

Fruit to the Glory of God

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[0 : 00] We shall sing now to God's praise again, singing from Psalm 80, this time at verse 14.

Psalm 80 at verse 14, singing to the end of the psalm. O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine.

Look down from heaven in love, behold, and visit this thy vine. This vineyard which thine own right hand hath planted us among, and that same branch which for thyself thou hast made to be strong.

But up it is, with flaming fire, it also is cut down. They utterly are perished, when as thy face doth frown. O let thy hand be still upon the man of thy right hand, the son of man whom for thyself thou madeest strong to stand.

So henceforth we will not go back, nor turn from thee at all. O do thou quicken us, and we upon thy name will call.

[1 : 13] Turn us again, Lord God of hosts, and upon us vouchsafe, to make thy countenance to shine, and so we shall be safe.

Let us sing these verses. Psalm 80 from verse 14, O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine. O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine.

To come from heaven in love behold, and list it this thy time.

This vineyard which thy own right hand, adlanded a salmon.

O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine.

[2 : 58] O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine.

The land of thy right hand, the land of thy right hand. The land of my world, while thy snar, thou bidest strong to stand.

So hence, O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine. We thee beseech, return now unto thine. O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine.

O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine. O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine. O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine. O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine.

O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine. O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and upon us, but still. O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine.

[4 : 29] O God of hosts, and upon us, but still. To make thy child to us, to shine, on us, o we shall be saved.

O God of hosts, we thee beseech, return now unto thine. We can turn once again to the passage that we read together from the Gospel of John, chapter 15.

And we can read again at verse 8. John chapter 15 at verse 8.

Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit. So shall ye be my disciples.

Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit. I would expect most thoughtful Christians to think often, and to think with a measure of attention, even probing attention to the question, am I bearing fruit for the Lord?

[6 : 03] I would hope that as Christians we are all conscious and very much aware that we are planted in the Lord's vineyard.

And equally certain of the fact that our Lord will expect fruit from what he has planted.

Indeed the truth is that we expect our Lord to expect fruit. Which is why we ask the question of ourselves.

Am I bearing fruit for the Lord? Now if we examine the passage before us, we become aware that the Lord Jesus is taking time to prepare his disciples for his departure from the world.

And when he goes away, his disciples need to understand that they will encounter opposition which will be enlivened by the perceived fruitfulness of the opposition that they showed the Lord himself.

[7 : 31] What else could the enemies of Christ? What else could the enemies of Christ think? But that they had secured a victory over him through the death of the cross.

And many of them were not dissuaded of that. But what Christ wanted the disciples to understand was that the enmity that was shown to him would be replicated in the experience of those who were his disciples.

And his words are preparatory and conciliatory. Now if we read the words of the following chapter, chapter 16, the opening verse gives an explanation to us of something of the meaning of chapter 15.

These things have I spoken unto you that ye should not be offended. That ye should not be offended.

And it's always helpful to compare some of the other Bible versions to see how the translations compare.

[8 : 57] Sometimes they're just like for like, there's no difference whatsoever. But in the ESV which we're more familiar with, it's an English translation.

That translation reads as follows, I have said these things to keep you from falling away. Now what is the difference? Is it simply a difference in the translation or an interpretation if you like?

And I suppose that is the closest that we have to the answer. The words that we have, you know, the version that we're most familiar with here, suggests offence.

The offence that the disciples will feel because of the enmity that is in the world towards them who are the followers of Christ.

But in the ESV, the translation suggests that there is a falling away. And I think that's more interpretive of the outcome of the offence.

[10 : 22] Because when those who experience the offence or the feelings of being victimised come to fullness, then the inevitable consequence of that for some is that they will depart from him.

And very often that is the case. When the experience of the Lord's people, whatever it may be, be it a positive experience or a negative experience, it's not an experience that is dormant if you like.

It's always a developing situation. And for the Lord's people, and for the Lord's people, who were the focus of the enmity of the world as a result of the enmity that was in the heart of the world against God and his Son.

As that comes to fullness, they begin to feel shame, perhaps, or embarrassment or fear or whatever the experience may produce in them because of their association with Christ.

And that, on the part of the enmity of the enmity of Christ. What we're aware of is that Jesus certainly was aware of the hostility that was in the world.

[12 : 12] And that's what he was doing. He was preparing his disciples for this. And we find that very much in the final discourses that we have within the scripture.

How his words, surprisingly to some, were so much focused on others rather than himself, considering his circumstances.

One thing that we can understand is that the heart of what Christ is doing is he is reminding them of his continued interest in them.

Although he goes away, as his death will inevitably involve, and what follows on from that, he is not losing interest in them.

He is far from that. And in the sense in the sense in which we look at this passage where the focus of our attention is on the fruitfulness that belongs to the people of God.

[13 : 28] That they are destined to bear fruit for the Lord. If that is the case, if we just read this verse here. Herein is my Father glorified that he bear much fruit.

And if the glory of his Father is dependent upon their fruit bearing, then nothing can be allowed to frustrate that.

Nothing can be allowed to come into their experience that will prevent them from bearing that fruit. Not even the persecution that they will endure or the enmity that will come to light in greater measure once he leaves them.

