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Friends of Jesus John 15:8-14

Intro: We're dealing with the Lord's parable concerning the true vine and the branches; a word picture that illustrates the ongoing, intimate relationship between Jesus and His followers that's necessary to bring forth fruit in their lives. Last week, our text was vs6-8 there's a connection made by John in vs7 & 8 that we didn't have time to deal with. In these 2 verses, John links the offering of prayer according to the will of God to the glory of God. We've already seen this connection in 14:13-14 but here the emphasis is different. In ch14 the emphasis was on prayer and the fact that it would be answered was to be a comfort for the disciples. Here, the emphasis is on the glory of God (Read vs8-11).

In our text today, the glorification of God is linked to 4 specific features, each of which should be abundantly visible in the life of each Christian, each true disciple of Christ. These features are: fruitfulness, love, obedience and joy. Each one of these features is directly connected to the need for Christians to deliberately abide or remain in Christ. As important aspects of the Christian life, we want to give each of them the proper attention they are due.

8- fruitfulness – the idea here is: if we belong to Jesus and abide in Him, we will be fruitful in our Christian walk and God will be glorified by our fruitfulness. Plus, the fact that we're fruitful is evidence that we are truly Christ's disciples.

Having said that, we need to discuss the real meaning of fruitfulness because if we fail to do that or if we define it incorrectly, we will inevitably discourage some believers with this subject and that would be an ironic tragedy. How often do doctrines that are meant to encourage the church end up be a discouragement because of poor exegesis, incorrect definition or a misguided emphasis on a minor aspect? The real shame in many parts of the church today is that the word that was meant to uplift God's people is inappropriately used to badger, batter and beat them down.

Several kinds of spiritual fruit are mentioned in the Bible. Of course, we bear fruit when we win others to Christ. Jesus said we are part of the harvest

(John 4). We also bear spiritual fruit as we grow in holiness and obedience (Rom 6:22). Paul considered Christian giving to be the fruit of a dedicated life (Rom 15:28). Clearly, the “fruit of the Spirit” as listed in Gal 5:22-23 is the kind of Christian character that glorifies God and reveals Jesus to other people. Our good works, our service to the Lord, grows out of our abiding life (Col 1:10). Even the praise that comes from our heart and lips is considered fruit produced for the glory of God (Heb 13:15).

Now, some may say that many of these things can be counterfeited by the flesh and that is completely true. But, if that’s the case, it really won’t take very long for the truth to be revealed. Only real spiritual fruit contains within it the seeds for more fruit. Fruit produced by the flesh is dead and cannot reproduce itself; while Spirit produced fruit will go on reproducing from one life to another. There will be fruit, then more fruit, then much fruit. The starting point for all of this is the growth of divine character in the life of the believer. It’s the indispensable heart of the Christian’s witness.

9- love – This naturally follows since love is the primary fruit of the Spirit. Vs9 has 3 parts: 1) declaration of love – “I...have loved you...” Those are wonderful words to hear at any time of life, if they are true. They are the foundation of any good marriage, where the fullest measure of human love is expressed. It’s the basis of a Christian home seen in the love between parents and children. In a way, it’s the basis for friendship and for fellowship within the church. But, if this is true when these words are spoken between mere men and women, how much more wonderful are they when spoken by Jesus Christ? Especially when we’re the ones He’s speaking to! This is not just a wonderful love; it is an astonishing love because there’s nothing within us that gives any cause for such a great love. We are sinners. Jesus is holy! We’ve rebelled against God. Still, Jesus loves us. It’s nothing less than incredible!

Jesus loves us because He loves us; it’s as simple as that. But, expressing His love wasn’t that simple. Because of His great love for us, Jesus left His position of glory in heaven and came to earth and became a man like us. The Bible describes the love in marriage this way: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). If you think about it, that’s exactly what Jesus did. He left His Father’s home in heaven to come to earth to woo and wed His bride, the church. He redeemed her. Jesus became like us in order to make a way

for us to become like Him. This was the entire point and purpose of His incarnation.

