

Joke: A woman goes to her lawyer and says, "I want to divorce my husband."

"On what grounds?"

"Grounds? We have just a couple of acres outside the town, but it does have a big lawn and some fruit trees so it's not like empty ground."

"No, that's not what I meant. Do you have a grudge?"

"Yes, we have a 2 car garage but only one car so we use the rest for storage. Why?"

The lawyer beginning to lose his patience, says, "Does he beat you up?"

"No, I'm up by 6:30. He doesn't get up until after I leave for work."

"And why is it you want a divorce?" The lawyer asked.

to which she responds, "We just can't seem to communicate."

I always thought it would be cool to have a couple apple trees in our yard but I wouldn't have any idea on what to do to keep them healthy. So, instead Joy and I maybe every other year or so go and get apples from someone else's orchard.

We get to pick them right off their trees. And what's great is that you're not limited by what the store has. You get to pick your variety, which trees to pick from, always a good time.

But I've noticed that some trees don't produce as much fruit as the others. I do realize that some have already had their fruit grabbed off the tree, But you can tell when it's that and when the tree doesn't isn't producing as well as some others.

They are just more barren.

And that got me thinking that a tree that doesn't really produce fruit is much like some people that call themselves Christians.

I'm finishing up a series today called Christian-ish. What does it mean to be Christian-ish? It means claiming that we're followers of Jesus but not truly and faithfully following him.

And I know some people who would call themselves Christians, they might even believe in God and go to church.

But just like some of the trees in that orchard some of those people that claim to be Christians don't produce much fruit.

And not only are they not fruitful, meaning producing fruit of the spirit like love and joy, peace and patient, kindness.

Not only do you not see the positive fruit, I know some people that call themselves Christians, that sometimes what you actually see is the opposite.

There are some people that claim Jesus but can be kind of rude or selfish, judgmental, incredibly hypocritical even.

There are a lot of people that claim to be Jesus followers, but when you get close, they're all leaves no fruit.

Maybe you've might a few of them yourself. I wonder how many of you know someone that says, "Yeah, you know I'm a Christian," but when you look at their lives, you actually don't see a lot of evidence that they're truly following Jesus.

If you know somebody like that, don't point at them. I'm sure there's nobody here like that. But a lot of us know someone.

Now, if it wasn't so early in my message today I might ask if you're ever a little bit like that, where you claim Jesus, but you don't always display the fruit of the spirit. But again, it's way too early to ask that.

I'll wait until later in the message to ask you that question.

But, Scripture tells us that as disciples of Jesus, we should produce or bear fruit and He's not talking about apples or pears.

It's what the Bible calls spiritual fruit.

And Jesus told us this in John 15 we'll begin in verse 5. . .

John 15:5–8 (ESV): 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 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. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Now let me pause here for a minute because this verse is one of those like our Revelation verse our first week that if taken out of context can get us thinking wrong about God.

Verse 6 tells us. . .

John 15:6 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.

So, let me spend a few minutes on this verse because the context is very important.

This verse is not talking about being connected to the vine then becoming unconnected. Don't get me wrong we can walk away from God and decide we no longer need Him, but He will never walk away from us.

John 10:28–29 (ESV): 8 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand

No one can what? Snatch them out of the Father's hand.

Romans 8:38–39 (ESV): For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

So, verse 6 in John 15 is not about being connected then unconnected. But rather, the branches that do not remain in Him represent those who have not entered into a saving relationship with Christ.

And since they have do not have a relationship with Jesus they are not connected to the vine and therefore cannot bear fruit.

And if you have the context twisted you may get the idea that human effort or striving is necessary, if I pray enough, read Scripture enough, do enough then I will stay connected, but that is just not true.

If you are in Christ you are connected to the vine and because your connected the natural by-product is that you will bear fruit.

Let's get back to the rest of the text. . . The whole idea in our text was that we need to realize our new identity, and the importance of our spiritual union with Jesus. And when we come to realize that we are His and He is mine we will bear fruit.

And when we bear fruit the Father is glorified, and so prove to be His disciples.

