

A Heart to Give Us Fruit and Joy - John

15:1-25

Introduction:

- I want to tell you all something, that most of you will probably know. Almost exactly six months ago, my life changed completely. That change, of course, is because I got married, and now just about everything in my life is radically different than it was before.
- I want to give you an example of this change by painting you a picture of our apartment before, and after we got married.
- We have a beautiful little one bedroom apartment here, but before we got married this place was the very definition of a bachelor apartment. My fridge was mostly empty other than the food that I needed for that evening, my pantry was pretty much just full of pasta and sauce, and I had these aggressively orange and blue plates and bowls that I got at the dollar tree.
- As far as the rest of the apartment was concerned, I had a kitchen table where I would work, and other than that I had one chair, this giant recliner that my family had since before I was born, it was this old, redish purple recliner that was half falling apart, but I loved it. It was my favourite chair in the world.
- Needless to say though, that chair didn't last long after Elaine and I got married, as a matter of fact, everything about this place was completely transformed after Elaine moved in. We have a rug now. There are decorative pillows, I have never in my life owned a decorative pillow. There's chairs for possible company, if we didn't have COVID that is, and nice plates with nice designs on them rather than these irritatingly orange things I used to have.
- There's so much more, but I think you get the idea. After a week of being married, and having my wife living with me here, there is barely a single trace of the way this apartment was before. It has transformed completely in just about every way.
- Now the reason that I bring that up, is because the passage that we're going to be looking at today as we continue working through the book of John deals with a similar type of transformation, a change that affects all of our life. And what we're going to see as we look at Jesus' words in John 15, is:
- **The heart of Christ causes a complete change in our life, producing fruit and joy, and transforming all of our relationships.**

- Now this idea of transformation is not a new one, or something that Jesus is just going to pull out of thin air. In fact, we can see this even in the passage that Darryl spoke on last week about the coming of the Holy Spirit.
- Look at what John 14:23-24 say:

“Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.” - John 14:23-24 (ESV)

- So you can see that Jesus is already telling his disciples that to follow him requires some type of change, there will be evidence in their lives that they are followers of Christ, in that they will keep his word. On the flip side, it will be clear who does not follow him because they do not keep his word.
- So a relationship with Christ is something that causes a change in our lives, and more than just a change, actually a complete transformation, and in Ch. 15 we’re going to see Jesus go into more detail on how that transformation actually plays out in a number of different areas of our lives, and again, what we’ll see is that:
- **The heart of Christ causes a complete change in our life, producing fruit and joy, and transforming all of our relationships.**

The Work of Christ produces fruit in our lives (V. 1-6)

- Now there’s a lot of content to cover in this chapter, it is an incredibly rich and deep passage, so we’re not going to be able to dive into every little detail, but we are going to look at four different ways that Christ transforms our lives and relationships, and the first one is that “The Work of Christ produces fruit in our lives”.
- It’s really important to start here, because the beginning of this passage is really going to set the stage for everything else that Jesus talks about, but he starts right into it, giving his disciples a bit of an object lesson. Look at what he says in V. 1-2:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 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.” - John 15:1-2 (ESV)

- So he compares his relationship with his disciples to that of branches to a vine. This idea really returns to what Jesus has already said in John 14, I am the way, the truth and the LIFE.

As the vine, he is the source of life for the branches, which is his disciples, and all who follow him. Those who follow Christ find their source of life in him.

- And as Jesus provides life to his followers, the “branches”, we can see that bearing fruit is an essential part of this relationship with Christ. Just like branches on a vine are expected to produce fruit, those who find their source of life in Christ are meant to produce a similar type of “fruit”.
- That fruit which they produce, is an indicator that they are truly alive in Christ. And while Christ tells us that those who do not produce fruit are “taken away” by the Father, who is called the vinedresser, those who are alive in Christ are “pruned” so that they may continue to produce more fruit.
- Now, whenever we think of the idea of “fruit” that is brought about by the work of Christ, our minds naturally go to the “Fruit of the Spirit” that Paul talks about in the book of Galatians. This is what he says in Galatians 5:22-23,

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” - Gal. 5:22-23a (ESV)

- So these are the things that are naturally produced in our life by the work of Christ, and the sending of the Holy Spirit which Jesus was talking about in the end of Ch. 14. Because of Christ’s work on the cross, those who follow him receive the Holy Spirit, who in turn, produces this “fruit” in our lives, the fruit of the Spirit.
- Jesus then describes more of this relationship that he has with his followers, which results in this fruit being produced. Look at what he says in V.4:

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.” - John 15:4 (ESV)

- So it’s clear that we can’t just produce this fruit on our own, but we need to “abide” in Christ. This word, “abide” is really the key to this passage, because it describes the relationship that we are called to have with Christ, which will produce the fruit that he talks about, and transform us entirely. Before we can really understand the effect that our relationship with Christ has on our life, we need to start by looking at what he says about our relationship with him first and foremost, because everything else is built on this.
- The word “abide” is a very intimate word, and it has the idea of “remaining” or “resting”. Jesus is inviting us into an incredibly intimate relationship as he invites his followers to “abide” in him.
- So a relationship with Christ, this “abiding”, remaining in him, and relying on Christ as our source of life is not optional for the Christian. We cannot produce fruit on our own. It is only

through the work of Christ that we are able to receive the Holy Spirit and experience the transformation in him that produces this fruit in our lives and causes us to grow.

