

Sermon Resource



True Fruit

Key Passages: John 15:1-17 and Galatians 5:22-23 / 1 Corinthians 13

Key Message: That the congregation will have a clearer idea about the fruit of the Spirit and will be determined to develop their connection to Christ.

INTRODUCTION

- Illustration 1
 - Show a still life painting of fruit that looks realistic. Explain that, lifelike though it is, it is still an illusion.
 - Then show some examples of plastic, wooden or ceramic fruit. Explain that you can tell this is the real thing because you can see right round it, touch it and smell it, although you can't taste it as it's not the real thing either. A good facsimile and good enough to fool most people but without any substance - it is fake fruit.
 - Finally, bring out real fruit which can be seen, touched, smelt and tasted (bite into the fruit!).
- Illustration 2
 - Project some of the images in the link [Real or Fake?](#) on to a screen - or print them out if it is easier. Ask the congregation to identify which of the images they think is the real thing or a fake copy.
- Overall application
 - It is easy to be fooled by that which is fake.
 - In both the Old and New Testaments we are instructed to bear fruit which is good and true.
 - But what does that mean? What is true fruit? How is it produced? And why is it necessary?



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CONTEXT

- Writing many years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the author of John's Gospel was well aware of the historical fact of the rejection of Jesus by Judaism.
- Writing near the end of the first century, his main interest is in the life of the established Christian Church, and the question of those who are and are not true disciples of Jesus.
- 'I am the true vine' is one of the seven 'I am' sayings of John's Gospel.
- Symbolic speech based upon vines and vineyards is also found in the first three Gospels.
- Israel, in spite of all God's care and attention, had not been the 'vine' he meant it to be. Israel had degenerated, separated itself from the source of its life, and condemned itself (Isaiah 5:1-7).
- Jesus was now proclaiming that *he* was now the *true* Israel (vine) and that the purposes of God, originally entrusted to Israel, were being fulfilled in him.
- The disciples, as 'branches', are part of him. He is the source of life for them, and to be effective - to 'bear much fruit' - they must be completely dependent on him, because without him they can do nothing.

KEY HEADINGS

What is fruit?

- 'Fruit', not 'fruits'
 - Many gifts are given as the Spirit chooses, but one fruit is to be borne by all.
 - The fruit (*karpos*) of the Spirit is love (*agape*). The rest of the list found in Galatians 5:22-23 is made up of words describing true love. Compare this list with the one Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 13 to describe love (*agape*).
 - *Agape* love and *karpos* love are mentioned nine times in John 15:1-17 - both words are used interchangeably.
 - Therefore the fruit of the Spirit is love.



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- Commanded
 - To love is not a suggestion. Jesus never said, 'Do you know what, I've got a great idea...' He says, 'My command is this...' (John 15:12). It is not an option.
 - This is not a new command. The Old Testament commands us to love one another: 'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord' (Leviticus 19:18).
 - The new thing that Jesus talks about now is to love as Christ loves us: '...as I have loved you' (John 15:12). This was not just a command, but the greatest command.
 - In Mark 12:28-31 one of the teachers of the Law heard the Sadducees debating with Jesus. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?' (v28). Jesus goes on to answer that the most important one is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these.'
- Not easy!
 - Loving like this is hard, so we try to make excuses - 'Who am I to love, Lord?'
 - One another (John 13:34)
 - Your neighbour (Luke 10:27)
 - Even your enemy (Matthew 5:44)
 - Then we may say, 'OK, I'll love them, but I don't have to like them!' However, we are not given that option - remember that Galatians 5 and 1 Corinthians 13 show us how to truly love.

How is fruit produced?

- It isn't - at least, not by you and me.
- In John 15 we are not told to produce fruit. Jesus says we are to bear fruit, not produce it.
 - 'He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful' (John 15:2).
 - 'Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me' (John 15:4).



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- ‘I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing’ (John 15:5).
- ‘This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples’ (John 15:8).
- ‘You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit - fruit that will last - and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you’ (John 15:16).

How are we to bear fruit?

- By remaining in Christ ('Abide in me').
- Loving God first - the rest follows naturally.
- Being empowered by the Holy Spirit
- How effective we are as disciples of Jesus is determined by our connectedness to Christ resulting in our love for others.
- We sometimes spend so much time and energy at the wrong end of the branch - trying to be good, loving, patient etc - that we are only capable of producing a kind of fruit - a fake fruit - a short-lived, pale, weedy version of the real thing. This can fool some people for a while but does not stand the test.
- It is the other end of the branch we need to be working on - where it joins the vine, where the life-giving sap of the Holy Spirit flows into and through us and the fruit is produced by him in us.

CONCLUSION

Why is fruit necessary?

- Jesus gives us several reasons in John 15:
 - It enables us to access the resources of Heaven (v7).
 - It brings glory to God (v8).
 - As a witness to unbelievers (v8 and 13:35).
 - It provides us with complete joy (v11).
 - It identifies with the sacrificial love of Jesus (v13).
 - It is a sign of our friendship with Jesus (v14).
 - Christ has chosen us to do so (v16).



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- The main reason is simply because he said so - 'My command is this...' (v12).
- The fruit of the Spirit is the *agape* love which Christ commands his followers to display to everyone. It cannot be produced by us but is borne in us when we abide in him. It brings fullness of life to us and glory to God.
 - Are we in him, in the vine, fruit-bearing branches glorifying the Father? It's not about church involvement, or Bible knowledge, or theological ability, but a living, personal relationship with Jesus. This is effective living, effective discipleship.
 - He calls us to a life of abundance. To love as he loves - sacrificially, unstintingly, to bear fruit in increasing measure - ('more' fruit, 'much' fruit - John 15:5,8), 'everlasting' fruit (15:16).
 - Simply being connected to the vine is not enough, however. We must also be ready to receive the attention of our Father who is the gardener as he lovingly prunes away all that is within us that hinders true fruit bearing and enables us to bear even more fruit (15:2).

