

Fruitful • Genesis 49:22

INTRO • Read John 15:1-8

Jacob blesses & prophesies over Joseph.

He is a fruitful man because of his faith in God.

Jesus desires that we would be fruitful.

God is glorified by our fruit.

His work in us aims at producing fruit. God wants us to flourish.

As the culture turns against us – don't despair! Don't capitulate.

The culture is a runaway train doomed to crash.

Don't get tired, hopeless. Don't give up or in.

Our faith was born into adversity & it was forged in the furnace of a hostile culture.

It was the excellence of the Early believers that persuaded the pagan world The Gospel was BETTER!

The principles were planted, then produced fruit, but now, the bennies without the reason for them.

So, ruin.

Neo-paganism. The Gospel is STILL better! // Live it! With vim and vigor.

Jacob's Last Words

1. A person's last words can be interesting.
 - a. Singer Frank Sinatra, had a huge hit called, "My Way" died saying "I'm losing it."
 - b. When the famous Abolitionist Harriet Tubman died in 1913, her las words were, "Swing low, sweet chariot."
 - c. Richard Mellon, President of Alcoa Aluminum, & his brother Andrew played a game of tag that lasted 70 yrs. When Richard was on his death-bed, he called Andrew over, put a hand on his shoulder, said, "Tag, you're it" & breathed his last.
 - d. Drummer Buddy Rich died after surgery in 1987. As he was being prepped for surgery, a nurse asked him, "Is there anything you can't take?" meaning medications. Rich replied, "Yeah, country music."
 - e. A priest was summoned to the bedside of the playwright Wilson Mizner. The priest said, "I'm sure you'd like to talk to me before you pass on." Mizner replied, "Why should I talk to you? I've just been talking to your boss."
 - f. Basketball great "Pistol" Pete Maravich latst words before collapsing on the court during a pickup game: "I feel great."
 - g. In '64 as Lady Astor lay dying, she opened her eyes to find her family gathered round & said, "Either I'm dying or it's my birthday."
 - h. Queen Elizabeth I is said to have cried out, "A moment more! All my possessions for one more moment!"
2. Ch49 are Jacob's Last Words.
 - a. He's old & word's gone to his grown sons time's short.
 - b. So they gather round his bed as he speaks a final blessing & leaves his last instructions.
 - c. What Jacob says to each of them is a prophetic word that charts the course they & their descendants take.
3. He starts with the **eldest, Reuben**, and makes his way round to **Benjamin**, the **youngest**.
4. It's what Jacob says to his 2nd to youngest son Joseph we're considering today.

Vs. 22-26

²² Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; His branches run over the wall. ²³ The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him. ²⁴ But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), ²⁵ By the God of your father who will help you, and by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. ²⁶ The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.

1. Joseph was Jacob's favorite son because he was the firstborn of his favorite wife, Rachel.
2. Early on, Jacob had made it clear to his family he intended to give the inheritance & legacy to Joseph, even

though he was the 11th of 12 sons.

3. His older brothers were jealous of him for that, and as we've seen over the last weeks, got rid of him by selling him into slavery.
4. But Joseph wasn't just the spoiled brat most would expect. He had an irrepressible faith in God.
5. And though he spent 13 yrs as a slave & convict, he was eventually raised to be the PM of Egypt; 2nd only to Pharaoh.
6. It was then his brothers appeared before him to get food in a time of crushing famine.
7. And though it was a prime opportunity to get even with them for the cruel treatments they'd dished out yrs before, he instead forgave & reconciled with them.
8. Joseph's godly character has been amply proven by the most arduous trials.
9. So Jacob is right to pour out his richest blessing on him, which he does in these vs.
10. Joseph's descendants will eventually become 2 tribes in Israel; **Manasseh & Ephraim**.
 - a. Combined they will have more people and land than the other tribes.
 - b. And they'll play an important role in Israel's history.
11. But it's what Jacob says in v22 I want to concentrate on this morning
Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; His branches run over the wall.
 1. As Jacob speaks to each of his sons, before he gives a blessing, he diagnoses their spiritual condition.
 2. When he gets to Joseph, he calls him a branch of a tree, laden with fruit.
 - a. The tree is healthy because it stands next to a well.
 - b. It's branches reach beyond the bounds of its walled vineyard, giving fruit to those who pass by.
 3. My teen yrs were spent in Orange County, back when they actually grew oranges there.
 4. Down the street from my friend's house was an orchard with a pomegranate tree growing next to the fence.
 - a. It was an ancient thing with branches that reached out over the sidewalk.
 - b. We hoisted each other up to pluck those ripe, red poms.
 - c. That was back in the 70's when pomegranate was a rare & exotic fruit.
 5. That's the image Jacob presents for Joseph.
 - a. His is a life that brings blessing to others.
 - b. They enjoy goodness because it drops from him like fruit from a tree.
 6. Joseph was a fruitful because he was well-watered.
 - a. His roots were planted deeply in his faith & trust in God.
 - b. That faith was a spring of life that blessed others.
 - 1) It blessed his first Egyptian master, Potiphar.
 - 2) Then, it blessed all the prisoners he served.
 - 3) Last; it blessed & fed millions during the great famine that gripped the ME for 7 yrs.
 7. As Jacob lay on his bed, looking at his sons gathered round, knowing each of them was now married and had started their own families, he saw the promise of God to his grandfather Abraham & his father Isaac beginning to be fulfilled.
 - a. God had said their descendants would be as many as the grains of sand on the beach; as many as the stars in the heavens.
 - b. Yet both Abraham's and Isaac's wives had had a hard time producing children.
 - c. Not so Jacob. He had 12 sons, who were all well on their way to producing the tribes that eventually came from them.
 - d. But it was as Jacob's eyes rested on **2** of his sons; **Judah & Joseph**, that he saw the future & fulfillment of **the most important part** of God's promise; that through them all nations would be blessed.
 8. Joseph's already made a great start on that by being a fruitful bough that's **literally** fed the world.
 9. He's fed the word during a time of crushing famine.
 10. And **THAT** is where Joseph speaks so powerfully to us today.
 11. Just as his faith allowed him to bear fruit, God wants our faith in Him to bear fruit.