- Now it's important to point out that none of us are perfect at this, or perfectly produce these fruits. I certainly don't. But there is a growth that happens in the Christian life as we grow deeper in our relationship with Christ, we begin to resemble him as we produce this fruit in our lives.
- John Kostenberger writes a quote in his commentary on John that sums up this relationship beautifully:
 - *“through the Spirit, and sustained by obedience to his commandments, Jesus’s followers are to draw their life blood from their exalted Lord just as branches draw their vitality from the vine.”*

The Work of Christ Transforms our Relationship with God (V. 7-11)

- Jesus' words then move from this beautiful image of how his work in our life produces fruit as we abide in him, and shows how that fruit transforms every other part of our life, and he begins by discussing our relationship with God. He's continuing to elaborate on the image he gave of the vine, and how that impacts the rest of our life. Look what he says in V. 7-8:

“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.” - John 15:7-8 (ESV)

- In V. 7 the focus is on prayer, which is such an important part of our relationship with God. He tells the disciples to “Ask whatever they wish and it will be done for them.” One commentator I read explained this really well. He said:
 - *“In light of our union with Christ, “whatever you wish” is not a blank-check prayer but participation in the life and mission of God.”*
- So the prayers that he is talking about here are not selfish prayers, focused on us, and what we want God to do for us, but rather what he's talking about here is that his relationship with us transforms even the way we pray, and talk to God, that our prayers are to be focused on God, and bringing about his will in our lives.
- Then in V. 8 Christ explains more about what is the purpose of our prayers as his followers and we see how this relationship with Christ and his work in our lives transforms our relationship with God as he says *“By this my Father is glorified”*.

- Christ transforms our relationship with God because our lives now bring God glory, as we live as a reflection of his one and only Son, and our prayers are focused on accomplishing that goal. Not getting whatever we may want in life, but praying for the ability to glorify God with our lives.
- This, truly, is the goal of the Christian life. That our lives and our prayers are meant to bring glory to God, and this is something we are not able to do on our own. On our own we are sinners living in rebellion against God, yet through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross we are cleansed of our sins, and welcomed into this deep and intimate relationship in which we produce the fruit that comes from obedience and “abiding” in Christ, and bring glory to God.
- We are no longer considered enemies as we were, but welcomed into this relationship.
- And this is such a beautiful thing, in V. 9-10 Jesus compares the relationship of us abiding in him to his own relationship with the Father. This is so amazing that we could be able to have this kind of an intimate and loving relationship with God through the work of Christ in our lives.
- And so our goal as Christians should be to bring God glory in the way that we live. Recognizing the magnitude of what has been done for us, and the amazing relationship we are invited into, how could we do anything else. One of the big question we should be asking as followers of Christ is how am I bringing God glory in my life? How is my life producing this fruit, and how am I seeking to glorify God? That should be the goal of everything that we do as his followers: To bring him glory.
- We’re not perfect at this, far from it. That’s why we need Christ in our life, and the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot live this way on our own.
- And in V. 11 Jesus shares a beautiful truth with his disciples, that to live our life to bring God glory is not some constricting obligation, something that’s a drag, or we just do because we have to. Look at what V. 11 says:

“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” - John 15:11 (ESV)

- Living this way, living to bring God glory, this is why we were created, and when we are connected to Christ, producing fruit in our lives through the work of the Holy Spirit, and bringing glory to the Father we are fulfilling our ultimate purpose in life, the reason we were made, and this is a life that brings joy. Just like Jesus says, that his joy may be in us, and that our joy may be full. This is not an irritating obligation, it is the most amazing privilege to live our lives to glorify our Father in Heaven.
- This is so amazing, but Jesus doesn’t stop here.