They are destined to bear fruit. And they are being reminded of that. The preacher Eric Alexander refers to the believers' marriage to Christ.

Remember the words that the Apostle Paul uses in Romans 6 to describe the relationship that exists between Christ and his church.

[14 : 42] And this is what Paul says. It says, Now if the Father is meant to be glorified by their fruit bearing, surely it must follow.

Not only is there to be fruit, it is fruit that remains as he goes on to insist on.

The fruit that remains as he goes on to insist on. The fruit that remains as he goes on to insist on. The fruit that not only remains, it continues, it lasts. And that is the fruit which Christ expects us to bear for the Lord.

Now that really is the crux of what we have to consider this evening. The burden of this whole passage, if you like. Jesus is the vine. Jesus is the vine.

The father is the husbandman or the gardener. The Christian believer is the other branches.

[16 : 05] And their purpose, very simply, is to bear fruit for the Lord. And not just fruit. Christ says here that they are to bear much fruit.

So let us just think of that in our own experience. If we are those who are concerned about our role as fruit bearers, where are we going to find evidence of that in our life?

We can begin with the obvious. In order for there to be fruit, the branch that bears the fruit must be in Christ.

At the heart of what Christ is to say. I am the true vine. I am the true vine. My father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away.

Now, the focus I suppose in these words is on lack of fruit. But essential to that is that in Christ it is expected that there be fruit.

[17 : 23] The fruit that Christ is seeking. Dr. Sinclair Ferguson makes an interesting observation. You know, the psalm that we were singing there.

And other passages in the Old Testament, like passages we find not just in the book of Psalms, but in the prophecy of Isaiah and the prophecy of Ezekiel.

The mention is made there of Israel as being the vine that the Lord has planted.

And he is expecting that vine to bear fruit. And yet, when he comes to seek fruit in that vine that he has planted for himself, it does not provide that fruit.

It does not produce that fruit. It does not bring forth the fruit that he seeks from it. So, these passages that we often refer to in companion with the passage that we have in the New Testament that speaks of the New Testament church and the believer as the fruit bearing vine.

[18 : 43] The Old Testament focuses on the judgment of God upon those that he has planted that are not bearing fruit.

Whereas in the New Testament, in the passage that we have here, what we have is what the Lord has planted.

And the vine that he has planted is the Lord himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is where he expects to find fruit.

Let me quote you the words of Ferguson. His desire is to see us, cuttings grafted by his grace into the vine, remain, abide, or as gardeners say, take and bear fruit.

And that's simple message that Christ conveys to the disciples. And it is at the heart of the comfort that they have.

[19 : 47] His purpose for them. His relationship with them is not one of disinterest but of continued interest.

And the understanding being that this is what they are about. This is why he has called them to himself. And if we are not in the vine, we are barren.

Or perhaps the fruit that we produce is wild and unpalatable. The second thing that is most obvious, I suppose, as a question that needs to be asked is this and what.

What is this fruit? What is this fruit? And suppose it's interesting to us that he doesn't specify what that fruit is.

He names fruit but he doesn't say what the fruit is. He doesn't describe it. And we could say that that is strange.

[20 : 51] But if we are given a more specific description, then perhaps the nature of the fruit would not be understood in its proper form.

Because the believer is the one who is meant to produce fruit. And there are many believers who are grafted into the vine.

And the believers do not produce one single fruit or one kind of fruit. If you look at some things that the Bible describes to us as fruit that belongs to the believer.

We are all familiar, many of us anyway, are familiar with the words that we refer to on a Sacrament Sunday. Where reference is made to the division that exists between those who are in Christ and those who are out of Christ.

Those who are genuinely in Christ, they have the fruit of the Spirit. As opposed to those who are out of Christ and all they have is the work of the flesh.

[22 : 16] And the description that we have of the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. The believer can have all of these, but not in the same measure.

Every believer may well demonstrate evidences of any one of these spiritual gifts or graces. And they are fruits of the Spirit.

But not every believer will have them in the same quantities or the same amounts. When we read the works of John MacArthur, for example.

When we read the works of John MacArthur, for example. He states that the Holy Spirit never fails to produce some fruit in the believer's life. Some fruit. He doesn't say that every believer will produce the same quantity of fruit or the same kind of fruit.

But there is clearly here in this passage the potential for every believer to produce fruit of some description and more of it.

[23 : 40] The Lord desires much fruit. And are we just, if we were honest, if we are just, if we are happy that we have fruit in our lives, I wonder what fruit that we can identify in our own lives that we consider to be fruit for the Lord.

Do we think of one specific fruit or one area of our life where such fruit appears?

And then we think of other areas of our life which should be prevalent, which should appear, and yet there is no sign of it, no evidence of it.

No proof that it actually exists at all. Is that possible? Can we be Christian, engrafted into the vine, in Christ, without having the same quantity of fruit, the same quality of fruit, across the board, any kind of spiritual fruit that owes its origin to our relationship to Christ?

Are they all meant to be there in the same quality, in the same category, of the same kind?

