

The Fruit Of The Father pt 2

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Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[0:00] Well, before I forget, and just in case there was confusion about what's happening tonight, I want you to know that there is a family gathering taking place, not small groups.

! So I think the calendar online is out of sync maybe with... So anyway, if any of you were confused, maybe it's just me, I was confused, please come tonight.

We're having a family gathering this evening. Well, today I want to continue our time in John chapter 15, verses 1 to 11. We got a start at it last week, and hopefully we'll finish off these last remaining verses of 1 to 11 this morning.

Talking about the significance of our fruitfulness and what God demands for our lives in terms of being fruitful people. What does that mean? How does that play out?

And what do we need to do as people to be fruitful in this world? As I was thinking about this subject this morning, I was reminded a little bit about our home back in Aurora, Illinois.

[1:28] And I have a picture here I want to show you. It's maybe not the best picture. But you see, in our front lawn, this massive willow tree. It was a picture of health and beauty.

And one of the great things about this tree is that, especially during the summertime, it provided the kind of shade and comfort that we enjoyed as a family. And our kids often would climb little knobs in the trunk of this tree, and they would make their way up into the branches, and it was just a delight for our family.

Massive tree, massive branches, leaves that were green and without disease. And from all appearances, external appearances, it was a picture of health.

Well, you know where this is going. We went for a walk as a family. We went to the park and enjoyed some time at the park.

And on the way back home, we were making our way, and my wife saw these storm clouds coming. And being from California, she didn't know what storm clouds meant.

[2:42] She says, what's going on there? And I saw how quickly these clouds were coming. And I literally told the family, run! Which we did.

And we were hightailing it down the street, but it wasn't long before the wind almost picked us up and knocked us down. The gusts of wind were enormous.

I think 50, 60 mile an hour gusts of wind and the rain pelting us in the face. We had no idea this storm was coming. And when we showed up at our house, this is what we saw.

Can you see that? We saw this tree that was the picture of health split down the center in half of the tree now laying across our driveway.

And upon further inspection of this tree, what seemed to be a picture of health demonstrated that it was in actuality a tree of rot.

[3:43] A tree of disease. A tree that was eaten by bugs from the inside. So that all that remained of real life was only about a one inch ring of life that circled this tree.

And in several areas, there wasn't any life at all. And yet it still was supporting this picture of life there in the front of our yard.

Now I give you this illustration because unfortunately that is also true of so many of our lives. Especially those of us who have grown up in the church.

We know the right appearances. We know how to give the right answers. We know what's expected of us in terms of showing up to the right events. And involving ourselves in the right kinds of ministry.

We know the right kind of attitude and what's expected of us in terms of the right answers in our family and keeping them in line. But when the real test is made of our heart, it demonstrates that there really isn't the kind of fruitfulness or integrity that we seek to convey.

[4:59] It really is barrenness inside. We've learned to walk through the paces. We've learned to check the right list. And we've learned to give the right appearance to the people who are watching. But deep down inside, there is really nothing of change. There is nothing of real lasting relationship. There's nothing transformational in us that would indicate that anything of substance has taken place in our life.

And Jesus here on this last night, just hours before he is going to be crucified, deals with this significant subject for his disciples. Here they are just hours from the time where Jesus is going to be put on the cross.

And he's having this private discussion with his disciples. What will he tell them in these final moments? What is of utmost significance to them as he leaves them to do the ministry and turns them loose to this great mission of making disciples of all nations?

What will be the staying power for them? What will be the driving force? What will help them to be fruitful in this time of discipleship and representing their Messiah?

[6:19] Well, Jesus concentrates on many things through the course of this discussion with them from chapters 14 through chapter 16 in his conversation with the disciples.

And one of those things that he concentrates on is this idea or concept of the Father. Now, Jesus has spoken greatly about the Father throughout the course of his ministry.

But in these final hours with them, Jesus' focus on the Father is significant. So that 45 times in 82 verses, Jesus wants to draw the attention of his disciples to the Father.

