



gracefellowship

Series: What About the Change?
Date: October 29, 2024

Title: Changed to Bear Fruit
Passage: Galatians 5:13-26

Scripture Reading: John 15:1-8

This morning as we celebrated baptism you got to hear and see the way God is working in people's lives to bring them to faith in Jesus for salvation. And as we walk with God He is constantly at work in our lives to change us to be like His Son, Jesus. The change is born out of love for Jesus.

:: 1 Peter 1:8-9

⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Our love for Jesus results in another change that happens continually throughout our lives as Christians:

We are changed to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God.

My dad has a lot of rose bushes in his rock garden. Those things bloom like crazy! And every so often he will cut them back to the point that I think he's killed them. But inevitably they grow back bigger and stronger than ever. He will cut off the branches that aren't as healthy or aren't producing good roses and the plant will come back healthier and stronger than ever because the bad branches have been cut away.

Jesus talked about doing the same kinds of things in the life of His disciples. Earlier we heard John 15 read for us, but look at it again.

:: John 15:1-8

¹ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful.

³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.
⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.
⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.
⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.
⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.
⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

For the longest time I read those verses like this: If you’re a good disciple of Jesus he will prune you so you become more fruitful. If you’re an unhealthy, unfruitful follower, He will cut you off and throw you away to be burned up. In other words, I thought if you aren’t bearing fruit for the Kingdom you aren’t genuinely saved and you’re in danger of being completely cut off from God.

But that’s not what these verses are saying. Jesus is saying that in every one of our lives there are healthy things that are fruit producing and those things He tends to carefully so we can learn to be even more fruitful. But there are some things in our lives that are not producing Kingdom fruit at all- and when Jesus sees that in our lives, He goes to work, through the Holy Spirit, to cut those areas out of lives so we don’t continue to carry around dead, fruitless parts of our lives.

Then there is the question: How do I know what it looks like to bear good fruit? And Jesus tells us the answer:

To bear good fruit we must abide with Jesus.

If you cut a branch off an apple tree there is no way it will ever produce an apple again. It will wither up and die. But a branch that remains connected to the tree will be capable of producing fruit. In the same way, if we disconnect from Jesus it is impossible for us to yield Kingdom fruit. So Jesus implores us to remain in Him- walk in relationship with Him; stay in His Word, remain consistent in prayer; listen for His Holy Spirit- and then we can bear fruit that He desires.

So, what does this fruit look like? Let’s turn to the book of Galatians and see what Paul says to us there.

:: Galatians 5:13-25

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh^[a]; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Jesus came to set us free from the power sin holds over us. But Paul tells us to be careful that we don't use our freedom as a cover for evil and justify our ability to sin by God's ability to cover it with grace.

We are not free to sin; we are set free to serve!

14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."^[b]

15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever^[c] you want.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

There are two warring components in your life if you're a follower of Jesus: the Spirit of God and the desires of the flesh. These two things are battling over control for what kind of fruit your life will produce. Now Paul is going to tell us what kinds of fruit comes from a life disconnected from Jesus.

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul says, these things are obvious. We aren't caught off guard by them or confused as to whether or not they are good. We know that this kind of rotten fruit reveals the brokenness of our lives and a life that is not submitted to the Lordship of Jesus. When Jesus sees things like this in our lives He doesn't completely cut us off from Him, he cuts out the dead, broken parts. And, like we talked about last week, He does that in partnership with you. You may be in a place where you are tempted with something sinful and the Holy Spirit will bring a verse of Scripture to mind. Then you have to decide if you will honor the Spirit and walk away from the temptation, or if you are going to give in to your flesh and pursue the sinful desires.

Now Paul is going to make the contrast and tell us what a life looks like that bears Kingdom fruit and is fully yielded to the Holy Spirit.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

²³ gentleness and 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.

²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

What about the Change?

The change God wants to make in our lives is to learn to recognize the difference between the things of God and the things of this world, and then as we abide in Him, to consistently choose the things of God.

When we recognize sin in our life, yield to the Holy Spirit. God is not cutting those things out of us to hurt us. He is helping us get rid of the things that are unhealthy in our lives so more fruit can be produced in us by the power of the Holy Spirit and He can shape us more fully in the image of God.

- What areas of your life currently seem really healthy and you recognize the fruit of the Spirit growing in you?
- What areas of your life currently need to be cut out? Where are you unhealthy? Ask the Holy Spirit to work in your life to cut out the unhealthy places so you can be more fruitful in your life as a follower of Jesus.

- Response Song

- Elder Prayer Time: Pastor Appreciation Month- Lay Elders