

"Producing More Fruit by the Holy Spirit" November 22,

2015 2:30 p.m.

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Based on Catechism: Q. 24, 53, etc. Bible texts: John 15:1-12; Galatians 5:16-26

Introduction: Good gardening requires two kinds of activities. On the one hand, the good gardener must uproot the weeds and must prevent the growth of new weeds. She must destroy the weeds in the garden. On the other hand, the gardener must strengthen the good plants...the flowers and vegetables. She must water and fertilize the plants, so that they will grow and be more productive.

So it is in our sanctification. Sanctification, in this sense, is our growing in holiness, increasing in godliness. This is a main work of the Holy Spirit in us. Last time we noted how we must kill off the sins in our lives. Like a good gardener uproots and kills off the weeds in the garden. In theological language, this is called "**mortification**." Mortuus, in Latin, means "death." Morticians deal with dead people. So "mortification" refers to our putting to death the sins that the Spirit shows us, as He applies God's Word to us.

Today, we look at the **other side of sanctification**. How we as believers must increase the production of good fruit in our lives. By the Spirit we also must cultivate more good fruit in our lives. In theological language this is sometimes called "vivification."

"Mortification" and "vivification" are the two opposite sides of sanctification.

Now, there are other biblical words for sanctification. One is used by Jesus in John chapter 15.

He calls it "bearing fruit." That we, his followers, would become more fruitful, in our lives. Spiritual fruit includes showing more love, agape love. Also, displaying more spiritual joy and peace. Living in greater patience and kindness and self-control. In fact, anything that is good and godly in us, is a spiritual fruit./

-Now let's be clear about where this fruit comes from. It does not come from us, in ourselves, by nature. No. By nature our hearts, our minds, our souls are spiritually dead. Though unbelievers can do some outward moral good, they cannot do anything which pleases God in the deepest sense of pleasing God. So to be fruitful, **we first need to be born again**.

Born by the Spirit. Being born again enables us to put faith, trust, in Jesus, as our Saviour. Then we start to be fruitful, to think and say and do the things which truly please God.

-Look what Jesus says about this fruitfulness in [John 15:1-2, 5. Read.

Now, in the first sermon in this short series we learned that it is especially by the Holy Spirit that we are united to Jesus. By the Spirit, we are "in Jesus" and Jesus is "in us." So when Jesus tells us in vs. 5 to "remain" in him...that remaining in him **is only by His Spirit**, the Holy Spirit.

Then, in Jesus by the Spirit, we will bear "much fruit." Notice: not a little fruit, but "much" fruit.

We will do many good works and speak many good words, and think many good thoughts. As we are in Jesus. He is the like the main trunk of the grape vine, that thick, woody stem which goes into the soil and sends out roots. And we as believers in J are like the branches which grow from the main, woody vine. If a branch is cut off from the main vine, it will die. It will not produce any fruit. But, as we stay close to Jesus, and tightly connected to him...and as His Spirit is in us, more and more, then, we will bear much fruit.

So we have to take care of our garden, take care of ourselves. As we mentioned earlier, we must put to death the weeds, the sins in our lives. More and more. But then, on the positive side of gardening we must fertilize and enhance the soil of our lives. So that we bear more fruit.

-How do we do that, practically? Fertilizing and enhancing the good plant of faith in Jesus, so we bear more fruit? Well, the main ways Jesus works in us are twofold: by us **hearing the preaching of his Word**. Right preaching. We will grow in fruitfulness, sanctification, as we receive true preaching, accurate teaching from God's Word. And this, may I remind you, is normally in the context of a biblical church, a visible and gathered congregation. It is impossible, impossible, to stay close to Jesus without being connected to a biblical church. [Repeat. / Oh, if we are physically disabled, shut in, we are forced to be more isolated. But, the ordinary Chr. must always be a living member of a congregation which meets together.

Then, in addition to hearing preaching, we must receive the sacraments, such as the Lord's Supper...to feed our faith. Just like bread and wine feed the body, so Jesus body and blood feed our souls./ **Preaching and the sacraments** are two main ways the Lord Jesus sanctifies us, making us more fruitful in our lives.

Then, there are other ways to become more fruitful: for example, having good Christian family and friends; how important for children to have Christian fathers and mothers, to teach and guide them. Even as children become young adults...they will have Chr. parents who can give them advice. But, if you don't have a Christian family, then it is particularly important to have good Christian friends. / In addition, for greater

spiritual fruitfulness, we should also be personally reading God's Word. And applying it to ourselves. /And we have the practice of prayer and that of singing, to also keep us growing and bearing the fruit of the S. "Remain in me, says Jesus, and you will bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing."

2. Now, let's do a sampling of spiritual fruit. 2.A. {In general}

In the NT, many different kinds of fruit are listed for us. Here in John 15, the key fruit is love, love for Jesus...and, also, a love for Jesus people on earth, our fellow Christians. [Jesus—vs. 9 and 12. Read. As most of you know, this is a special word for love. It is not worldly love, or ordinary love, like husbands and wives have for each other, in marriage. Or love in the family. No, the word here is a special word, a rare word in that day, in which John was writing. "Agape." The main idea of agape love is that it is a sacrificial caring, a self-denying love...putting the needs of others first. And helping them with what they need. //

-Let's turn to that key Bible text about the various fruit of the Holy Spirit. [Read Gal 5:16-26.

We call this the fruit of the Holy Spirit...but we can just as well call it the "fruit of Jesus."

Because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, uniting us more and more with Jesus. Keeping us connected, like branches to the Living Vine, Jesus.