And he must have blown them away. Their concept of God was shattered at the coming of Christ. Sure, they knew that God the Father was all-powerful and all-wise and all-knowing.

And he was just and holy and pure. But now they were beginning to understand that God the Father was also personal. That God the Father was a forgiving God.

[7:26] That God the Father was a God of mercy. That God the Father wanted to have a relationship with them. And Jesus conveys to them the fact this staying force is that the Father will not only help to give you comfort and strength through the time of your ministry.

The Father will make you fruitful. The Father will drive you in the purpose for which I have called you. The Father will help you be the kinds of people that I've called you to be.

It doesn't have to happen on your own. It doesn't have to be something that you put together for yourself. It is something that as you are interested and involved in a relationship with me will be the natural outflow of life that is connected to Christ.

And so coming now to John chapter 15. Let me remind us of what some of the things that we talked about last week in verses 1 through 3.

I'll read this for us. John chapter 15 verses 1 to 3. If you're a guest with us this morning, it's on page 901 in the Pew Bible. This is what it says.

[8:36] I am the true vine and my father the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away.

And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

As we read through this passage and especially verses 1 to 11, what rises to the surface is the fact that there is a demand on our life for fruitfulness.

The father demands fruitfulness from his disciples. We saw that last week in point number one that you have as a reminder this morning. Fruitfulness is demanded by the father, but fruitfulness is only accomplished in the son.

God is not only deeply interested in fruitfulness. He had not only called the people of Israel to be his vine throughout the Old Testament.

[9:44] He had consistently referred to them as his vine. But as with everything else in the lives of this Jewish nation, this nation of Israel, the people of God, they let God down.

They failed him utterly. A nation that was supposed to be the kingdom of priests. They were supposed to be a holy nation. They were supposed to be a light to the Gentiles.

A covenant people. And his own special vineyard. But Israel was wayward. They had trouble following the commands of God.

Their idolatrous heart was caught up with affection for the world. But instead of God wiping his hands and saying, Good riddance to you because you're not able to fulfill the objectives that I had placed before you, sends his son, Jesus, to be what Israel could not.

Jesus was the answer to Israel's problem. And Jesus is the answer to our problem today. We, like Israel, are unfruitful.

[10:51] We, like Israel, are unable to fulfill the expectations of God for our life. But through Christ, if we're connected to him, we can be accepted.

We can be fruitful. We can be filled with the purpose of God as he's working through our lives. God sent Jesus to accomplish what Israel could not.

Jesus as the seed of Abraham. Jesus as the true fulfillment of the law. Jesus as the promised servant. As the light to the world.

And as we find here in John 15, 1, Jesus as the vine. The one who would be fruitful and meet the demands that God had for our lives.

The question for us this morning as we work our way through this passage is, Are we, are you, a fruitful vine? If God has demanded us to be fruitful and has given us the ability to be fruitful in Christ, are we placing our confidence in Christ so that we can be fruitful as well?

[12:06] So it is accomplished in the Son. It's assisted by the Godhead. We see that in verse 2. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. Every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes.

That it may bear more fruit. We saw in our study last week that God condescends to us to serve us. What an unbelievable concept.

That the God who deserves our worship, who deserves our service, condescends to us to serve us, to help make us more fruitful. And God's ministry to us is to prune us, to discipline us, to help us to make more fruit.

He also has a ministry to either cut off or destroy those who are unfruitful. And the question that comes to us in this passage is, What does it mean every branch in me that does not bear fruit? Who are these individuals and what does it mean to be connected to Christ? Are these individuals losing their salvation? And we saw that the Old Testament concept of being in someone had more to do with association than it had to do with union.

[13:26] As we'll find as the dawn of the New Testament era, the new church era would take place. As the Holy Spirit would fill the hearts of people and unify them in Christ, that would be the concept of the church era.

But the disciples in hearing Christ's message had a different idea of connectiveness. They're thinking more in terms of identity. They're thinking more in terms of association. And as we look through the Gospel of John, we see certainly that is what is taking place.

