*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 7 - 12

“Bearing Fruit”

**Monday, November 7 Matthew 7:17-20**

*“By their fruit you will know them”*

 Maintaining the balance of not judging another brother or sister, yet not being naively accepting either, Jesus tells his disciples to be wisely discerning about those who proclaim to be his followers. “By their fruit you will know them.” “Fruit” is the product of a person’s inner life. All that a person says and does reveals who he or she is. John the Baptist earlier rebuked the Sadducees and Pharisees for coming to him for baptism, telling them to “produce fruit in keeping with repentance.” Repentance in their heart would produce a repentant life that rejects sin.

 The disciples are to evaluate carefully those who come into their community, not only to look at their faith to see if it is consistent with the way advocated by Jesus, but also to look at their works and lives to see if they are consistent with the kingdom life of righteousness he has advocated. A vine or tree will only produce fruit that is consistent with its nature, so Jesus is telling them that they need to be “fruit inspectors.” Those who are false need to be identified; otherwise, they will produce the bad fruit of leading others away from God.

*Help us to be a discerning church, Lord, so we can produce good fruit. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 8 Galatians 5:22-25**

*“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . ”*

 How different it is when people live the life of the Spirit. When introducing this inventory of the character traits of a Christian life, Paul uses the singular word for fruit. This leads us to see that the fruit of the Spirit is love, and each fruit which follows in the list is another expression of love. Thus, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are all expressions of God’s love for us in Christ, and of our love for God and one another when we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

 The fruit of the Spirit is the outward expression of Christ dwelling within. This fruit grows and is expressed in any person who willingly lets go of that which opposes Christ, what Paul earlier in this chapter calls “the desires of our sinful nature,” so that the Spirit may bring him or her to new life in Christ. Powerfully and surely the Spirit works – sometimes dramatically; sometimes slowly, almost imperceptibly – in our lives to accomplish the miracle of transforming us into a new creation in Christ Jesus.

*I give you control of my life, Holy Spirit, that love may be produced in me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 9 Psalm 1:1-6**

*“Like a tree planted by the water”*

 Diligent study of God’s Word is not only enjoyable in and of itself but yields fruitful results as well. The image of the tree planted by a source of abundant water is a common one in the Bible, found in such places as Jeremiah 17 and Revelation 22. The quality of the tree’s leaves is commented on (in Revelation they bring healing) as well as its consistent fruitfulness, describing the future of the faithful who cast their lot with God rather than relying on human strength and evil.

 The faithful tree is not simply a wild tree that has taken its position near the water by chance. Those who delight in God’s Word are “planted” – as by a master gardener – in the place where they can receive the nourishment they need to flourish. At the end of verse 4 the description shifts over to express more directly the consequences of faithfulness. Like the well-watered tree, one rooted in the life-giving water of God’s Word will “prosper.” Here the word is not used to denote material wealth but rather a sense of “bringing to a successful conclusion.” By contrast, the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

*As I study your Word, Lord, you give me what I need to be fruitful. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

November 7 - 12

“Bearing Fruit”

**Thursday, November 10 1 Corinthians 3:5-9**

*“It was God who made the seed grow”*

 Paul and Apollos were leaders in the early Corinthian church. Dissension had grown up in the congregation because some of its members preferred Paul over Apollos, while others thought of Apollos as being a better leader than Paul. What Paul is teaching in this passage is that the church belongs to God, and he and Apollos are merely human instruments that God uses as he wills. They are servants of God, playing different roles in God’s ministry with the Corinthian believers, all under God’s guidance.

 Paul uses an agricultural analogy in which he likens the role he played in preaching the gospel to planting the seed and Apollos’ continuing pastoral role as watering the plants. They are not in competition with each other but are partners in a common venture, team members in a common task. And while their work was very important, it was subordinate to the role of God, who provided the fruit of their ministry. The inference is that divisions had been caused by giving more devotion to the servants than to the Lord.

*Thank you, Lord, for each leader you have given our church. Amen.*

**Friday, November 11 Luke 13:6-9**

*“There is no fruit”*

 Jesus’ parable is directed at the nation of Israel, using a variation on a standard figure about Israel as a vineyard or a tree garden (see Psalm 80:9-19; Isaiah 5:1-7). Jesus may be alluding specifically to Micah 7:1 where God looks for grapes and figs in the garden of the nation but cannot find any. The fig tree should have borne fruit by the third year, but it has failed. The owner has given plenty of opportunity for the tree to be productive and has exercised a lot of care into getting it to be fruitful. So the failure to yield fruit is both disappointing and costly.

 The image describes the unfruitful state of the nation of Israel, both in her on-again/off-again relationship with God in the past, and in the current rejection by most Jews of Jesus as their Messiah. The time for the nation to respond is limited. The parable also pictures God’s patience. He will give the nation a short time yet before exercising judgment, but the shortness of the time highlights the importance of making a decision quickly before it is too late. God is looking for fruit in our lives today. Is he seeing any? How long will he wait?

*May my life bear fruit for you, Lord, honoring your work in my life. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 12 John 15:1-8**

*“You cannot be fruitful apart from me”*

 Jesus is the “true vine.” In the Old Testament writings, Israel had frequently been spoken of as the vine which God loved and tended. But over and over again, waywardness and corruption had made God’s people barren. Now it is Jesus who is the vine, the Chosen One from God. His Father owns the vineyard and cares for it. And as with any responsible vineyard owner, his one primary purpose in growing a vineyard is that it will bear fruit. So the branches that bear no fruit “he takes away.” Here is the final judgment on those who do not abide in the vine.

 But the “vinedresser” also prunes the branches, removing that which would hinder the branches from bearing fruit. Are not those experiences in life we call troubles – the hurts and disappointments and defeats – the Father’s way of pinching off those excess sprouts and leaves that seem so attractive, but bear no fruit? This fruit that the disciples bear is not what they do, but the life of Jesus in them. It is his character reproduced within them and shared with others in love. This cannot come to pass without the disciple abiding in Jesus.

*I make my home in you, Lord, as you are making your home in me. Amen.*