

THAT YOU MAY HAVE LIFE

(A Study of the Gospel of John)

The Secret of Fruitfulness

On this day, nearly 1,987 years ago, Jesus began His final march toward the cross.

- His disciples, the people who knew Him best in this world, still did not really understand why He had to die upon a cross.
- Even today, many are confused by the centrality of the cross in the Christian faith.
- Always there have been those who scoffed at “the foolishness of the cross.”

As the Holy Spirit said through the Apostle Paul in his letter to the believers in Corinth,

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

As we worship this morning, we begin with our eyes upon the cross and our hearts upon the Savior hanging there in our place.

- We contemplate His innocence and our guilt.
- We consider the great exchange:
 - Jesus took our sins upon Himself.
 - He gives His righteousness to each of us who believe.

Peter, once a foot-in-mouth fisherman, transformed by the power of Christ into a consummate theologian and preacher par excellence, summarizes in two verses that which cannot be fully explained in a dozen volumes: Christ,

1 Peter 2:24–25 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness— by whose stripes you were healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

TEXT: John 15:1-11

The disciples had made no plans for the other side of the cross.

When Jesus died there and His body was put in Joseph’s tomb, they literally did not know what to do. They hid in a house in Jerusalem, hoping they would not be found and crucified as Jesus was. Only after the women discovered the resurrection, did the disciples venture out to see for themselves.

So, it is no exaggeration to say that the disciples had made no plans for what to do after the cross.

But Jesus had plans for those disciples, and not just the twelve, but for all who trusted in Him.

- We saw last week that Jesus told them they would not be alone. The Holy Spirit would actually move inside of them to lead, guide, and comfort them.
- And next Jesus tells them how to live fruitful lives as His followers.

Now, let me pause here to ask you a very individualized question:

- Do you identify yourself as a follower of Christ?
- **Do you know how to live a fruitful life in Christ?**
 - **Do you know what a fruitful life is?**
 - **Do you know what will enable you to have one?**

Let us listen and consider as carefully these instructions of Jesus as those early disciples must have done to hear how they could be success-filled, fruitful, followers of Jesus.

John 15:1-11 1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. 9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.

To help His disciples understand, Jesus used an illustration with which they would have been very familiar. They all knew how grapes grow on a grape vine. The disciples knew that

- **No branch of the vine could produce grapes unless it was connected to the vine.**
- **Any branch that did not grow grapes would be cut off by the vinedresser.**
- **Even producing branches would often be pruned in order to increase their fruitfulness.**

But Jesus isn't teaching the disciples how to be farmers. He is teaching them how to be disciples, followers of Christ. So we need to ask four questions?

I. WHO IS JESUS TALKING ABOUT IN THIS ANALOGY?

Jesus does not leave us guessing.

John 15:1, 5 1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ...5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. ..."

- **The vine is Jesus.**
- **The vinedresser is God the Father.**
- **The branches are believers, followers of Christ.**

Now, what does Jesus, the True Vine, expect of His branches? That they bear fruit.

Of which branches does He expect this?

- Does Jesus expect this of Bro. Rick? Bro. Mark? All the pastors of the church?
- Does the Lord expect this of the deacons, that they be fruitful?
- Does He expect this of other leaders in the church?
- Who else does Christ expect to be a fruitful follower?
- All of us who are saved. All of us who are born again?

Are you born again? Are you going to heaven when you die?

Then Jesus expects you too as a believer, as His follower, to bear fruit.

Now understand that bearing fruit does not make you a follower. We cannot earn our way to heaven by bearing fruit. We are saved by trusting Christ and what He did upon the cross, and by faith inviting Him to be the Lord of our lives. But after we are saved, Jesus expects us as saved followers to bear fruit in our day to day lives.

That leads to my second question:

II. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BEAR FRUIT?

Gal. 5:22-23 helps us a lot here.

1. Love	6. Goodness
2. Joy	7. Faithfulness
3. Peace	8. Gentleness
4. Patient endurance	9. Self-control
5. Kindness	

However, we also need to read Romans 1:13 which calls People won to Christ a fruit. The fruit of evangelism. **10. People won to Christ**

So, how does Jesus expect us to live our lives as His followers?

Wow! How in the world can we live like that? And that is the next question.

III. HOW DOES A PERSON BEAR FRUIT?

John 15:5 "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

By abiding in Christ.

- To stay
- To reside
- To remain
- To continue
- To keep on keeping on

Can a person bear fruit simply by trying to bear fruit?

No, Apart from Christ, we can do nothing.

What does it mean to “abide in Christ?” Again, Jesus tells us.

v. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

- **living the cleansed life** (1 Jn. 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.)

v. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

- **live in His Word**

v. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you* will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

- **pray, “ask”**

v. 10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

- **obey His commandments**

IV.WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO DO NOT BEAR FRUIT?

John 15:6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

A. If a person bears no fruit

- **That person is not in Christ** (2 Corinthians 5:17 ... if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.)
- **That person is lost**
- **Their name is not in the Book of Life**
- **They will be cast into the lake of fire.** (Revelation 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.)

The evidence of genuine salvation is a changed life! Not a perfect life, but a life made different than it was – a changed life.

My friend, if this is you. You need to put your faith in Christ today!

But Christ does not just want some fruit. **John 15:8** **By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.**

B. What about those who just bear a little fruit?

- **There is change in their lives that gives evidence of salvation,**
- **but they are far from fruitful.**

Paul speaks of people like this in his letter of **1 Cor. 3:10-15** **10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. What happens to the man whose works are burned up?**

- **He suffers loss but is still saved.**

Oh dear family of faith at St. Andrew Baptist Church, I love you! You are so dear and precious to me.

- And there are many of you for whom the Day of the Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be a glorious day, for you have born much fruit since you have been saved by God's grace through faith in Christ. You are loving, kind, good, and faithful servants of the Lord who lead others also faith in Christ, and you are spending your labor on things that will endure, that will count in eternity, and great will be your reward!
- But to others of you I must say, I do love you, and because I love you I must tell you the truth. Although you have been saved by grace through faith also in our dear Savior, you are spending your life on things that will be burned up! Now I'm not going to make a list. But you look at your calendar and look at where you spend your money. Of each item ask this question: When I stand before Christ, will it matter to Him that I did this? Did this time spent, this money spent, did it matter?

Some of you are going to stand there on that day, saved, but suffering terrible loss as the things you spent your life on are burned up before your eyes.

CONCLUSION: It does not have to be that way. You could determine to make it different beginning today.

Here is what Jesus is saying.

I am the vine

You are the branch

If you will abide in Me, remain, continue, stay in Me,

- **By keeping yourself cleansed like I cleansed you when you were saved**
- **By reading and studying My Word**
- **By talking to Me through prayer**
- **By doing what I tell you to do**

I will make you fruitful.

I will transform you and fill you with love, joy, peace, patient endurance, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.

I will make the testimony you share about Me and the times you tell the gospel to others fruitful as well, and you will see others come to Me.

And Jesus ended with this **John 15:11** "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.

**Jesus, keep me near the cross,
There a precious fountain—
Free to all, a healing stream—
Flows from Calv'ry's mountain.**

**In the cross, in the cross,
Be my glory ever;
Till my raptured soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.**

Hebrews 13:20–21 20 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.