We see that there are people in John chapter 8 who essentially believe. It says they have this superficial faith, this belief in God. But we find out later in the same passage that Jesus calls them sons of their father, the devil.

They had belief on the surface, but the testimony of that faith did not lead them to confidence in the words of God. We also saw in John chapter 6 this great enthusiasm for Jesus in following after him, after the feeding of the 5,000.

And yet, as Jesus shares some hard words in the message of eating his body and drinking his blood, the followers of Christ who seemed initially so enthusiastic had identified themselves with his ministry.

[14:49] Later on, it says they turn and follow him no more. And now Jesus has got to help his own disciples, his own band of 12, who among them, Judas, would be one who would betray the Savior.

What would the disciples do in terms of understanding how this could take place? Jesus needs to help them recognize that there are fruitful vines, there are fruitful branches, and there are unfruitful branches.

Those who are true disciples and those who are superficial disciples. And that God, in observing fruit, will discard the unfruitful and will help to prune and nurture those who are fruitful to make more fruit.

So the ministry of the Godhead in helping to create fruitfulness in his people. And finally, we saw that it is something that is accompanied by a changed life.

Jesus points here in verse 3 to a group of individuals who have been clean. Their heart had been transformed. Certainly, there was more work to do.

[15:59] There was more understanding for their minds. There was more maturity that they needed to arrive at. But they were on the path. They had humbled themselves. They had repented

for their sin.

They had left all to follow Christ. They were moving in the right direction. Their heart had demonstrated a purity. It had demonstrated that the Word had sanctified them and made them pure. They were moving in the right direction. Something had taken place inside. It was more than just a casual conformity to God's standard.

It was a transformation that had happened. Certainly, more work to be done in their lives, as we'll see in the Gospel of Acts. But at least, in the moment, that work of God had become evident. Now, that leads us to our next point that we find in verses 4 to 6. Let me read this for us, and we'll make our way. It says, If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers, and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

[17 : 43] What we find in this section of John chapter 15 is, fruitfulness is not just demanded by the Father. Fruitfulness is dependent on the Son.

Fruitfulness is dependent on the Son. We find this statement repeated a couple of times. Abide in me. Jesus is suggesting that there is something that needs to happen in relationship to him, in connection to him.

If fruitfulness will take place, it can only happen through connection of an abiding relationship with Jesus himself. You must abide.

You must remain. You must stay. You must exist or keep on. We find this repeated several times through this passage.

We find it twice in verse 4, once in verse 5, once in verse 6, in verse 7, in verse 9, in verse 10. This is an overriding theme. Abide in me.

[18 : 46] And although God is integral to the process, even though God the Father is ministering to his people to help them be more fruitful, we find that there is personal responsibility.

There is a way that we can get in the way and we can hinder the work of God in our life. There is a way that we can sever this abiding relationship that God desires to have with us.

Now, the danger at this point in the message is to tell you all the things you need to do in order to have an abiding relationship with Christ. Now, I could tell you about the importance of having your devotions.

I could talk about the importance of time with God in prayer. I could talk about the importance of ministry and coming and worshiping God in a corporate setting.

I could talk about all the things that we need to do to have this abiding relationship. But the idea that is conveyed by this word and conveyed through the ministry of Christ is that it has very little to do with what we're involved in and more to do with who we are.

[20 : 02] Now, that's difficult for us to even try to describe. How do I describe a state of being rather than describe something that we do? And I think one of the reasons why it's so difficult for us to describe a state of being is because it is so unfamiliar to us in this busy, frantic culture.

We like doing. We know doing. We can do doing. Give me a checklist and I'll make sure it gets completed.

Help me to know what the mechanics are and I'll walk through the system. I want the checklist. But when we talk about resting, existing, dwelling, and remaining, those concepts are so foreign to us. What does it mean to abide? What does it mean to rest? What does it mean to exist in God? How do I make that happen in my life?