The Work of Christ Transforms our Relationship with Each other (V. 12-17)

- Jesus continues to describe how the impact of this transformation then starts to work its way outwards. We've already seen that the Work of Christ produces fruit in our lives, and transforms our relationship with God, the next section of this passage shows how the work of Christ transforms our relationship with Each other.
- Look at V. 12:

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." - John 15:12 (ESV)

- So Jesus moves directly from his description of his relationship with his followers, and he comes immediately to this command, showing them how his relationship with them transforms the way that they interact with one another, specifically that they are called to love one another, and not just love one another, but love each other in the same way that Jesus has loved them.
- And to add to this command, Jesus gives such a beautiful description of the love that he has shown to them in V. 13-15, saying:

"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." - John 15:13-15 (ESV)

- This is so amazing, that for those who have given their life to Christ, and have a relationship with him, as he's described at the beginning of Ch. 15, he has called them friends. If you have a relationship with Christ, not only are you able to live your life to bring God glory, but you are considered as a friend of GOD. A friend of the one who created the entirety of the world.
- He then links this command back to his words from earlier in the chapter. Look at V. 16-17:

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another." - John 15:16-17 (ESV)

- So those who have a relationship with Christ have been chosen by him, appointed specially so that they can bear fruit, and work on his behalf in the world, and Jesus reminds his disciples again, that part of living this life means loving one another as they have been loved.

The Work of Christ Transforms our Relationship with the World (V. 18-25)

- Now we come to the fourth impact that the work of Christ has in our lives, and this one is much more difficult than what we've already seen.
- So far we've seen such a beautiful picture of the fruit and joy that Christ produces in our life, and how that gives glory to God, and grows our love for one another, but in this final section that we're going to look at, we're going to see that the Work of Christ also transforms our relationship with the world around us.
- Look at what Jesus says in V. 18-19.

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." - John 15:18-19 (ESV)

- Those are heavy words, and they make us a bit uncomfortable. We've seen such beautiful realities in our relationship with Christ, and been so encouraged in this passage, yet here we seem to be smacked in the face with this challenging reality, that the world will hate us because of our devotion to Christ.
- John Kostenberger comments on this as well, saying:
 - *"during Jesus's earthly ministry it was he, not his followers, who bore the major brunt of the world's (including the Jewish leaders') persecution, but once Jesus has been removed from the scene, the world's hatred will inevitably turn toward them."*
- So we, as followers of Christ, are going to face the hatred of the world, because the world first hated Christ. We will be rejected just like he was rejected.
- It's a difficult truth to wrestle through. We naturally want people to love us, yet Christ makes clear that this isn't what's going to happen.
- He also refers back to Ch. 13 when he talks about his disciples not being greater than him in this. In Ch. 13, Jesus washed the feet of the disciples as he taught them about humility, instructing them that they were not above showing the same humble service that he showed to them. That idea continues here as he teaches them that they are not above the type of suffering that endures at the hands of the world, and shouldn't expect not to face similar difficulties.
- Yet as much as we find these words incredibly challenging, there is also encouragement. Look at V. 21:

“But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.” - John 15:21 (ESV)

- He makes clear in V. 21 that whether we are accepted or rejected by those we interact with in this world, it is on account of his name. It is because of our relationship with him, and the message that he has given us to share, that our relationship with the world around us is changed.
- And yet, we don't need to be afraid of the world because of our relationship with Christ, because we are abiding in him. That is something that the world can never take away from us, and to live our lives abiding in Christ to bring glory to God is so much greater than living for the praise of the world. If we live for Christ, the world may hate us, but we can be encouraged that the one who created us calls us his friends.

Conclusion

- And this life, this same life that Christ calls his disciples to in this passage, is the same life that he calls you and I to today. I told you in the beginning that my entire life changed when I got married, and you can see that change very evidently in the way that our apartment is laid out.
- In the same way, a relationship with Christ completely transforms our life, and Jesus lays out some of the evidence of that transformation that shows itself in our lives.
- So can I give you all an encouragement for this coming week? Abide in Christ. That really is the key to this passage, the key to this life and transformation. This kind of transformation occurs in our life when we are abiding in Christ, and relying on him as our true source of life. Remember, without him, we can do nothing.
- And as you abide in Christ, pray that he would continue to work in your life. Pray for the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, so that you may live your life to bring glory to God, love one another, and proclaim the love of Christ to the world without fear, knowing that they will reject us because they rejected Christ first.
- Two times in this passage Jesus mentions the importance and the power of prayer, that as we are abiding in him, and as we pray that God's will will be done in our lives, our prayers will be answered.
- In this passage Jesus lays out the key to living your life as a true follower of him, and that key is never found in yourself. It is found in abiding in Christ, remaining firmly attached to the vine, who provides himself as the source of life for all who follow him.
- And as you go out this week, remember this. The heart of Christ causes a complete change in our life, producing fruit and joy, and transforming all of our relationships. So abide in him,

and pray that his Spirit would work in you, causing this transformation to take place, so that your life will be lived to bring glory to your Father in Heaven, as Christ did.