

~ A Fruitful Heart ~

Text: John 15:1-10 | Mathew 13:3-9 & 18-23

Theme: Abiding in Christ is the only way to produce fruit. Allowing the Father in heaven to purge us is the only way to produce MUCH fruit.

Intro:

1. We looked recently at the Old Testament command to “break up you fallow ground” and it seems appropriate at this time to look at the parallel New Testament command to abide in Christ and be fruitful.
2. The sermon in John 15 was delivered to the disciples by the Lord Jesus, just prior to his crucifixion. It is akin to a farewell message in that he is seeking to equip his disciples with the knowledge and encouragement they will need to possess in his own absence.
3. In Mathew 13 the Lord Jesus described the different responses that people have to hearing the gospel message. The Lord Jesus used the Parable of the Sower to illustrate spiritual truths regarding man’s heart toward God.
 - i. “In reality, this is not the parable of the *Sower* as much as it is the parable of the *Soil*, because the soil is the key variable in the story. The Sower and the Seed never change.¹”
 - ii. The Sower is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the seed is the gospel message of Salvation through Christ, and these never change. The soil is the human heart and the receptivity of man’s heart to the word of God is compared to 4 soils on which a seed might fall.
4. Today, we will consider the condition of the human heart under three categories.
 - I. The No Fruit Heart (John 15:1-2a | Mathew 13:3-7 & 18-22)
 - II. The Some Fruit Heart
 - III. The Much Fruit Heart

Main:

- I. **The No Fruit Heart** (John 15:1-10 | Mathew 13:3-7 & 18-22)
 - A. The soils that produce no fruit (Mathew 13:4-7 & 18-22)
 1. The wayside soil (Vs 4 & 19)
 - a. The wayside is the path that runs alongside the field being sowed.

¹ David Platt, [Exalting Jesus in Matthew](#), ed. Daniel L. Akin, David Platt, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2013), 177.

- i. If you've ever walked along a path through a field, you'll know that the path becomes compacted due to the traffic. The seed which falls on the compacted soil will simply sit on the surface and will not germinate.
 - ii. Since the seed has fallen on the surface, rather than penetrating into the soil, it is an easy target for birds to eat it up.
 - b. The person this soil represents is explained in verse 19.
 - i. The wayside soil represents those who hear the word of God, but their hearts are so hardened toward God that the seed never makes it past the surface, and so they remain unmoved and unchanged by the Word of God.
 - ii. Since the seed has only made a surface level impact upon them it is easy for the Devil to come along and undermine even the limited effect the seed has had.
 - The lost man is the primary person in focus here. The lost man who has hardened his heart toward God will not be saved because the Word of God is never allowed to germinate in the soil of his heart and so it cannot produce fruit unto eternal life in him.
2. The stony soil (Vs 5-6 & 20-21)
 - a. The stony soil is the ground that has not been properly prepared for the seed to be sown.
 - i. The stony ground has just enough soil on the surface for the seed to begin to germinate and grow, but the stones underneath prevent the seed from really taking root in the ground and so it remains so shallow to be of any lasting good.
 - b. The person this soil represents is explained in verses 20-21
 - i. This soil speaks of the individual who initially has great receptivity to the Word of God, but they refuse to allow the Word to really sink in and do the deeper work of removing the stones from the soil and so their receptivity to the Word remains shallow.
 - ii. Once again, we can see the application is primarily for the lost.
 - For the lost, this soil represents those who have never truly been saved, even though there was an initial receptivity to the Gospel.
 - They never allowed the Word to change them and so, with time, the seed that was planted and the conviction it brought was allowed to wither and die off.
3. The thorny soil (Vs 7 & 22)