Perhaps some help can be found in Jeremiah 2, verse 13. I would encourage you to turn with me. Keep your finger in John chapter 15. Turn with me to Jeremiah.

[21 : 31] Jeremiah 2, verse 13. Those of you who are guests, it's on page 628.

Jeremiah, or God, through the prophet Jeremiah, gives this indictment to the people. He says, I think this describes in very clear terms what an abiding relationship is.

Rather than drinking from the fountain of living water, this group of individuals commits two evils. They reject the source of life and refreshment. Instead, they set up for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns at that, which hold no water, can provide no nourishment, can provide no life, and no help, and no comfort.

We are so often very much like that. When hurting, we mask it through leisure, vacation, television.

[23 : 10] Anything to dampen out the pain that we feel. Anything that we can do to unplug from the hurt that is going on inside.

When anxious, we turn to any number of things that help make us secure. When falling behind financially, we work harder and longer, and we're eager to make sure that we can get ahead. When discouraged, we sleep. We unplug. We drown our sorrows in a fury of activity to help us forget the discouragement that we have. We have at our disposal the fountain of living water, but instead, we drink at the desert of the world. We fill up our hearts with everything but the Lord. We seek to find our satisfaction in all these things that are apart from Him. But in order for us to really abide in Christ, there is a sense in which we need to be still. [24 : 17] And know that He is God. It takes time. It takes quiet. It takes meditation. And reflection. And waiting. And listening.

And examination. And giving God the opportunity to speak to your heart as you are listening to Him through His Word. Not a rushed time through your devotions or a hurried time in prayer, but a deliberate and focused opportunity of waiting at the feet of Christ and asking Him to expose in your own soul the areas of dissatisfaction so that He can be the one who provides fulfillment. so that He can be the one who provides comfort and strength and purpose and direction and sustenance and identity and moment-by-moment breath.

God wants us to be like a flower that is put into a glass with dye and filled up with the dye so that it shows up in the blossom.

He wants us to abide in Him and to find Him as the life source. To find Him as the root by which we find comfort and happiness and joy.

[25 : 48] Last week I encouraged you to ask yourself two questions. The first question is how do you respond when all the good things that you've done lead to disaster?

disaster. Like, you've been faithful to do your exercises. You have made sure you have the right diet. You make sure that you spend time with Him.

You're working and doing all the things that God expects you to do but then you get that fateful news from the doctor that you have cancer. Or you get that fateful news that you have that illness that is incurable.

And then you begin to wonder, Lord, what is it that I did wrong? Why are you allowing this to happen in my life? You ever been there?

You ever faced that? You ever been confronted with the resentment and the bitterness of wondering why God lets bad things happen to good people?

[26 : 53] that flows from a heart that is not understanding the significance of abiding in Him. That recognizing that God allows hard things to happen in life so that He can reinforce this abiding relationship.

So that He can strengthen your need for Him. So that He can prove Himself sufficient for all things. that He can magnify your testimony in the world.

That people can look at your life and say, wow, they have a peace that passes understanding. Their God must be an amazing God if He's able to sustain them through that crisis.

God does that for us. He doesn't lead us to hard things because He delights in seeing us in trouble. He leads us to hard things to press us in to deeper, more abiding relationship with Himself.

It is good for us. It's good for our testimony. It's good as the world sees that God is sufficient. That leads to the next question.

[28 : 07] The next question would be, what is connection to Christ worth to you? What are you willing to say, God? You can have access to this in my life in order for your, my relationship with you to be strengthened.

I think of Philipians chapter 3 where the Apostle Paul says that I might know Him in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. Paul was willing to go through the paces in order to deepen that abiding relationship with Christ.

maybe it requires a measure of laying down and saying, God, I need you to humble me.

I need you to break me. I need to be the kind of individual who sees my sin for what it is so that you can lead me to purity.

You can lead me to reflecting your greatness more spectacularly in this world. What is it going to take to be more fruitful?

