

Following Jesus – Part 7: Be Fruitful

Greetings

Very good evening to all of you. Welcome to our CEP session this Saturday evening. So glad you can join us. And if you're here with us, you will be, I'm sure you will realize this is our very last session on following Jesus. If you've been with us for the past six weeks, I want to say well done. And I pray that God would use these truths that you have heard and understood to bless your life and to grow you to be more like Jesus. Right after the CEP on following Jesus, pastor Chee Kean will be following up with a six-part series called Blueprint, Knowing God's Will. So, if that is something you want to learn about, please do continue to join us here. But in our very last session on following Jesus, I want to end it off with a simple look at what it means to be fruitful.

Our Purpose

See, that's the goal of the Christian life that we are to bring forth, much fruit to glorify God. The basis of our thinking will be John chapter 15, especially verses one to eight. So, if you have your Bibles, it will be good to open it up. CEP is something that is short and punchy, I will not take too much time referring to the verses. But in this passage, I like to highlight three things that would encourage you in your spiritual life. Number one, in being fruitful, I think it reminds us of our purpose here on this earth. Jesus said in John 15, verse eight, "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." The followers, the disciples of Jesus Christ, they will bear fruit. And that is what Jesus said, "You bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." Some of you struggle with what is fruit? I know apple, orange, but what is spiritual fruit? I think based on this verse, I would say fruit is anything in a Christian's life that brings glory to God. Based on verse eight, fruit is anything in a Christian's life that brings glory to God. And from the rest of the Bible, I suggest to you a simple way to compartmentalize what we can do to glorify God. I've shared this before in our church services, but I'll repeat it again for you.

Fruits

The first thing we can think about is our words. Our words can be bringing glory to God. We see that in Hebrews 13, verse 15, "The sacrifice of praise is the fruit of our lips that acknowledges his name." I believe praising God brings glory to Him. We see also Philippians 2, 14 and 15, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing." So, we don't just glorify God with our words, like praise and encouragement and speaking truth to others. But we can also bring glory to God by not speaking words of complaint and grumbling and disputing. Now along these lines, you can think of many more verses, but I just want to give them as samples. We glorify God with our words.

We also glorify God with our wealth. We see in second Corinthians chapter nine "For the ministry of this service", the context there is about giving, "is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but it's also

overflowing in many thanksgivings to God” (2 Corinthians 9:12). So, the way you give, or the way you steward wealth, can bring glory to God. And I think that is also fruit. We see, “Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to credit” (Philippians 4:17), Paul says in Philippians, chapter four. You can look at other verses, as I've said, but these are samples. So we can glorify God with our words, with our wealth.

Of course, we glorify God with our walk. And that refers to the way you conduct yourself, the way you live your life. And we see, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience”, especially in these extraordinary times in the COVID pandemic, I think how we live our “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness” (Galatians 5:22-23), and so on, really can be a means by which God is glorified. When everybody is grabbing, but you're giving, when everybody is panicking, but you are calm, when everybody is easily flustered, but you are at peace. I think that brings glory to God. And again, in First Peter chapter two, “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that on the last day, they may see your good works and glorify God” (1 Peter 2:12). So, the way you walk, the way you conduct yourself brings glory to God.

Number four, I will suggest to you we can also glorify God with our works. That is being full of good deeds and helping others. “Let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need and not be unfruitful” (Titus 3:14). First Peter chapter four, “We should serve one another, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 4:10-11). So, we glorify God with our words, with our wealth, with our walk, with our works.

And lastly, with our witness, Paul says, “I have often intended to come to you, he said, the Romans, in order that I may reap some harvest among you” (Romans 1:13). And again, in Matthew 28. This is God's command, and we glorify God by “Making disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). So, I hope you realize fruit is anything in a Christians life that can glorify God. It involves words and wealth and walk and works and witness, all W's. And that is God's will for you, that is God's purpose for you, as he leaves you here on this earth, why? So that we may bear fruit, we may glorify Him. And you know, one day when Jesus will return, he is going to look for fruit in your life, his disciples are proven by their fruit by their works. And if there is none, whoa, I think that will be a scary thought. And let me quote your Spurgeon, “The first Adam came to the fig tree for leaves”, he just wanted to cover his shame, “but the second Adam, Jesus Christ, looks for figs”, he looks for fruit. So that is the mark of the Christian. That is the purpose of the Christian. He aims to glorify God by bearing fruit, in what ways, in his words, in his wealth, in his walk, in his works, in his witness.

