

Bearing Fruit
Psalm 1
October 20, 2019

Plants are a wonderful gift of God. They are not only beautiful to look at, but they are also a source of nutrition, healing, and comfort. All God's creations are wonderful. but flowers really stand out in my opinion. Their beauty, sweet fragrance, and bright colors brighten any and all occasions. Flowers have been helping us express our emotions and feelings throughout human history! Many flowers and plants are used for making beauty products and medicines. Plants are truly a wonderful gift of God.

But in order to get the best benefit out of them, we need to manage them. This is especially true for fruit trees. Growing fruit trees requires a commitment to pruning and close monitoring of pests.

Isn't it interesting that the Bible compares the life of those who fear God to a fruit tree? As followers of Christ, we are to bear fruits, and these fruits are in the form of character. We are to have honorable characters. The Bible teaches us that there are two fruit-producing agents in our lives. One is the Scripture, the word of God, and the other the Spirit.

Psalm 1:2-3 says that the people who fear God love "the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by the streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper." In other words, our lives will produce the fruit that God intended. We will have the character God wants us to have if we read, study, meditate on God's word, and follow its teachings.

There is another fruit-producing agent which is the Spirit. Gal. 5:22-23 speak of the fruit of the Spirit. Again, the fruit of the Spirit is the character we will have as a result of obeying the Lord.

Isn't it interesting that the Bible uses the metaphor of fruit when it describes the character that the Holy Spirit produces? Why fruit? Why such metaphor?

First of all, fruit is visible. It is tangible. You can see it. You can smell it. You can taste it. You can experience it.

Fruit reflects the character of the tree that produces it. Jesus said, “Every tree is known by its fruit.”¹ Jesus also said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciple, if you love one another.”² The word love is very inclusive. To love, we need to have patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. In other words, all these characters are interdependent. They grow together simultaneously.

In Galatians 5, Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit as a singular fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is not like an apple on a stem; it is like grapes in a cluster. You cannot grow in love without patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. They are meant to grow together.

This fruit of the Spirit, the godly character, forms and grows as we obey the Lord and his teachings.

It requires pruning. It requires protecting the tree from pests. In order for us to build godly character, we need to cut out ungodly habits and behavior. We also need to protect ourselves from all things that could lead us into temptation. Doing these diligently is required in producing godly character.

Another reason why the “fruit metaphor” is used is because fruit is beneficial. Fruit exists not for its own benefit, but for the benefit of others. When fruit is eaten, its seeds are to be planted.

When people experience godly character in us, it is like eating the fruit. They receive the benefit from our character. Once that happens, the seed, the same character, whether that is love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control, that is to be planted in their lives so that they also bear the same character. The fruit of the Spirit is contagious.

One of the things I want to share with you is that this fruit, the fruit of the Spirit is NOT produced BY us. Rather, it is produced IN us. It is produced in us by the Holy Spirit when we OBEY him. The key term is “obedience.” Without obedience, the fruit will not mature.

No matter what our duty or role may be, we need to be obediently faithful in what we do. Through that faithful obedience, the fruit of the Spirit matures.

¹ Luke 6:44.

² John 13:35.

In the eleventh century, King Henry III of Bavaria was getting tired of court life and the pressures of being a monarch. He wanted to escape from all the pressures and become a monk. He went to Prior Richard at a local monastery, and asked to be accepted as a monk and let him live the rest of his life in the priory. The Prior responded saying, “Your Majesty, do you understand that the pledge here is one of obedience? That will be hard for you because you have been a king. You have never obeyed anyone.”

“I understand,” said King Henry. “The rest of my life I will be obedient to you, as Christ leads you.”

“Then I will tell you what to do,” said Prior Richard. “Go back to your throne and serve faithfully in the place where God has put you. Doing your work faithfully is what God expects of you.” Hearing that, King Henry returned to the palace and governed faithfully for many years.

When King Henry died, a statement was written: “The King learned to rule by being obedient to God.”³

Whatever our roles or responsibilities may be, we need to accept it as that is what God wants us to be. Whether our role is a teacher, or clerk, or engineer, or lawyer, or mother, or father, or husband, or wife, being faithful in that role is what God expects of us.

Being faithful in that role is how the fruit of the Spirit matures.

The second thing I want to share with you is that the fruit of the Spirit is a process rather than a product. In the fruit of the Spirit, maturity is the process of obedience.

When Jesus talked about heaven, he talked about it in two different ways.

First, Jesus talked about heaven as a place where we will go.

Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare

³ An illustration on “Obedience” from www.esermons.com

a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself (my place), so that where I am, there you may be also.”⁴ So he definitely meant a place where we go.

This is why when people think of heaven, they think of a wonderful place, a paradise. The Bible certainly confirms that. The Book of Revelation described heaven as a place where there are “streets of gold, walls with precious stones and pearl gates.”⁵ Heaven is definitely a place.

Second, Jesus also talked about heaven not as a place but as an activity. In the gospel of Matthew, in parables, Jesus describes “heaven” not as a destination but a journey. According to Jesus, heaven has to do with planting seeds, discovering treasure, catching a huge amount of fish. In other words, heaven is not just a place where we end up. Rather, it is a process we participate in.

There is a story about an old man who was very wise. People came to him for advice and he always gave them very wise advice. Then one day, a cunning man came to him to test his wisdom. He had something in his hands, but he covered it with both hands. He told the sage that he was holding a small, newly hatched bird in his hands, and he challenged the old man to tell him whether the bird was alive or dead. Obviously, he wanted to prove the old man wrong. If the old man said the bird was dead, he would simply open his hands to show a perfectly healthy baby bird. If he said the bird was alive, then he would crush the bird before opening his hands. Knowing what this conning man was doing, the old man said, “The bird is whatever you choose him to be.”

And that’s the way it is with the kingdom of God. Experiencing the kingdom of God is within our choice. Bearing and maturing the fruit of the Spirit is also within the process of our choices.

Bearing and maturing the fruit of the Spirit is based on our obedience. And it is based on the process of our obedience. I hope we choose to be obedient always.

Starting next Sunday, we will talk about the Fruit of the Spirit.

⁴ John 14:1-3.

⁵ Revelation 21:21.