[29 : 19] It's going to take an abiding relationship with Christ that is more than just doing but it's being, being and existing in Him no matter the cost.

verse 6 helps us to understand another point of this is you must also be aware of future judgment. You must be aware of future judgment. There is a day of reckoning. The vine dresser takes special interest in his vineyard and he will not tolerate unfruitful branches especially when he knows that the life source, those who are connected to the life source will bring fruit.

You will not endure the barren branches for long. Luke chapter 13 kind of gives us a parable where Jesus illustrates this.

Listen as I read from Luke chapter 13. Jesus tells this parable a man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. He came seeking fruit on it and found none and he said to the vine dresser look for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and I find none cut it down.

[30 : 38] Why should it use up the ground? And he answered him sir let it alone this year also until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year well and good but if not you can cut it down.

We find as a principle through scripture that there is patient enduring waiting on God's part to nurture the fruitless branches so that it can demonstrate either fruitfulness or barrenness.

Picture of God's mercy with Israel and also a picture of God's mercy for us. He did not want to sever the branches that could eventually be fruitful.

And God knows our hearts so that would never happen but God demonstrates his endurance with us. As 2 Peter says the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness but is patient towards you not wishing that any should perish but that all should reach repentance.

But there is accountability. There will be a day of reckoning and God will judge based upon your connection to Christ whether or not you've been fruitful.

[32 : 00] The consequences of not abiding in Christ are devastating. Are you a fruitful vine? Now moving to this last point from verses 7 to 11 we find that fruitfulness is a delight to God's people.

Those who demonstrate fruitfulness will get to experience the joy of that fruitfulness and what that means in terms of their relationship with God.

We see six ways that fruitfulness is a delight to God's people sprinkled out through verses 7 to 11. Let me read this for us.

It says this If you abide in me and my words abide in you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

[33 : 14] These things I have spoken to you. That my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. Listed up here on the screen are the six ways in this passage that God brings pleasure and favor to those who are fruitful.

Those who are connected to Christ can enjoy the benefits that come as a result. First in verse 7 we find prayer that is answered. Here we get a glimpse of a life of harmony with God's words.

They will be received and as we are existing in the word of God we will know exactly the things that please God. It will direct our prayers.

will help us to pray for things that God already wants to give. Jesus has already emphasized this point in John chapter 14 16 and he'll emphasize it again in John chapter 16 whatever you ask in my name that I will do.

This is a significant theme for Christ especially in these last moments with his disciples. We'll look at this more in depth when we get to chapter 16 but just to call it to your attention prayer that is answered.

[34 : 33] Maybe one of the greatest recent examples of someone who committed himself to this kind of living was George Mueller.

Any of you who know George Mueller know that he lived in the 1800s and he says this of his life. He says I have joyfully dedicated my whole life to the object of showing how much may be accomplished by prayer and faith.

George Mueller not only exemplified that but George Mueller recorded at least 10,000 ways that God answered his prayer directly through the course of his life in ministry.

He lived this out. He was a pastor. He helped to develop a training center, a seminary during his day. He was also responsible for an orphanage where there were 10,000 children that streamed through the course of his ministry to them and not once did George Mueller ask people to give a donation.

He was committed to God being able to show up and answer prayer independent of his request and God was faithful. And George Mueller in his heart's desire to show joyfully that God is able to answer prayer demonstrated that very thing.

[36:04] He's an example to us. God does answer prayer. Secondly, praise to the Father. Do you realize that when God changes your life, when God moves you from the person that you were to a person who is a new creation in Christ, God the Father gets glory for that work.

People get to see his power to forgive, his power to heal, his power to change, his power to help you overcome the sinful tendencies that are so true of your life.

When God changes your life, God gets credit for his power showing up in you. Praise to the Father is brought into the forefront.

Then we see in verse 8 as well, there is proof of discipleship. When you get to see that God is changing you from the inside, it helps to confirm the fact that you actually belong to him.

There can now be confidence in the Christian life. The person who was once angry and selfish, impatient, rude, and critical, and foul-mouthed, now has this posture of forgiveness and gentleness and mercy and kindness and compassion.

