And then there are the **branches**. Jesus says to His followers – **YOU are the branches**. The **branch exists for one purpose – to produce fruit**. **Some branches are content only to be attached to the vine. It is enough to be “saved”**, to have the hope of eternal life. And yet while they are attached to the vine, they do not produce fruit. **Some branches suppose that it is enough that they produce a lot of leaves and appear to be healthy and beautiful**. And yet they do not produce fruit. I fear that there are a lot of branches like that. They put on a good show, to make others think they are disciples, but in reality there is nothing of substance there. They are not producing the fruit for which they were brought into existence. But the purpose of a branch is to bring forth fruit. Vs. 8 ***“This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”***

So, **we are clear about that – We exist to produce Fruit**. NOW, what does that mean. What is the fruit that we are to be producing. Last week, I pointed out that in the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was referred to as the Vine of God. I quoted the passage from Isaiah 5.

Isaiah 5:1-2, 7

5 I will sing for the one I love (Yahweh)

a song about his vineyard:

My loved one had a **vineyard
on a fertile hillside.**

**² He dug it up and cleared it of stones
and planted it with the choicest vines.**

**He built a watchtower in it
and cut out a winepress as well.**

**Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,
but it yielded only bad fruit.**

⁷The vineyard of the LORD Almighty

is the nation of Israel,

and the people of Judah

are the vines he delighted in.

**And He looked for justice, but saw bloodshed;
for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.**

The vine of Israel had only produced bad fruit. **God was looking for behavior that conformed to His will.** Instead of justice, the Lord only found bloodshed and violence. Instead of righteousness, the Lord only found oppression. **Fruit refers to the Acts of People.** The actions of a person are the outward evidence of the inward nature. Jesus says, **“A bad tree, produces bad fruit.”** Paul says in Ephesians 5:7 **Walk as children of light⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),** So, **the fruit that we are to be producing as branches is behavior that conforms to God’s standard of behavior – righteousness.** God has given us direction about the kind of behavior that He desires. When we obey God’s word, we will produce righteousness.

A second understanding of what fruit looks like is found in Galatians 5. First, what does **bad fruit** look like: **¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy,[Ⓜ] drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do[Ⓜ] such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

Those behaviors are bad fruit. The bad fruit is contrasted with a different list of qualities: These are Christlike qualities. **²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** So another way of understand what fruit is Christlike Character.

Fruit can also refer to other people who are influenced by our witness to become followers of Jesus. Andrew Murray, in his little devotional booklet on this passage write this: **“No, Christian, the one object with which you have been made a member of Christ’s Body is that the Head may have you to carry out His saving work. The one object God had in making you a branch is that Christ may through you bring life to men.”**

Christ has drawn you to Himself for the purpose of bringing forth fruit in your life. The fruit of righteousness and justice. The fruit of a Christlike character. The fruit of others who become followers of Jesus. **This is to the Father’s Glory, that you bear much fruit!** So that is why you have been brought to new life. You have not been saved so you can just look forward to going to heaven when you die. That is a benefit we receive. But We have been saved for the purpose of producing Fruit. How fruitful is your life?

Examen – May I suggest an exercise for you this week. It is a spiritual exercise or discipline known as Examen. At the end of your day, sit for a few minutes of quiet reflection. Ask the Lord to guide your thoughts. Think back over the day. Ask the Lord to show you fruitful behavior – an act of obedience, an act displaying

the character of Christ; an act of witnessing to someone, where you encouraged someone to make a commitment to God. Write down the evidence from your life where you saw fruit. Give thanks to God for the privilege of serving Him. If you become aware of times when you could have been more fruitful, confess that and ask God to help you do better.