In other words, Jesus is saying that you actually demonstrate you are a disciple of Jesus when the fruit of the spirit come out in your life.

And Jesus goes on to tell us that someone will actually know that you are committed to Jesus by what? The fruit that you show.

Here's what he said in Matthew 7.

Matthew 7:15–20 (NIV): Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Once again let me pause to give some clarity here as well here's another of those scary verses. First of all notice what it says in verse 15. . . watch out for who? False prophets.

The imagery of a tree and its fruit is to illustrate the idea that genuine faith in God will naturally produce fruit. Not just fruit but good fruit. Why? Because of a transformed life. The cutting down and burning of the tree are of those who do not truly know God, despite any outward appearances or claims on the contrary.

We who know Jesus, truly know Jesus, because of the transformation in our lives, and the power of Holy Spirit to make us a new creation will naturally or maybe better to say supernaturally will bear good fruit as we live from the life of Jesus.

Does it happen instantly no. . .but

Philippians 1:6 (NIV): being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

And listen it doesn't mean you arrived. It says until the day of Christ Jesus. We are growing in wisdom, and revelation, and fruit.

And because we are producing good fruit a non- believing world will know that you belong to Jesus.

Because they'll see the spiritual fruit come out of your life. Not just in the words you say, but in the way you live.

It's not that we just claim Jesus, but the fruit of the spirit is displaying Jesus every single day in and through us.

And many of you, you've seen it, you know somebody, they just see that their full of love and their full of joy and their full of peace even when life isn't going as well as they had hoped for, but because of how they respond people want to be around them.

And it's not that their perfect, but they know that they care about them and care about other people and some of you are like that.

There's just something coming out of you that other people are like, I want to be around that. They are attracted to you.

You live like Christ and you love like Christ and you make a difference like Christ and you care like Christ.

And the way that you live demonstrates your commitment to Jesus and they see the fruit of the spirit displayed in your life.

And there are some of you that are like that.

But there are others, maybe you've met a few, who call themselves Christians and they may be able to quote a lot of the Bible and may have Bible knowledge but they lack integrity.

They'll say one thing and they'll do another.

They say, yeah, I'm a Christian. But a lot of times they're rude or harsh or selfish.

Okay, it's time I hope that we are deep enough into the message now for me to ask you what I referred to earlier and that is when others look at you, what do they see?

Is it clear by the fruit of your life, the way you treat people, the way you carry yourself? Is it clear that you are a follower of Jesus?

Do they see that you're loving and that you're patient and that you're kind and that you're full of joy? Or do they see a fruit tree that's just bearing leaves?

You call yourself a Christian but. . .

Galatians chapter 5 it lists for us nine fruit of the spirit.

Let's look them, they are by the way worth memorizing. . .

Galatians 5:22–23 (NIV): But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Other translations use the word patience instead of forbearance.

What are they? Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

I want you to notice one very important detail many of us miss. Notice it says fruit, not fruits because it is not giving us an option to pick out what we feel like we want to display today.

Ya know today I'm going to show peace but don't you dare think for a moment that you can push me because my self-control today well it's lacking a bit.

No, no and no. The whole idea of it being fruit singular is that it emphasizes the unity and interconnection as a single cohesive result of the Spirit's work in a believers life.

Rather than being separate, individual traits that we might choose from they collectively represent the overall transformation and character of someone who is living by the Spirit.

And they all are simply a natural outflow of knowing Jesus.

And here this church, it's not about striving to produce individual virtues, but rather allowing the Spirit to be expressed as Christ works through us.

Let me say that again, it's not about striving to produce individual virtues, but rather allowing the Spirit to be expressed as Christ works through us.

There's also fruit of something else. And it's not the spirit, but it's the flesh.

The apostle Paul talks about we're basically living from one of two things. If you are a follower of Jesus, what happens? Your spirit is born anew. Your spirit is connected to God.

The problem is our spirit is at constant war against our flesh.

And when Paul calls it the flesh, he's not talking about your skin. The Greek word is sarx, and what that is, is your not spiritual nature. But a fleshly thinking.

Your flesh wants to do what's selfish, your spirit nature because we are a new creation wants to do what's God honoring.