[37:30] How did that happen? Except for the fact that God has done his work in your life, proving to you and proving to others that God is real to you.

There is proof of discipleship. There's also the presence of God that we find in verse 9. That the Father's love which had been conveyed to Christ is now disseminated to his disciples.

That there is an opportunity for us not only to know about God's love intellectually but to experience God's love personally. And when we are drawn into the love of God, when we come to understand the love of God, it leads us to a power for obedience that we find in verse 10.

It says in verse 10, it says, if you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love just as I have kept my Father's commands.

Loving God leads to loving the things that God loves. Loving God leads to loving the things that God loves. When you love God's word, then you love hearing it routinely.

[38:49] You love spending time with God's people, worshiping together. When you love God's name, you learn to revere it and you decide not to take it in vain.

When you love God's design for work and for rest, then you learn to honor the Sabbath day. When you love God's plan for family, then you learn to honor your parents.

When you love God's provision, then you don't need to steal or covet. When you love God's choice of the partners for you, then you learn not to be a person of lust or person who commits adultery.

And when you love the God of truth, you learn to be a person of truth. See, our affection for God drives us to love the things that God loves. Do you love God?

Do you love God's plan? Does it lead you to love the things that God loves? Are you a fruitful vine? This past week, I had the opportunity to help three of my children build their Awana car.

[40:02] Now, I can tell you that helping my kids with their Awana car is not because I enjoy the process of the hours and hours of cutting and sanding and filing and then the embarrassment of putting the car on the track and getting smoked by the rest of you.

But, a love for that process demonstrates not an affection for the Grand Prix as much as an affection for my children.

There is a love for them and a love to do and to partner with them in the things that they enjoy. Are you a lover of God? Do you love to do the things that God loves?

And finally, this last provision of joy to the full. Up to this point in the Gospel of John, the word joy has only been mentioned once.

And now it will come six more times in chapter 16. There is this rapid fire understanding Jesus wants his disciples to know there is joy that comes to the followers of God.

[41:15] You can be full of joy even when the pruning process feels quite painful at times. God's desire is to flood your life with joy.

To close, George Mueller says this. He says, the more we know of God, the happier we are. When we became a little acquainted with God, our true happiness commenced.

And the more we become acquainted with him, the more truly happy we become. What will make us so exceedingly happy in heaven? It will be the fuller knowledge of God.

Do you know God this morning? Does your life reflect a knowledge of God through overflowing joy? unquenchable, infectious joy?

May we be people who demonstrate an affection for him through a changed life and through fruitfulness that comes from Jesus.

[42:25] Let's pray. God, we thank you this morning for your word. Thank you for the challenge and encouragement to be people who are fruitful.

Lord, we understand that to be fruitful only happens through the person of Christ by being connected to you, by having an abiding relationship with you. Lord, help us in that process. Help us not to replace an affection for you with an affection for everything else. and Lord, I pray that duty would not get in the way of delight, that we would punch the clock, that we would perform our checklist, but Lord, help us to grow in our humility, help us to grow in brokenness, help us to grow in our satisfaction and our delight for our Savior.

We praise you that you are ministering to us in ways that we can't even see. May we not resent the process. May we give you space to do your work so that we can be more fruitful as your people.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. I want to encourage this morning before we sing this song and maybe as we're singing this song, maybe today you would say, I'm not where I want to be.

[43:59] God, and you would just like to have somebody pray with you. We would love to pray with you. And maybe this morning can be just a fresh start for you, a new beginning, of just taking that step and saying, God, I don't know what an abiding relationship with you looks like.

I've been working so hard to measure up to what you called me to do, but I realize I just need to let you do the work through me.

Or maybe you're here this morning and you don't know Christ. You don't have a relationship with him. You know the emptiness in your life and you know that as a result of this passage, he is the only person that can fill you up.

We would love to pray with you today. If you don't know Christ, we'd love to introduce him to you so your life can be full of joy. Let's stand as we sing. Amen.

Amen.