2) measure of that love – If His love for us were a part-time, half-hearted thing, we could still rejoice because for him to love us at all is just amazing. But that is not the case, nor is it what He says. We should note that when Jesus declares His love for us, He doesn't use an example of human love. He doesn't say, "as a mother loves her baby," or "as a husband loves his wife," or "as a soldier loves his buddies." While these are all examples of human love, they are not perfect examples. Multiplies thousands of mothers abort their babies every year; nearly half the marriages in this country end in divorce and not every soldier is committed to sacrificing his or her life for someone else (tho most are). No, the only illustration that could do His love for us justice was to equate it to the love of the Father for Himself.

This is the love that existed within the Trinity from all of eternity and will exist to all of eternity. Is there a love greater than that? It's impossible that there could be. This is a love without beginning or end, without measure and without change. It's according to the measure of this great love; in fact, with this very same love, that Jesus loves us.

3) challenge of love – abide, remain, continue in it. If we continue in His love, we'll abide in Him and be fruitful.

10- obedience – Are we tired of hearing this emphasis on His commands? We may be but if we are, the fault lies with us and not the commands. **I John 5:3b** says "His commandments are not burdensome." Jesus Himself said, "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (**Mt 11:30**). If this is true then what's the problem? The problem is we're not as excited to do His commands as we like to think we are. Thus, this continued emphasis on obedience exposes our half-hearted commitment to the Lord's will and our guilt from this makes us very uncomfortable.

At the end of this book we'll hear Jesus ask Peter 3 times if he loves Him. By the 3rd time, Peter was frustrated. Why did Jesus ask him 3 times? Because Peter denied Him 3 times and nobody likes to be reminded of their weakness. But, we need to be reminded and that's why this point is repeated so much (**14:15, 14:21, 14:23, 15:10, 15:14**). We must keep His commands if we're going to be His disciples and grow in His love. For the

disciple, His commands are not easily ignored or lightly set aside. They are the bread and butter of the Christian walk.

By the way, we should also notice that Jesus points out that He's asking no more of us than what He has already asked and given of Himself. He compares our obedience to Him with His obedience to the Father. We should be encouraged by this, knowing that the One who instructs us to obedience has set the pattern for us Himself and will provide for us the strength to accomplish what He commands us to do.

11- joy – the 4th feature in the believer that brings glory to the Father. This teaches that the commands of Jesus are not grievous - they actually lead in the opposite direction. This verse speaks of the believer's joy in 3 tenses: joy attained, joy abiding and joy abounding. Joy is attained by accepting the things Jesus taught. The joy of Jesus is not the pleasure of a life of ease; it's the exhilaration of being right with God! That's why we must abide in Him, so that His doctrines, His perspectives and His aspirations will be ours too. His joy should be the disciple's joy. His joy was wonderful; it wasn't deterred by suffering or difficult circumstances. It rejoiced in hardship: "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross" (**Heb 12:2**). Where'd He find this joy? In His intense desire to do His Father's will.

Joy abiding means joy doesn't automatically remain. Many things can destroy it like sin, disobedience or unbelief. David referred to this in **Ps 51:12a** when he cried out for God to, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation." It wasn't that his salvation was lost; but the joy had evaporated. This always happens when we're separated from Christ by sin; when our fellowship with Him is broken. Thus, we must abide in Him. When we do, His joy abides in us too.

Joy abounding means your joy will be complete - filled up. Defeat and unhappiness should have no place in our lives. We should be able to rejoice in Christ, even in the face of arrest, beatings, crucifixion, and death, as He did.

When fruitfulness, love, obedience and joy are found in the believer's life, everyone sees it and knows the source is divine. We can never produce these of ourselves but Jesus can and will produce them in us as we abide in Him.

12-14- Here, Jesus returns to the theme of love and He makes reference to the greatest of all loves – sacrificial love – laying down one’s life for others. But, Jesus doesn’t just say “others;” He specifically speaks of laying down one’s life for his friends. This is the 1st time in John’s Gospel that He uses this term and He does so in regards to our relationship with Him. When Jesus says, “You are My friends” He’s speaking to us on a human level in terms we can clearly understand. He does this so we can contrast His friendship (perfect) with the best friendships we’ve ever had.

The most famous Biblical example of friendship was between David and Jonathan. Jonathan was King Saul’s eldest son, the next in line for the throne. David had been anointed by Samuel to replace Saul and everyone knew it and could see he was clearly God’s choice to be the next king. These 2 should have been at each other’s throats but there was no antagonism between them; there was only a great and beautiful friendship. It was a case in which each sacrificed in order to put the other’s interest ahead of his own. Still, it’s not proper to talk about Jesus’ sacrifice in mere human terms; His death surpasses anything we can imagine. It doesn’t happen often but sometimes people do voluntarily die for another. But this never equals or parallels Jesus’ sacrifice. Why was His death exceptional?