- a. The thorny ground is the soil that has received the good seed, but it has germinated alongside thorny weeds.
 - i. Anyone who has tried to grow grass in their front yard will know that weeds have a terrible impact on the good grass.
 - ii. They take all the goodness out of the soil, and the good grain is choked by it, making it fruitless.
 - b. The person this soil represents is explained in verse 22
 - i. This soil represents the man who heard the Word, but his heart was divided. He wanted to have the Word and the world, but he ultimately found that a man cannot serve two masters, and so, his love for the world overpowered his love for the Word.
 - ii. The lost man is so captivated by the worlds system, which has been constructed by the Devil, that he cannot seem to make a break from it. Its thorns have taken hold of him and the Word is crowded out.
 - The lost man is made so comfortable by the world that he feels no need for the Word. Or maybe he is so concerned about the affairs of this life that he takes no time for the affairs of the next.
- B. The reason they produce no fruit (John 15:1-10)
1. The truth is not in them (John 15:2 & 7-10)
 - a. The truth has not taken root in their hearts; therefore, they have never learned what it is to Abide in Christ which is the sphere of fruitfulness.
 - i. The Bible makes it clear that the individual in whose heart the Word has been able to take effect is the individual who is both saved and bearing fruit to some degree.
 - **1 John 2:3-5** *“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.”*
 - **James 2:17** *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*
 2. They are not saved.
 - a. Their fruitlessness is the evidence that they are not truly saved, since those who are saved will bear, at least some, fruit.
 - i. Since they are not saved, or in Christ, they cannot bear fruit, because fruit bearing is a work that is produced by Christ living in me and I in him.

- **John 15:4** *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”*
- ii. The fact that they are not saved is further established in verse 6.
 - **John 15:6** *“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”*
 - The ones who are not abiding in the vine are the ones who suffer the judgement of fire. These fruitless branches are clearly unsaved, or else they would not be cast into the fire.

We’ve already seen the 3 unfruitful types of soil in relation to the unbeliever, but there is application here for the carnal Christian too.

II. The Some Fruit Heart (Vs)

A. The half-way Christian

1. The wayside soil (Vs 4 & 19)

- a. The wayside soil is the hardened soil of the path that runs by the field.
 - i. We already saw the primary application here was for the lost man, but the Christian can be guilty of allowing his heart to return to a state of apathy toward God and thus exhibit the symptoms of a lost heart. We call this Christian the backslider, or the carnal Christian.
 - ii. The carnal Christian who has begun to harden his heart toward God will not allow the preaching of the Word to change them in any real way and so the fruitfulness of the Word is hindered by the hardness of our heart.
- b. This is where we must return to the call of Hosea.
 - i. **Hosea 10:12** *“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.”*
 - ii. If the preaching of the Word isn’t producing fruit in your life, then there is something wrong. Maybe the problem is hardness which is preventing the seed of the Word from making anything more than a surface impact.

2. The stony soil (Vs 5-6 & 20-21)

- a. The stony soil is the ground that is full of rocks that prevent the Word from really taking root in your heart.

- i. The Christian who does not allow the word to change them and remove the stones of sin in their heart will remain shallow in their Christianity, only really having a surface level Christianity that is devoid of fruit.
 - ii. The stones represent those sins in our lives that are hindering the Word of God from having any lasting effect upon us. These sins need to be dealt with before the fruit bearing can begin.
3. The thorny soil (Vs 7 & 22)
- a. The thorny ground is the soil that has received the good seed, but it has germinated alongside thorny weeds.
 - i. Here we see the Christian who has been saved and yet remains unproductive for Christ because the affairs of this life have entangled him.
 - **2 Timothy 2:4** *“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”*
 - ii. For the Christian, the warning is simple.
 - **1 John 2:15** *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

III. The Much Fruit Heart (Vs)

A. The more fruit Christian (John 15:2-3)

- 1. The branches that are taken away
 - a. The branches that are not bearing fruit are taken away so that the vine might remain free of useless stems.
We can see this from two different perspectives.
 - i. The branches that represent the unsaved
 - We could call these branches the dead branches because they have no life in them.
 - These branches cannot bear fruit because, as we've already seen, they are not saved which means that they are not connected to the life source that produces fruit in us, which is Jesus Christ.
 - ii. The branches that represent the irrecoverably backslidden Christian.
 - These branches are not dead, since they are saved and have the life of Christ available to them, but they are fruitless because they refuse to allow Christ to fill them through constant abiding in him.
- 2. The branches that are purged