[25 : 12] Well, the truth of the matter is that it may well be that our calling is to look for fruit and to ensure that the fruit that we are not as aware of has been there, to make every endeavour to seek it out and find it if it's there and encourage its growth if it is not there as we would have it be.

The Puritan Thomas Watson tells us in his words when he's speaking about, I think it's a passage in the epistles, he's talking about the fruit of righteousness.

And he's saying to the believer that when the believer is looking for the fruit of righteousness in his life, they should understand that fruitfulness is something that adorns the Christian as an ornament to their religious life.

And it is something that adorns the fruit of righteousness in his life. And it is something that beautifies them and glorifies them in the eyes of God. And the more that it is in evidence of that fruit, the more the Lord is willing to be much in our garden.

When we look at our own endeavours at gardening at times, we know that there are skills that are associated with bringing certain plants on.

[26 : 56] And one thing that is clear is that if there is to be fruitfulness, not only is there a need for the right kind of soil, the right kind of fertiliser in the soil, there is also the right kind of fertiliser in the soil.

There is also the need for the right kind of management of the plant, that is to be bearing fruit. Fruit trees need to be pruned. They need to have not just the right soil, but the right kind of cross fertilisation between plants and soil.

The horticulturists will know more about it than I do. But the vinedresser who is responsible for this fruit purchases in order for the fruit to increase.

And it is not a fruitless activity on his part. He is intent on doing what he is doing in order to produce still more fruit.

It is to increase the fruit bearing. And the more fruit we bear, the more Christ-like we become.

[28 : 15] The closer you are to the vine, the stronger the fruit is, the sweeter the fruit is.

This year I planted some tomato plants for the first time. I don't know if I'll ever plant them again because it wasn't very successful.

Because there was no fruit except, there was three different kinds, and there was no fruit except on one. And it was very much at the end of the season before that fruit was seen.

And they never ripened. Because I hadn't dealt with these plants the way they should have been dealt with. They need a certain environment.

They need a certain amount of sunlight. They need a lot of heat and warmth and so on. When Christ is dealing with his own people, he is dealing with us with a view to our being.

[29 : 21] Fruit bearers for the Lord. That's what this verse is saying. Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit.

Divided energy makes for feeble fruit. And referring to the words of verse 7 there, If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.

Spurgeon writes about these words. He says, if you are not to be like Enoch, walking with God.

If you are not going to be like John, lying in his bosom. Then the constant ministry or treatment that you get from the company of the Lord will clearly evidence itself.

Union leading to communion is something that is an encouragement to fruit bearing.

[30 : 44] And what we need if we are to glorify God. It's not a given. You would think that it is a given.

Most of the commentators, they say, you have words of encouragement in this passage, but also words of warning. You know these words at the beginning.

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he says. He taketh away. And there is a question then.

Why? How can a branch be in Christ without bearing fruit? And then the theologians, they have a field day trying to separate between what in Christ means in reality and what it means when there is no fruit.

But what we understand and what you can understand is this. That any person who is in Christ vitally, who has the life of Christ in them, then they are destined to bear fruit for the Lord.

[31 : 59] For the Lord, not for themselves, not for our convenience, not for our confidence, not for our boastfulness. But for the Lord, the fruit is from him and to him.

And there is always, however fruitful, however gifted we are, however great we are endowed with the Spirit's close proximity and ministrations that allow us to recognise spiritual fruit in our lives.

It is for the Lord, however great we are endowed with the Spirit's close proximity and to the Lord.

He encourages us to be. Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit, so shall you be my disciples. He's not saying there, you're going to be my disciples when you become fruit bearers.

But so shall you be my disciples. You'll know that that is what you are. You'll be confident that that is what you are. When there is fruit in your life that is spiritual fruit derived from Christ and for the glory of God.

[33 : 42] That's what your aim is. That's what your desire is. More fruit is what we need if we are to glorify God.

Well may God encourage us to seek such spiritual fruit out and to have our lives speak of who we are by virtue of it to the glory of God.

Because if we are not really bearing fruit that is recognisable, not just to ourselves but to others of our Christian experience, then what are we, what can we possibly be except fraudulent and without really the potential to glorify God as we are expected.

God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. These few thoughts. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we give thanks that you are a God who has given to each and every one of your people the potential to bear fruit for your glory.

Everyone without exception. God bless you. And each one may look at their own mager, mager growth and their mager harvest as they look upon it.

[35 : 12] And yet you are the one from whom our growth comes and where our fruit is to be found.

The more we are dependent upon you, our God, the more we can ascertain that our fruit is of the Lord. Continue to watch over us, we pray.

Continue to make known to us where the source of our fruit ensures that such fruit is to your glory. Guide us in the truth.

Pardon sin of Jesus. Amen. I'm going to sing in conclusion from Psalm 72. And we're singing in Gaelic.

Psalm 72 and at verse 16. Psalm 72 and at verse 16.

[36 : 34] Psalm 72 and at verse 16. Psalm 72 and at verse 16. Psalm 72 and at verse 16. Psalm 73 and at verse 16.

Psalm 73 and at verse 16. ** singing in■■■ signatures ** Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[39 : 22] Thank you.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.