

“Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree”

Introduction – Luke 13:6-9 (NIV)

6 Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. **7** So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ **8** “‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. **9** If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

I. THE CALL TO BEAR FRUIT (verses 6-7)

As followers of Jesus it is our calling to bear fruit. Scripture tells us what the character traits are of those who walk with Jesus:

Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Romans 12:9-21 (NIV)

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. **10** Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. **11** Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. **12** Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. **13** Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. **14** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. **16** Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. **17** Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. **18** If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. **19** Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. **20** On the contrary: “If your enemy is

hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Jesus made it very clear about the importance of us bearing fruit:

John 15:4-8 (NIV)

4 Remain in me, and I will 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 a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not remain in me, he is 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 given you. **8** This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Matthew 7:15-23 (NIV)

15 “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. **16** By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? **17** Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. **18** A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. **19** Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20** Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. **21** “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. **22** Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ **23** Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

So we get a very clear picture of what it is to be a fruit bearing disciple!

So the question arises:

How do I bear fruit as a follower of Jesus?

II. HOW TO BE FRUITFUL (verses 8-9)

So what does it take for us as servants of Jesus to be fruitful?

1. FRUIT IS GROWN IN ADVERSITY

The apostle James recognized this:

James 1:2-4, 12 (NIV)

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, **3** because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. **4** Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. **12** Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.

Paul brings this out as well:

Romans 5:3-5 (NIV)

3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; **4** perseverance, character; and character, hope. **5** And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

2. IN ORDER TO PRODUCE GOOD FRUIT WE MUST PREPARE THE SOIL

The soil is our heart and character which is fed spiritually by the Holy Spirit! We gain this fertilizer by:

A. READING GOD'S WORD

Just listen to these passages:

1. READING THE WORDS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT LAW INSTRUCTED TO THE LEADERS IN ISRAEL:

Deuteronomy 17:18-20 (NIV)

18 When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. **19** It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees **20** and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.

2. RECOGNIZING WHAT THE WORD OF GOD DOES FOR US:

Psalm 1:1-3 (NIV)

1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. **2** But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. **3** He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

3. GOD'S WORD HELPS KEEP OUR WAY PURE

Psalm 119:9 (NIV)

9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.

4. GOD'S WORD IS MORE VALUABLE THAN SILVER OR GOLD:

Psalm 19:10-11 (NIV)

10 They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. **11** By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

5. NATIONS DRIFT AS A FAMINE OF GOD’S WORD CREEPS IN:

Amos 8:11 (NIV)

11 “The days are coming,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord.

6. LEARNING GOD’S WORD REQUIRES US TO SEARCH:

Acts 17:11 (NIV)

11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

7. SCRIPTURE GIVES US DIRECTION IN LIFE:

II Timothy 3:14-17 (NIV)

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, **15** and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17** so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

8. THE WORD IS LIVING AND ACTIVE:

Hebrews 4:12-13 (NIV)

12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. **13** Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

B. PRAYER is like the electricity we plug into in our outlets in our homes. It connects us to God in relationship. We talk and He talks to us through His word! It is as light to our path along with the word:

I John 1:5-7 (NIV)

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. **6** If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Prayer brings the character, the fruit of the Spirit to ripen:

Philippians 4:4-9 (NIV)

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **8** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

C. THE BOTTOM LINE IS OBEDIENCE

John 14:15 (NIV)

15 “If you love me, you will obey what I command.

I John 4:19-21 (NIV)

19 We love because he first loved us. **20** If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. **21** And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

So be in the word, pray and walk in obedience and the fruit of the Spirit will grow!

D. PRUNING

Then the last point to consider in being a fruitful servant of Jesus is pruning!

We never arrive, we are not perfect and God allows things in our life that make us truly find the only way we can make it is through our relationship with Jesus:

John 15:1-2 (NIV)

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 so that it will be even more fruitful.

Endure hardship as discipline:

Hebrews 12:7-11 (NIV)

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? **8** If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. **9** Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! **10** Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. **11** No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Conclusion

So as we walk out our faith in this world we will see how God enables us to bear fruit showing ourselves to be His disciples!

John 15:8 (NIV)

8 THIS IS TO MY FATHER’S GLORY, THAT YOU BEAR MUCH FRUIT, SHOWING YOURSELVES TO BE MY DISCIPLES.