The Fruitful Life

1. In John 15, Jesus said to his disciples ...

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.

2. Note those last words: “so you will be My disciples.”

- a. In other words, “This is **HOW** you’ll BE My disciples, **My** guys & gals.”
- b. The great goal of our lives is to bring glory to God. That’s WHY we exist.
- c. Our greatest satisfaction & joy comes when we bring Him glory.
- d. That’s the sweet spot of existence.
- e. And Jesus says it’s **when we bear fruit**, God’s glorified.

3. Being a disciple, a follower of Jesus, isn’t about being a church member or having a CCO or NotW bumper sticker.

- a. It’s not about having a huge study Bible and thick journal.
- b. It’s not about memorizing vs, or having brilliant answers to the half dozen objections skeptics make.
- c. All that’s good. But according to Jesus, it’s not what makes a disciple.
- d. Disciples bear fruit.

4. Now: Tell me something. Who eats fruit?

- a. Does the tree eat its own fruit?
- b. No. **Others** enjoy it.

5. In Gal. 5, we discover **what fruit** Jesus means when the Apostle Paul says the Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, & self-control.

6. **That’s** what brings glory to God & marks us as genuine disciples.

7. Joseph bore fruit because he had his roots deeply into God.

8. The same is true for us. We must, as Jesus says in vs4-5 =

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.

Timely

1. I wanted us to camp on what Jacob said to Joseph about being a fruitful bough, because it can pull us through the challenges we’re facing today.

2. I’ve been reading & listening in on what people are saying about the state of the Church in the US.

3. While there are exceptions here and there, the general consensus is that Christians, and I’m talking about Evangelicals, of which we’re a part, are feeling defeated & disillusioned.

- a. People use a whole pile of words to describe it.
- b. Some of the more common descriptors are = tired, hopeless, despair, aimless, tenuous, uncertain.
- c. It’s like an epidemic of **Spiritual** Chronic Fatigue Syndrome has set it.
- d. People’s core beliefs haven’t change & they still go to church.
- e. But they also skip more than they used to.
- f. And they don’t volunteer as they did.

4. They see the direction American society is going and realize Christianity has lost its place as an identifying feature.

- a. The law has marginalized some of our most deeply held convictions.
- b. Popular media mercilessly mocks people of faith.
- c. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, which was at one time held in high regard, is now openly scorned.
- d. Those seeking to faithfully follow God are told they’re on the wrong side of history in regard to sex, marriage, & gender.
- e. On another front, there’s a push to legalize certain drugs.

5. And while all that seems against us, there’s no champion waving a flag we can get behind.

- a. No prophetic voice calling a clear message of hope.
 - b. It's a time of little men & little women without vision.
6. But I'm not suggesting we pack it in & resign ourselves to the despair Satan would love us to embrace.
 7. The time in which we live is still not as bad as the environment in which our Faith was born & spent its infancy. And yet, it THRIVED!
 8. Christian: We are NOT on the wrong side of history in regard to the sexual revolution, marriage, gender, drugs, and all the rest.
 - a. The Pagan World of the 1st C knew all these things.
 - b. They practiced homosexuality, gender-bending, & drug-benders.
 - c. Christianity was scorned; even outlawed.
 - d. It was deemed a faith for fools and slaves.
 - e. But more and more came to Faith in Christ as they tasted the good fruit of the few who followed Jesus.
 - f. Few became many, and many became many more until the paganism that had ruled the world was seen for the pathetic brutality it was and was set aside in favor of Christianity's enlightened view of both man & God.
 9. We are NOT on the wrong side of History. It's those who want to go back to paganism that are.
 10. You know why they *want* to go back?
 11. Because the Christian tree isn't bearing fruit. It hasn't for a while.
 12. It's time to ask the Vinedresser to come and do His work of pruning so we'd bear fruit again.
 13. Listen to Jesus again . . .
- 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.
14. As a vine grows, little shoots called "suckers" pop out.
 - a. They grow rapidly but produce only leaves, no fruit.
 - b. And they leave the fruit-bearing branches without the energy to produce.
 - c. The tender of the vine snips the suckers off so life can flow into producing fruit.
 15. All along the length of the branch, the vinedresser snips, channeling the life and energy of the branch into one thing – fruit!
 16. God *pruned* Joseph so he could be a fruitful bough.
 - a. When he was 17, the sucker shoots of pride & foolishness emerged when he bragged of his dreams of greatness.
 - b. God nipped them in the bud by repotting / transplanting him in Egypt.
 - c. He *channeled* Joseph's life into the tasks of administration,
 - d. And just as a vinedresser does, God *bent* Joseph's circumstances toward the ultimate goal.
 - e. Which was to save the lives of millions.
 - f. Jacob endured 13 yrs of pruning to become a fruitful bough.
 17. Just as God pruned Joseph, He prunes us; all so we'd produce fruit.
 18. What sustained Joseph during his pruning is what sustains us during ours; Trust God. Hang on/Hang in!
 19. Jesus said "Abide in Me!"

CONCLUSION

1. Christian: Don't grow weary!
2. Don't give up or in.
3. Now is not the time to pull up or back; to slow down or coast.
4. Now's the time to pull out all the stops and go for it.

Hebrews 12:1–11

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. ⁵ And you have forgotten the exhortation which

speaks to you as to sons: *“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” . . .*¹¹ No chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those trained by it.