That's one reason why we are told to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

We just looked at the fruit of the Spirit but I also want to show you the fruit of the flesh as well and after we look at them I want to explain to you what Paul is not saying. . .

Galatians 5:16–21 (ESV): But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Now let me explain what Paul's not saying. . .

When Paul talks about us warring against the flesh, he is referring to the internal conflict that we as believers experience between our new identity in Christ and our old influence of the flesh.

Which was our old patterns of thinking. He's not talking about a sinful nature within us as believers.

We are a new creation. Our sinful nature died, we don't have a sin nature when you come to Jesus. We have a sin problem.

Paul tells us for the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Listen church I don't wake up everyday thinking about how I can go and sin and hope I don't get caught. No I used to do that maybe but since I became a follower of Jesus I now wake up wanting please Papa.

Does that mean I'm successful everyday. . .I wish.

But the verse is simply highlighting the tension between two desires flesh and Spirit. We have been given a new nature but the flesh still tries to influence us, but you need to know it is not who we truly are.

The war is not a battle between two natures within us but rather a struggle against the external influence of the flesh, the power of sin and of the world.

So, Paul goes on to say walk by the Spirit, and you will not what? Gratify the desires of the flesh.

It's not a conflict between two natures but about allowing the Spirit to guide us and produce His fruit in our lives.

And really quick let me address the scary portion of the scripture...

I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

And church, if you are truly one who has been transformed by the Spirit of God and following Jesus you won't want to do those things. As just mentioned I wake up everyday simply wanting to please my Heavenly Father.

The emphasis of these verses is to be living out our true identity by walking in the Spirit and allowing His fruit to be expressed in our lives.

It's all about living in accordance to what we have been called.

So, with all of that being said how would you characterize your life.

Remember the fruit of the Spirit. . .What are they? Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Let me just highlight them by asking a few questions. . .

Do you find it easy to love those who don't show love in return or does it make you bitter that they don't reciprocate. So you keep a record.

Are you more joyful or do you more often walk around frustrated?

Are you more peaceful or do you yourself, like many people today, live in an ongoing world of anxiety.

Do you find that you are more patient with people especially when things don't go your way? Or do you find that you're impatient when nothing's going as you would want?

Do you find that you're kind to people or do you have things to do and places to go and people to see?

Do you find that there's goodness in you or do you have a bad attitude, bad mouth, and bad fruit?

Do you find yourself faithful that your word is good. Or are you occasionally disloyal?

Maybe you talk behind their backs or gossip.

Are you more gentle with people or are you harsh?

Do you have self-control or do you find yourself indulgent, giving in to the things that you want when you want them?

What would you say? How would you characterize your life?

Here's where I'm going to make a theological mess of everything I just said, because if I'm being honest I see myself in both of them.

Maybe some of you are like that as well.

Truth is sometimes I can be really, really patient and godly, but there are other times that I'm not so much that way.

And here's what I've noticed about me, almost every time my life displays bad fruit, I tell myself I have a good excuse, or it's someone else's fault. You don't understand my life. I'm going through something right now. I'm just under a lot of pressure.

However, if you have bad fruit, I'm judging you. But if I have bad fruit, there's a reason.

And what I've noticed is even though I tell myself I've got a good excuse, truth is, if I belong to Jesus and I'm connected to the vine, there is no excuse for bad fruit.

Let me say that again. If you belong to Jesus and you're connected to the vine, there is no excuse for bad fruit.

And here's where Jesus gets a little honest about it all. He actually in our original text, he talks about wolves dressed in sheep's clothing.

He talks about those that are not followers of Jesus that pretend like they are.

And I don't know a lot of people that just do this intentionally like I'm going to try to fool people. Don't get me wrong there are for sure some pastors and teachers and churches that are misguided and wrong. There are some cults that's are their to lie to those that will listen. And I'm not talking about those.

But what I'm talking about are the people that may actually fool themselves that would say, oh yeah, I may not kind of do the church thing.

I'm more of Christian-ish.

We dress up the flesh to make it look spiritual.

Like we literally don't have much good fruit. Like a lot of our fruit's bad fruit, but we try to make our bad fruit look good.

