

If You Want to Follow Jesus – part 6

Jn. 15:1-5,8

Luke 9:23— Luke 14:25-26;33--Jesus was not at all unclear or ambiguous about what is required of a disciple.

--Neither is the rest of the New Testament: II Corinthians 5:15; Romans 12:1

Salvation is free, but discipleship will cost you your life.

--If we follow Jesus, we will move into His word; we will make disciples.

--Last week: If we follow Jesus, He will make us fruitful.

(I recommend to you Dr. Wilkinson's book – Secrets of the Vine.)

Jn. 15:1-8

1. John 15 = One of the most succinct descriptions of the believer's life and how God is shaping it to be pleasing to Him.

--Some of the dearest and most significant events and teachings of Jesus' earthly ministry happened on the night He was betrayed: (Washing the disciples' feet, Lord's supper, His anguish in the Garden, His high priestly prayer) -- all happened on that night)

--It was a night full of symbols and rich in teaching in particular what takes place here in John 15.

--Jesus and His disciples had just finished supper and had sung a hymn and left to spend the rest of the evening in the Garden of Gethsemane.

--On their way, Jesus stopped to give one final lesson before He is inevitably betrayed in the hours to come.

--They had to cross the Kidron Valley to get to the Garden, there vineyards were putting on the fresh growth of Spring. It may have been there that Jesus stopped and spoke to His disciples.

--Vv. 1-2, 5, 8 --This explains the believer's purpose: **To Bear Much Fruit.** This is the thing that will be rewarded when that day comes.

2. Jesus conveyed some of His deepest truths in simple earthy examples.

--Ever wonder what God is up to in your life? This metaphor will help you greatly.

1. Jesus is the Vine –

--The metaphor of the church being the Body of Christ follows this same thought – We are all connected to Him.

2. The Father is the Vinedresser – A vinedresser had really only one task and one goal: to make his plants as productive as possible.

3. We are the Branches – the branches are the focus of the vine dresser's efforts because they produce the fruit.

--The Vinedresser lovingly cultivates each branch so that it produces the most fruit.

--The branch has as its goal to grow long or lush or high; (they have what is called bull cane that is a part of the branch that will grow as much as a foot overnight and grows no fruit) -- the vinedresser will chop these things back.

--We also have dreams and goals and agendas for what we think will be best for us, but to be Jesus' disciple we have to lay all of it down and the Father prunes away what isn't in the best interest of the fruit He wants and we want.

3. So what is fruit?

--It is more than winning people to Jesus although that would certainly be considered fruit.

--Fruit is a broader term and covers everything that could be classed as good works. [Titus 3:14](#), [Mt. 5:16](#)

--Producing good works is how we bring glory to God in this life. [V. 8](#)

--Inward Fruit – [Gal. 5:22](#)

--Outward Fruit – when we allow God to work through us to bring Him glory.

4. How important is fruit in a believer's life?

--[Eph. 2:10](#), [Jn. 15:16](#) --God is not in the business of making our dreams come true partly because our dreams are too small!

--We are here to fulfill God's dream by bringing Him glory through a remarkably abundant life.

--If Jesus chose us for abundance, expects abundance, and created us to deeply desire abundance, how can we find fulfillment in something less? **We Can't!**

5. There are four distinct levels of fruit bearing here in John 15.

1. No Fruit [v. 2](#)

2. Some Fruit [v. 2](#)

3. More Fruit [v. 2](#)

4. Much Fruit [v. 5](#)

The branch that we are concerned with this morning is going to be this one in [V.2](#) – the branch that does not bear fruit.

--Seems pretty scary that someone attached to Jesus gets taken away?

Doesn't being a believer mean old things have passed away, created in Christ Jesus for good works, passed from death to life? Answer: YES

--Is it possible to be a believer and have none of those things visibly manifesting in your life (be a believer but look like you're not; 007= believer but undercover)? Answer: YES

--If you would care to push that issue and say that fruit is natural occurrence of all branches

-- why are these commands and admonitions in Scripture? [II Tim. 2:22](#), [Eph. 4:22b](#),

[Rom. 6:11b-12](#), [Jn. 15:5](#)

6. Believers with little or no fruit; lives show little or nothing of eternal significance – Could that be you?

--Let's take a look at a single word translated: "takes away", "cut off", or can mean "raise or lift up"

Which is it? It is determined by the context.

--What is the context? Among other things "**every branch in Me**"

--what some call "**the saving preposition**"

--Many places in the New Testament the believer is said to be "in Christ": [I Cor. 1:30](#),

[II Cor. 5:17](#)

--Clearly it is possible to be "in Christ" and your life be unfruitful.

--We know that salvation has nothing to do with our performance.

--God is in the process of lifting up the saved to the place of fruitfulness.

--"take up" or "lift up" – Not only fits the context of Scripture but it also fits the context of grape agriculture:

Ask a person who tends grapevines and he'll tell you that you don't cut off branches. They are much too valuable for that. New branches have a tendency to grow down along the ground where dust coats their leaves and when it rains they get muddy and mildew making them sick and unfruitful. The vinedresser goes through his vineyard with a bucket of water and cleans and lifts up the branches from off the ground so they can get better sun and become fruitful.

--The Greek for "prune" can also mean "wash"

Are you getting the picture of how God deals with unfruitful branches?

--He cleanses us: **Eph. 5:25-26**-- Sin is like dirt on us

--He lifts us up: worldly way of living has us down on the ground.

How does He lift us up to a place fruitfulness? **He intervenes in our lives to discipline us.**

Hebrews 12:11 teaches the same message: "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

"Discipline" has become a dirty word for our culture. ... I know I am speaking heresy in many circles, but spontaneity is greatly overvalued. The "spontaneous" person who shrugs off the need for discipline is like the farmer who went out to gather eggs. As he walked across the farmyard toward the hen house, he noticed the pump was leaking. So he stopped to fix it. It needed a new washer, so he set off to the barn to get one. But on the way he saw that the hayloft needed straightening, so he went off to fetch the pitchfork. Hanging next to the pitchfork was a broom with a broken handle. "I must make a note to myself to buy a new broom handle the next time I go to town," he thought. ...

By now it is clear the farmer is not going to get his eggs gathered, nor is he likely to accomplish anything else he sets out to do. He is utterly, gloriously spontaneous, but he is hardly free. He is, if anything, a prisoner to his unbridled spontaneity. The fact of the matter is that discipline is the only way to freedom; it is the necessary context for spontaneity.

--Discipline stops us from doing certain things but is also frees us to do the things that really matter.