1st) Jesus didn’t have to die. We’re mortal; we going to die. Jesus was immortal and didn’t have to die. He was life itself, “I am the way the truth and the life” ([John 14:6](#)). He could’ve come into this world, ministered and then returned to heaven without ever experiencing death. Not so for us...“it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” ([Heb 9:27](#)). So, if we give our lives for someone else, it may be a heroic sacrifice, but it would only be facilitating what must eventually happen anyway. We’d just die sooner than normal. Jesus didn’t need to die.

2nd) He knew He would die. This is rarely the case when a person gives their life for another. Few do so knowing in advance they will die. They usually believe they can escape death and still save their friend. People take calculated risks and sometimes die, but they don’t often die deliberately. Jesus by His own testimony deliberately went to the cross to die for our salvation.

3rd) When He died, we weren’t exactly His friends. Sure, He calls us friends

and it's also true that we become His friends. But, we become friends because of His death, because of the atonement He made for us and the ministry of His Spirit which overcomes our natural rebellion against God and draws our hearts to love and serve Him. When Jesus died for us, He did so when we were still foreseen to be His enemies. It was "while we were still sinners, [that] Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). Here's where we see the wonderful love of Jesus for us. If we see ourselves as being good in God's sight, we don't see it. When we see ourselves as God sees us, the surpassing love of Jesus is clear.

Not only did God create us, He created us in His own image but we've rebelled against Him and defaced that image. Instead of God's glory, we promote depravity. Instead of God's sovereignty, we seek autonomy. Instead of holiness, we sin. Instead of love; hate. Yet, in spite of this, Jesus came to be our friend and He proved it by dying for us.

4th) His death was spiritual. If we died for someone else, our death would only be physical. We can't die spiritually for another person. That's exactly what Jesus did for us. Death is separation. Physical death is separation of the soul and spirit from the body. Spiritual death is separation of the soul and spirit from God. That's what makes hell such a terrible place; those in hell are separated from God. Since God's the source of all good things - joy, peace, love, etc. – hell's the opposite. It's misery, unrest, hate, etc. This is the separation that Jesus endured for us. He died physically too. His death was particularly painful and degrading. But the truly horrible aspect of His death was His separation from the Father when He was made sin for us and bore God's just punishment for our sins.

Do you know Jesus as the One who demonstrated His love and friendship for you by dying for you? Is He your friend in that way? If not, you're not yet a Christian, not yet a child of God. But you can be. You can find Jesus to be your friend. In fact, He'll be the best friend you'll ever know or have. You only need come to Him in repentance, confessing your sin and acknowledging that you need Him to be your Savior. Ask and He'll respond to your prayer.

If you are a Christian, Jesus has declared that He is your friend. But, are you His friend? "How do I know?" He tells us right there in vs14 and He puts the requirements in terms we can understand and accommodate. We show

our friendship to Jesus through an obedience that is active, continuous and in all things. It must be active because He says “You are My friends if you do...” Some people think the Christian life consists of refusing to do certain things (drink, cheat in love or business, etc.) and believe they’ve accomplished something. They haven’t, they’ve only obey negatively, not positively. Jesus commands us to love one another and that can only be done in practical ways. He calls us to pray, to worship corporately and do good works. If your not sure what He’d have you do, ask Him

Our obedience should be continuous – He doesn’t say “Do My commands and then quit” or “Just do ‘em on Sundays.” The verb tense here is continuous. It means “If you do...and keep on doing...” It must be a continuous action, day after day, year after year. There is no vacation from being a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Our obedience must be in all things – “whatever I command you.” It means submitting to Him in love to do whatever He asks of us, not picking and choosing, not pursuing the aspects of the Christian faith we like and neglecting those we dislike. It means coming to Him with that yielded humility of mind and body that asks, “Lord, what will you have me do?” It’s only when we ask that question and mean it that we are lifted up to do the great errands of our king. Not as slave but rather as a true friend of Jesus.

Are you Jesus’ friend in this way? If you are, it will be to your own great joy and to the praise of His glory. 😊