Our Progress

Second, I'd like you to see in this text, a progress. Not everyone is fruitful, and very fruitful immediately. In this text, you will see a reference to no fruit. And then you'll see a reference to bear fruit, and then you'll see bears more fruit, and then you'll see bears much fruit. So, Jesus said in verse eight, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit” (John 15:8). So, God's goal is not just that you produce Fujikura, very small amounts of fruit, but that you will bear fruit and more fruit and much fruit to the intent and to the extent that “Every branch that bears fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:2). So, our father is not passive in heaven. Sometimes we think he's just sitting there and not doing

much. The Bible tells me, he is actively at work like a vine dresser, like an agriculturalist. Like someone who is a farmer, he is actively pruning his branches in a vineyard, that they may bear forth much fruit. Now we all know what pruning is, isn't it? We snip off some small branches, so that only the main branches will remain, so that all the SAP all the juices, all the goodness that is absorbed from the ground, would go not to wasted little branches and twigs, but go maximally to the fruit that the fruit will be bigger, juicy and better. So, every farmer understands this, you can't have a tree or bush that is full of twigs, full of little branches, but you need to learn how to concentrate it so that the fruit will be more luscious. And the imagery is so clear, that God is always at work in your life, to prune away the excesses to prune away sin, to prune away sinful habits, so that your life will be maximally concentrated to bring much fruit to God. He does this through the instrument of the word. I'm so glad you join us in CEP, in our Bible studies and our services, because I believe God is taking his word as you hear it, as you read it to clean your life, to clear out the excesses to clear up sin, that you may be particularly fruitful. So it's so exciting. God's purpose is that we may bear forth fruit to glorify Him. He makes sure that there is progress in our life as we avail ourselves to His Word.

Priority

And then finally, I want to share with you although our purpose is to glorify God in bearing fruit, there is a priority, and I will explain how priority and purpose works out. What is your priority as a Christian? Well, I see that Jesus tells us that we are to abide in Him (John 15:4-7). Now, it's so clear that the main thing for the Christian is to abide. The word abide simply means to remain. That is to continue in Jesus., that is that we are continuing to be in a good, dependent and obedient relationship with Him abide, remain, depend, obey me. That's the idea. You say why? Because he says, "For apart from me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). He says that "He is the vine, and we are the branches" (John 15:5). And it makes sense that if we are not stuck on Jesus, if you're not remaining on Jesus, then we are useless. You go to any tree, you break a branch off the tree, and this branch will be useless. No matter what you do, this branch will not bear fruit. The branch is powerless, is useless, without an abiding relationship with the vine, and the Christian is powerless if we are not abiding, we're not remaining in a vine, if we're not continuing in our relationship with Jesus, if we are not obedient and we are not dependent upon him. So, the priority is that we must abide in the vine. You say, "How?" I've already hinted at somewhat with the words: obedience dependence, but it's really here in verse seven, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7). I see two things. In abiding, I see that the word of God must be in us, and that I must be praying, I must be asking. So, there's a simple statement or simple phrase, we need to be both in obedience and dependence to be abiding in Jesus. To abide in Jesus is not a mystical idea that you go to some mountain and just meditate there. It is saying, "Lord, I will obey you your words, abide in me. And I'll ask you, to help me to do what I cannot do". That's an abiding relationship, that is saying no to the self-life, no to my desires, no to by dependence, and I'm looking only to Jesus Christ. That's what it means to abide. And when you abide in Jesus, when the branch is naturally connected to the vine, you know what fruit bearing becomes natural. I never hear of a branch on a tree screaming, "Aiyo, bear fruit!" It is not hard. It's not difficult. It's natural, as long as it's abiding. So, if you are today, learning and obeying God's word, and praying and depending on his spirit, you know what? You will bear fruit, more fruit, much fruit. So obedience and dependence. "Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy and Jesus, but to trust and obey". So this is how it all works. Our priority is to abide. And as you abide, you

will progress, God will change you and make you more fruitful. And as you progress, you will arrive at your purpose of bearing much fruit.

Conclusion

Here in Gospel Light, I want to encourage you, first abide, then you're abide. Take care of your roots, and God will take care of your fruit. Take care of the depth of your life, and God will take care of the breadth of your ministry. Remember, to be aligned with Jesus before you are assigned for Jesus. Abiding, before abundance, worship before our work, or in Gospel Light, we say, Know, Grow, Go. Know Christ, as your Savior first, and then grow in him. And as you grow in him, you will be effective in going for him. I hope that wraps it all up for you. I hope this gives you a picture of what Christian living should be like. And I pray not only will you know, but you will trust and obey, you will depend on and obey your whole life. And may you be a super luscious branch, full of fruit, bringing glory to our Father.

Prayer and Closing

Let's pray. Father, thank You for this time. Bless your word. Bless all that we have learned. Bless our hearts, that we might obey and do Your will. May we abide in Jesus, may we be aligned with Jesus, may we take care of the roots so that then you will grow our fruit, you will grow the breadth of our Ministry, we will abound for your glory. May this church truly, regularly help people know, grow and go for Christ. Thank you. We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you for joining me these seven weeks. It's a blast, it's been fun for me. Still one more q&a session. See you after this in our zoom session. May God bless all of you richly.