In Galatians 5, we also see the two sides of sanctification. The negative, first, "mortification," the things we must put off, or kill off: vs. 19f, such as sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, hatred, jealousy, fits of rage, envy, drunkenness. Make sure you pull out those weeds, kill them off.

Then, the opposite side of good gardening: the fruit of the Spirit. Nine of them listed here, starting in vs. 22. Notice how the list begins with that all-important fruit, agape love.

Someone has given a good way to think of agape love in relationship to the other fruit.

Think of these fruit as grapes on a whole cluster of grapes. But think of the main stem of the grape cluster as agape love. You see, without agape love, we cannot have the joy of Jesus, nor can we show the peace of Jesus, nor any of the other fruit. So, the stem is agape love, and the other fruit flow from it.

Again, the Holy Spirit helps us to increase this fruit. But [read vs. 25. We must put forth effort, we must not get sidetracked from the Spirit, turning to the right or the left. But we must keep in step with the Spirit. Like army soldiers keep in step when they are on parade. Walking in close formation.

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Here, again, you see the two sides of sanctification. The negative, first, "mortification," that which we must put off, or kill off: vs. 19f, such as sexual immorality, impurity, hatred, jealousy, fits of rage, envy, drunkenness. Make sure you pull out those weeds, kill them off. [See vs. 24—crucified the old, sinful nature. Still partly in us, requiring us to keep killing it off. Putting those sins to death.

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Nine spiritual fruit are listed here. This is not an exhaustive list. Other Bible verses add to this list of spiritual fruit. But these are 9 key fruit.

Let me just focus on two of these fruit, in our context today...

2.B. 1. One fruit that is so needed today, in our culture, and in our churches, is the fruit of "joy."

Now each of these spiritual fruit have a kind of "artificial" counterpart. Like those fake

fruit seen in some decorations—painted, rubbery fruit. No real fruit. So the world can seem to have joy—lots of laughter and seeming fun. Lots of backslapping and joking. But much of it, not all of it, but much of it, is just for the moment. Sometimes it covers up real, inner sadness and despair. Some worldly people when they are laughing and joking are, in some ways, crying on the inside. I'm sure you have met some people like that. Now, this fruit, of spiritual joy, doesn't mean laughing all the time. It doesn't mean that we paste a yellow sticker with a happy face on everything. Many things in this world are sad: the recent terrorist attack in Paris. The refugees pouring out of Syria. And there are sad things in our own lives: sickness, disabilities, losing a job, children who might be straying from the Lord. But, for this fruit of joy we must focus ourselves in Jesus. That in his death on the cross, all our sin and guilt is forgiven. And we have been adopted in Jesus as children of our Father in heaven. And that, therefore, none of the sad things in life can ever destroy us, or take away our faith, or take away our future. Jesus has overcome the world. Jesus has defeated sin and death. He has risen victorious from the grave. That's the heart, the core of our joy.

Gospel, the good news of Jesus: crucified, risen, ascended, and now reigning. So, to increase true joy ask yourself: what are the weeds, that are choking out my Christian joy? Are you living in sins that are weakening your joy? Are you surrounding yourself with gloomy people? Are you focusing on the bad things in life? **Pull out those weeds.**

And, then, cultivate, more joy...through hearing good preaching and enjoying the sacraments.

Through right kinds of Bible reading and reflection. Read through the book of Philippians in one sitting, four short chapters. Maybe read that short letter each morning of the week. Fertilize that tender "joy plant"...water it much. Cultivate that plant of joy that it will grow and produce more fruit in your life. Surround yourself with joyful Chrs, and learn from them.

2.B. Then let me highlight one more fruit...that I personally need more of. And most of us need.

It's the 4th one in the list of 9. **The fruit of patience.** The word in the Greek language is "macro-thumia." Two parts: "macro," means "large or long." And "thumia," in this context means "anger or angry passion." So the word macro-thumia literally means, "taking a long time to get angry." Taking longer to become frustrated. In other words, being more patient.

What are the weeds, the little sins, which choke out this fruit of patience? Well, sometimes, we fall into the sin of thinking we are too important. Right? When there is a long line in the grocery store, we say to ourselves: "I don't have time for this. My time is more important than this." Basically we think of ourselves too highly. Or when someone has a different idea, or different plan, we can easily dismiss it, because in our minds, our idea is much, much better. And we become impatient with them and their idea. Oh? What makes your idea better than theirs? See the weeds in your own heart which choke out the fruit of patience.

And then, practically, consider the ways you can produce more Christian patience. For ex:
 -Take the moments of waiting and natural impatience, maybe, to pray. In our busy lives...
 -Take that moment standing in the line at that grocery check out, to maybe have a short conversation with the next person. Help them, maybe, with their impatience, in that line.

Illus: I recall being somewhat impatient at a local library, someone was checking out, maybe 20 books, before the libraries had those automated machines. I think maybe the person behind me saw my impatience. She said: "Don't we have it good here in Toronto? So many local branches of libraries, so many books? People in most of the countries of the world don't have enough good reading material. How blessed we are." It made all the difference to me, that day. /

The Holy Spirit empowers us to be more fruitful. To become more sanctified, more holy.

May you and become more and more fruitful. Why? So that we call attention to ourselves? No. Jesus says in John 15:8 that bearing much fruit is [quote] to "my Father's glory." Think of it. You and I bring more glory and praise to God the Father, and to our Saviour Jesus...when we bear much fruit. The more fruit we bear, the more God is praised. By us, and, in the church. And, even, out in the world. As people see our good works they will give more glory to God. LET US PRAY.