Like sometimes we just learn to talk just to talk.

Like how are you doing? Praise the Lord brother. I'm good. Hallelujah. Thank You Jesus. That's spiritual talk. Oh God is good all the time and all the time God is good.

And there are a lot of people that talk the talk but don't walk the walk. Do you know anybody like that?

There's also a look, your bio changes on your social media page and it says God's first. I love Jesus.

But in reality He's not first we're more of a master of disguise.

And we may have actually been changed by Jesus at some point, but when our fruit's not good, so instead of letting God transform us into His image we start to disguise it and make it look like it's good.

I mean in the church world, we're so creative. We can disguise gossip as concern and call it a prayer request.

Let's just pray for sister so and so. Oh, how she needs prayer, she needs the power of the Holy Ghost. I'm telling you what she's doing behind closed doors isn't right, she needs our prayers.

We can also disguise legalism as holiness where we're like so self-righteous and be so judgmental of others.

And the reality is that it's a performance based Christianity and not a true reflection of who Jesus is.

I know people that might even trick themselves to saying and believe in like, Hey, I'm just righteously angry. But the truth of the matter is they're just plain old fashioned bitter.

It's all too common on social media to say, Hey, look how I'm promoting Jesus on my social media platform. But if you look carefully, it's way more about self-promotion than it is about Jesus promotion.

So as we abide in the vine, the fruit of the spirit just comes out supernaturally.

And the reason this talk is really challenging, is because it would be really easy for you to hear this talk and think, I know somebody who needs to hear this.

But it's really, really hard to say, oh my gosh, I need to hear this because it's really hard to see our own blind spots in the mirror.

So what I want to do is I want to ask you two questions and perhaps the Holy Spirit will speak to you about these two questions.

The first question I want to ask you is this, how pleased are you with the quality of your fruit?

When other people look at you at work, does everybody know, not just by what you say, not just by the shirts you wear, not just by the words you speak, but by the way you live. Do they know and see the fruit of the spirit in you?

Do the people at your school, your classmates, do they see that you're literally serving others? You're more others focused, that your life exists for the glory of God and to make a difference with other people?

How pleased do you think love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control are displayed in your life?

The second question is similar, but I'm asking it this way. How pleased are you with the quantity of your fruit?

In other words, maybe you produce three peaches a year and it's great if you get one of them but everybody else walks and sees a bunch of barren branches.

Because I don't want to have selectively loving, I want to be overflowing with love.

And I don't want just peace whenever everything's okay in my life. I want a peace that comes from heaven that goes beyond my human ability to understand.

I want people to look on and say, George I know he's going through a lot right now but man, you can see the joy of the Lord is his strength.

And listen church I would love to tell you that those two questions were not for me but the truth of the matter is I need improvement.

So, what do we do? How do we produce spiritual fruit?

How do we apply God's Word to what I just taught?

For years, what I kind of thought and I would've said is like, well you have a relationship with Jesus and you live for Jesus. That's it you have a relationship with Jesus and you live for Jesus. That would be close, but it's wrong.

And let me try to explain. In our text from John 15 Jesus was very likely near a vineyard when he was saying this to his disciples. Remember what He said? He said, "I am the vine and you are the branches."

So who is Jesus? Jesus is the vine. Who are we? We are the branches. He said, "I'm the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me," you're connected to the vine and I in you, that's a promise.

You don't have to do anything. You will naturally or even more accurately, you'll supernaturally bear much fruit. Now if you're disconnected from me, Jesus says, you can't do anything. "I am the vine. You are the branches."

So let's nail down the players. There's two players in the story. There's Jesus and there's us. And the metaphor tells us this. Who is Jesus? Jesus is the vine. And who are we? You are the branch.

What happens when the branch is connected to Jesus? The vine. It bears fruit. That's it. Boom. When you're connected to the spiritual source, which is Jesus, the spirit produces spiritual fruit.

When you the branch are connected to Jesus divine, you are loving and joyful and at peace.

Does the branch have a relationship with the vine?

Yes, but it's way more than just a relationship.

The branch needs the vine to survive. The vine is the source of life for the branch.

