

**“Producing More Fruit by the Holy Spirit”** (Holy Spirit series #3)

For New Horizon URC, by Pastor Rand Lankheet, March 5, 2017, second service

Catechism: Q. 53, \*86, \*88-90. Bible illustrations: 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. 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 those plants, so that they will grow and be more productive.

So it is in our sanctification (成圣) . We began this topic last week. Sanctification, in this sense, is

our growing in holiness, increasing in godliness (敬虔) . This is a main work of the Holy Spirit in us.

Last week we noted how we must kill off the sins in our lives. Like a good gardener uproots

and kills the weeds in the garden. In theological (神学的) language, this is called “**mortification**.” 治死 (罪) Mortus, in Latin, means “death.”

Morticians (殡仪业人员) deal with dead people. “Mortification” refers to our putting to death the sins that the Spirit shows us, as He applies God’s Word to us.

-This morning, we look at the **other side of sanctification**. How we as believers must increase

the production of good fruit in our lives. In theological language this is sometimes called “vivification.” (给予生气, 苏醒) “Mortification” and “vivification” are the two, opposite sides of sanctification.

-Now, there are other biblical words or illustrations (比拟) used for sanctification.

One illustration is used by Jesus in John chapter 15. He calls it “bearing fruit.” That we, his followers, would become more fruitful, in our lives. Anything that is good and godly in us, is a spiritual fruit./

-Let’s be clear about where this fruit comes from. It does not come from us, in our human

nature. No! By nature, our hearts, our minds, our souls are spiritually dead.

So to be fruitful, **we first need to be born again**. [Repeat. Born by the Spirit. Being born again

enables us first to trust in Jesus, as our Saviour. Then we start to be fruitful. Then we can think, say, and do things which truly please God.

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

When Jesus tells us in vs. 5 to “abide” (“remain”) in him. Remember, that remaining in Jesus **is only by His Spirit**, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit unites us with Jesus.

Then, we will bear “much fruit.” Vs. 5. Notice: not a little bit of fruit; but “**much**” fruit.

We will do many good works and speak many good words, and think many good thoughts.

In John 15, Jesus explains that He is like the main trunk of the grape vine.

When you drive on the QEW through the Niagara area, you can see grape vineyards.

Out in

the fields, you can see the thick, woody trunks of the grapevines. They are like small trees. Jesus compares himself to the main trunk, the main vine. And we as believers in Jesus are like the branches which grow out from the woody trunk.

What happens if a branch is cut off from the main trunk, the main vine? That branch will die.

It will not produce any fruit. So it is for us, if we ever try to remove ourselves from Jesus. Jesus is saying we must stay close to Him. Then, more and more, we will bear much fruit.

-So we have to take care of our garden! Taking care of ourselves, as believers.

-How do we do that, practically? Do you remember the two main ways God grows His grace in

us? First, we must hear the *preaching of God's Word*. Right preaching (讲道). 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. This past week I talked with a pastor friend of mine in the States. He mentioned one or two of the members of the church, whom I knew. They had jumped from church to church, to church. Never satisfied. Always complaining. How dangerous is that!! The Bible emphasizes that put ourselves under faithful pastors and elders. And not jump from church to church. What would you think of a child who jumped from one family to another family, every time he was not happy with something?

Then, in addition to hearing preaching, we must receive the sacraments (圣礼), such as the Lord's

Supper (圣餐). 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.

There are other ways to become more fruitful as believers: for example, Jesus cultivates (培养) us

within Christian families, having Christian spouses, Christian parents, Christian brothers and sisters. / In addition, it is particularly important to have good Christian friends, who love us. And, in love, dare to confront us, to help grow us in godliness. /

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 Christian prayer and singing.

"Remain in me," says Jesus, "...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...Also, a love for Jesus' people on earth, other Christians. [Jesus--vss. 9, 12.

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. The word here is a special word, a rare word in that day, in which John was writing. “Agape.” (爱) The main idea of agape love is that it is a sacrificial (牺牲性的) 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. In Galatians 5, we also see the two sides of sanctification. The negative, first, “mortification.”

These are the things we must put off, or kill off: vs. 19f, such as sexual immorality (不道德), impurity, debauchery (邪荡), hatred, jealousy, fits of rage, envy, drunkenness.

Make sure you pull out those weeds, kill them off.

***Then, the opposite side of good gardening: bringing to life more 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 (转向) 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 (接受检阅) . /

***Then, the opposite side of good gardening: the fruit of the Spirit.***

*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 an “artificial” (假的, 人造的) counterpart.

Maybe you have seen fake

fruit in some homes. As decorations---painted, rubbery fruit. No real fruit.

So the world can seem to have joy---lots of laughter and seeming fun. Lots of backslapping (热情赞扬, 拍背以示友好) 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.

Now, this fruit, of spiritual joy, doesn't mean laughing all the time. It doesn't mean that we

paste a yellow, happy face sticker on everything. Look, many things in this world are

sad. And there are sad things in our own lives. Even as Christians: sickness, disabilities, losing a job, children who might be straying from the Lord. But, for this fruit of joy we root ourselves in Jesus. To be assured that in Jesus' death on the

cross, all our sin is cancelled. All our guilt is pardoned (被宽恕). And we are adopted (被收养) 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, Jesus has overcome the world. Jesus has risen victorious from the grave and is powerfully reigning from heaven, for us. That's the core of our joy.

Gospel (福音), the good news of Jesus: crucified, risen (复活), ascended (升天), 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.***

-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 Christians. Learn from them. Imitate (效仿) them.

**2.B. Let me highlight (强调) one more fruit...one that I personally need more of.** Probably most of

us need more of it. 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." "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." At that point, we are thinking 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.

***Illus:*** I recall being somewhat impatient at a local library. There was a long line of people

checking out books. Someone was checking out, maybe 20 books. I think maybe the person behind me saw my impatience. She said to me: “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. 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. We bring more glory to God the Father, and to our Saviour Jesus...*when we bear much fruit.* The more fruit we bear, the more God is praised. [Catechism 教理问答, Q. 86

As we are more fruitful, may God be praised in our church.

And, maybe He be glorified throughout the world. LET US PRAY.