

BE FRUITFUL

The first time I ever witnessed the “love of Jesus” was when I was 22. Back then I was living with my grandmother as I attended to college. One day my beloved Grammy fell down at the grocery store, and her femur bone completely shattered. From that point forward, she was confined to a wheelchair. Because of her disability, she rarely left the house. I could tell she was lonely and craved interaction with others.

One day a lady from the church named Mary, came to visit Grammy to see how she was doing. It became a regular thing to see Mary’s car pull up in our driveway. She did not have a set schedule, but I always knew in advance she was coming by the sparkle in Grammy’s eyes and the excitement in her voice.

I knew nothing about Jesus back then but even with my unsaved eyes, I could see something very special about Mary. The way she selflessly made time for my grandmother, touched my heart deeply. I don’t recall her ever mentioning Jesus, but she did not have to. Her love and compassion towards my grandmother spoke volumes to me.

That special quality that I saw in Mary was the “fruit of the spirit” written about in Galatians 5:22-23. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control: against such there is no law.” The love and kindness she displayed towards my grandmother - her fruit - was the manifestation of the character of Jesus. The first command God gave to man after He created him was to “Be fruitful.” (Genesis 1:28) When I first read that I thought it meant to go procreate and populate the world. While that is certainly true, there is a deeper meaning. He wants us to display the “fruit of the spirit”, that is, to be a blessing to others. We are to manifest the nature and character of Jesus to the world. We do that by walking in the Spirit and not the flesh.

Mark 12:1-9 really spoke to me about what God wants from us. That passage talks about a man leasing his vineyard to a tenant. Then the owner sent his servant to collect some fruit from his vineyard from the tenant. But that servant and all subsequent servants were rebuffed, beaten and in some cases, killed. Finally he sends his son, who is also killed.

What that passage means to me is that every day we live, people are placed in our path and we have a choice on how we respond to them. We can choose to manifest the “fruit of the spirit” and be a blessing to them, or we can walk in our flesh. Let’s say someone takes offense at what you say and starts attacking your character. We can choose to “get in the flesh” and start insulting them back. Or we can choose to walk in the Spirit and exhibit the fruit of self-control by not taking offense and smoothing things over. Or maybe we see a homeless person holding a sign on the side of the road. Do we ignore him because “it’s not my problem”? Or do we walk in the Spirit and show him the fruit of love and goodness by taking him a meal? Or maybe you’re in a public restroom and hear someone crying in the adjacent stall. Do you ignore it since you have some place important to be? Or do you ask them if they’re okay? And spend a few minutes trying to help them? Even a call from a telemarketer can be an occasion to display fruit. Do you scream “Stop bothering me!” and hang up angrily? Or do you kindly explain that you are just not in the market for that thing they are selling? I believe the Lord is examining us closely, looking at our fruit, or lack thereof, every minute of every day. I think one of the most crucial questions every believer in Christ needs to ask himself is - am I fruitful?

Scriptures

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in His Own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. 28And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Luke 13: 6And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and **he came seeking fruit on it and found none.** 7And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' 8And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. 9Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit** and so prove to be my disciples.

Mark 12:1 And he began to speak to them in parables. "A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country. 2When the season came, **he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.** 3And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. 5And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed. 6He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 7But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 8And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. 9What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.