- a. Notice that it is the branches that are bearing fruit already that God the Father purges.
This purging can be seen on two levels.
- i. The purging of individual Christians who have not yet begun to produce more fruit.
 - Purging refers to the process of removing contaminants and waste which will either hinder or mar the desired end product.
 - The Christian whose life is contaminated with sin and selfishness will need to undergo this purging process before they can begin to produce more fruit.
 - God the Father will seek to remove those sins which prevent you from being a fruitful branch in Christ.
 - ii. The purging of a church which needs to produce more fruit.
 - This purging occurs on a corporate level when an individual is hindering the church from bearing more fruit.
 - There is a multiplicity of ways in which we can become a hinderance to the fruit bearing of the local church.
 - ~ Personal sins that go undealt with and unconfessed
 - ~ Personal offences that go unforgiven
 - ~ An unbridled tongue causing damage in the church.
- b. Christians often wonder why God allows them to be cut back, or pruned, even when they are busy doing the work of God.
- i. There are times when God simply has to cut out, not necessarily sinful things, but things that are keeping us from going on to becoming the Christian who produces more fruit.
 - ii. Pastor Ian Western was Pastor Northside Baptist church, and all was going well when God called him to go start a church in the little town of Murray Bridge. He really struggled with this because he was enjoying the fruit of the ministry at Northside, but eventually God took him to Murray Bridge, and many souls were saved as a result. God cut him back in terms of the size of his ministry so that he could be used to produce more fruit elsewhere.

B. The much fruit Christian (John 15:4-6)

1. The way to produce much fruit (Vs 4-6)
 - a. The goal for the Christian who is producing some fruit is to become a Christian who produces more fruit and then finally much fruit.

- i. Notice what Mathew 13:23 says about the good ground that the seed fell on.
 - **Mathew 13:23** *“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”*
 - Not all of the seeds ended up producing an hundredfold or even sixtyfold.
 - b. Let’s compare this with John 15.
 - i. The thirtyfold Christians are the ones that John says are simply bearing fruit.
 - ii. The sixtyfold Christians are the one’s whom the Father has been purging so they might produce more fruit.
 - iii. The hundredfold Christians are those who have been purged of all sin and self and have so learned to abide in the Vine that He can, through them, produce much fruit.
 - “Too many of us are satisfied to be thirtyfold Christians. But the desire of our Lord is that we press on to become hundred-fold Christians. The question then is, how are we to go on to this stage?”²
 - c. The source of all of this fruit is not the branch but the Vine that feeds the branch and gives it life.
 - i. Verse 5 tells us that the Christian who brings forth much fruit is the Christian who abides in Christ and Christ abides in him.
 - The Apostle Paul wrote of this death to sin and self and total dependency on the Vine in **Galatians 2:20** *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*
 - ii. The fruit on comes when Christ has freedom to flow through you and produce the fruit.
 - iii. It is no wonder that the Apostle Paul wrote, “Walk in the Spirit...” and then again, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance...”
2. The goal in producing much fruit (Vs 7-8)
 - a. The end goal of the fruit bearing Christian is to bring glory to God the Father.

² A.W. Tozer, Bethany House 2017; The Crucified Life, Pg 14

- i. Notice that the Father receives the greater glory when Christ bears MUCH fruit through us.
- ii. Do you want to bring greater glory to God? Then go on from being a thirtyfold Christian, and don't be content to be a sixtyfold Christian, but be a hundredfold Christian.
- iii. Bear much fruit for the glory of God.

Conclusion:

1. I asked the a few weeks back but let me ask once again, what is the condition of your heart? The soft heart that contains good soil is only the first step in becoming a fruit bearing Christian, but many Christians never even get that far. "Give me thine heart says the Father above."
2. Are you allowing God to purge you of anything that might obstruct the work of the Vine in producing life through you? Have you gone on from being a thirtyfold Christian yet, or have you become content with the bare minimum fruit?