Jesus uses the same word 11 times in this chapter, 11 times He uses the Greek word meno. And this word means to remain, to abide, to dwell.

It actually means to live in. 11 times.

He says you have to remain connected to the source of all life.

And when your connected, you will produce fruit. That's the word meno.

No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain. It must abide. It must live in the vine. It's why Scripture tells us, it's in Him we live and have our being.

So you don't just have a relationship with Jesus, you remain in him, you live in him, you live by him, you live through him, you dwell in him.

And then what do you do? You live for Jesus, right? Not exactly, you abide in him. Because if you only live for him, the focus is on you. If you're trying to live for him, then you're focusing on your works and your effort's, your performance.

And that's where so many of us get it wrong. And we end up becoming Christian-ish.

We believe in him, but we still think it's about us. I've got to stop sinning and I've got to stop thinking bad thoughts. And I've got to stop saying bad words.

I've got to produce the spiritual fruit, which is really, really hard. because people cut me off in traffic, and my co-workers try my patience.

And what Jesus is showing us is don't focus on production, focus on connection.

Stay connected to the vine, abide in the vine. And if you do that you will bear fruit.

Have you ever seen a tree trying to produce fruit? No, you don't. The branches just stay connected to the tree and they produce.

Jesus is the vine. You are the branch. What's your assignment? Be the branch. Stay connected to Jesus. Abide in him.

Now how do you do that? I have two answers. I have the normal answer and I have a better answer.

The normal answer, and it's a good answer, is you abide in Jesus by doing this. You pray of course you do. You talk to him because he's relational. You worship him, of course you do because He inhabits the praises of His people so you worship. And of course you read God's Word because how can God renew your mind unless you know his word? How can His word direct your steps unless you hide His word in your heart and you obey God's Word and you do life together in community.

And listen church, all those things are important.

But let me give you a better one. Let's take it a step above because this is what Paul says when he is saying, Hey, here's the fruit of spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, self-control, kindness, and goodness.

Right after he tells us that, in verse 25, he says this.

Galatians 5:25 (NIV): Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

So here's the better answer. . .

We keep in step with the Spirit. You keep in step, like literally you're remaining so close to Jesus that every step you take, He directs. Every thought you think, comes from His heart, you bury His word in your heart. So His power and truth comes through you. You keep in step with the Spirit.

Joy and I years ago took dancing lessons. Now I'll be honest I didn't do that well. I might be able to do the chicken dance now but that's about it.

Anyway one thing that they said had to happen was that I had to take the lead so it might be a gentle pull or something to make sure she went the same direction as I did.

And this is what we do with Jesus, we abide in Him and He nudges us. He prompts us. It's not like lightning from heaven it's usually His Holy Spirit speaking to us in a still small voice.

It's like, I know you didn't plan on it but why don't you buy that meal for that guy over there and pray for him while your at.

I know your stressed out right know but remember you can cast all your cares upon me because I care for you.

You don't produce it, you stay connected to it and the Holy Spirit produces it through you. It just supernaturally happens as you live out your life for Christ.

So I would ask you again, how pleased are you with the quality and quantity of your fruit?

And the reason why I ask you is because my fruit is not always great.

Because there have been times when I've left service and had someone cut me off in traffic and it tried my patience. Or I had someone say something to me that really got under my skin.

And I have to be honest with myself that sometimes I'm doing the work of the Spirit without the fruit of the Spirit.

And maybe some of you are there right now.

You literally have the look without the connection.

And I thought to myself, I need to do better.

And God said, no, no, no. What's your assignment? It's not try harder, just be the branch. Abide, remain, stay connected, and He will produce fruit through you.

So Holy Spirit, do what only you can do. Produce fruit through us. We don't have to work up the fruit, we just have to stay close to you. And God, your fruit will be on display for the world to see that we love you and we belong to you.

And growing up, we went to church. I believed in God, I was Christian-ish. I claimed Jesus, but I wasn't fully devoted to him. I tried to do better. I ended up doing bad. Why? I wasn't connected to the vine.

Prayer. Show video of spring forward. Introduce next sermon series