



Empowering People to Change the World

Where Is the Fruit?

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Where Is the Fruit?

My name is Joey Follett. I am the youth and young adults pastor here at the Road. This morning, we are going to be in John chapter 15.

John 15

- John 15 is a favorite of mine. One of my favorite teachings of Jesus. It is actually where I taught the last retreat message on the Sunday morning of the retreat. As we were encouraging our high school students to refocus and reconnect to the Father.

This passage was on my heart again for this morning, but with a bit of a different focus. The title of this message is “Where’s the Fruit?”

- Throughout the Bible, but especially in the New Testament, we see the analogy used of fruit and our lives bearing fruit. And that is exactly what John 15 talks about.
- But whenever I think about this analogy, I also think about actual fruit.
- *Peach tree story.*

Throughout the journey with this peach tree, the question that was often asked was where is the fruit?

- I think the same question can be asked and should be asked of each one of us and our lives.
- Is God looking at you and your life and wondering, “*Where is the fruit?*”

- Because fruit can often be the indicator.
- As James 2 talks about faith without works being dead. Works, or fruit, are evidence that your faith is alive! It is evidence that we are connected to the Father!

Consider that question as we look at this passage this morning.

John 15:1-8

Vines and vineyards were common symbolism used back in this time, and we see it all throughout scripture.

- Why – because there were grape vines all over Israel.
- Also a large golden vine that was a decoration on the temple – symbolizing Israel and God’s vine.
- Jesus is speaking in language familiar to his disciples.

Jesus starts by saying, “I am the True Vine... My Father is the Vinedresser.”

- Jesus is saying I am the vine. Not any nation or anything else. Be connected to me.

The same type of language Jesus speaks throughout the Gospel of John.

- **John 6:48** “I am the bread of life.”
- **John 8:12** “I am the light of the world.”

- **John 10:9** “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”
- **John 10:11** “I am the good shepherd.”
- **John 11:25** “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.”

John 14:6 *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

Church, the first thing we need to establish this morning is that Jesus is the only way. If you don't hear anything else I say this morning, then please hear this. Jesus is the only way. He isn't a way. Or part of the way. Or that, well, He is “a part of my story, or a portion, or one of the ways.” NO, HE is the ONLY WAY.

- People will try to tell you that the teachings of Jesus are good and that they like this person too, and this teacher, and that some sort of combo of different religious figures and religions is the best way.
- Jesus was pretty clear on this one. Don't do that. HE is the ONLY WAY!

He is the vine.

- One of the first things that I did with our peach tree when we moved in was to remove a dead branch (bird netting). That branch was never going to produce fruit. It was black, it was dead.

Now hear this. Once removed, was it then going to produce fruit? NO!

You must be connected to the vine to bear fruit.

- So what about us? Where is the fruit? Is there fruit in our lives? And how do we know?

3 questions we can ask ourselves to determine if there is fruit in our lives:

3 Questions to Determine If There Is Fruit in Our Lives

1.) Are We Connected?

Be connected to Jesus.

- What does that mean? It means complete dependence.
- A branch gets everything it needs from the vine, from the plant.
- Water, food, security, safety, everything.

Jesus wants you to be connected to Him and dependent on Him.

- A constant connection.

Look back at verse 5.

- “He who abides in me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing.”

We Can't Do Anything of Real, Eternal, Significant Value Without Jesus.

Connection is key.

Without a connection to Jesus, your life will be fruitless. Which is a sad thought.

- I think we all have a desire to make an impact. To leave a legacy. To have people who say he or she made a huge difference in my life.
- Without Jesus, we won't have fruit in our lives.
 - Again – a sad thought.

On the flip side, though, I think there is a promise associated with this verse.

- If you are connected to Jesus, then your life will bear fruit – you will impact the Kingdom – you will make a difference – you will change people's lives.
- This is a promise!

If You Are Connected, Your Life Will Bear Fruit.

- Even if you don't see results.
- We often get fixated on numbers.
- We don't always see results right away.
- I was talking about this with Sebastian the other day, and we were talking about the Old Testament prophets and how many of them were hated in their day and didn't fully see the fruit of what they were doing.
- Here is the truth. If you are connected to Jesus, and you are where He has led you and asked you to be. Then keep going. There will be fruit. That is a promise.

Jesus says, "Abide in Me."

- **The Greek Word For "Abide" Is "meno."**
- Means to continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain.

- The word dwell sticks out to me.
- Dwell has some commitment to it. It doesn't mean you are connecting to Jesus on Sundays. It means you are living there. You are abiding in Him, dwelling with Him.
- Through it all, through the ups and downs, the highs and lows. Remain, endure, continue, abide in Jesus.
 - Let's reflect on that.
 - Are you abiding in Jesus?
 - Are you in God's word?
 - Are you spending time giving God praise and worship?
 - Are you praying?
 - Are you in fellowship with other believers?
 - All of those things connect us to the vine.

First indicator of fruit, first thing we need to ask ourselves if we are looking for fruit, is *"Are we connected to Jesus?"*

2.) Are We Working with God?

Keep a bookmark in John 15 and turn with me back in your Bibles to Psalm 127.

Psalm 127:1-2

- When we are talking about fruit and results and making a difference, I want to be careful that the focus is not completely on the fruit. Or not just on the fruit.

- Because we can go through life and say yes to every opportunity that seems good and go go go, and that can actually be a distraction.
- My wife Alleigh and I have four kids now. Our oldest is seven years old, and our youngest is seven months old. I remember very clearly back to when our first was born.
 - I think sometimes God looks at us the same way. And says just sit down and hang out with me.

Are We Working *With* God or Just *For* Him?

- There is a difference.
- The difference is the connection that we were just talking about. Are you connected to the vine? Because without that connection, there is no fruit. Solomon, here in Psalm 127, says it is in vain. Without God, your efforts are in vain.
- Are you where God has called you to be? Are you connected to Him?

Are we acting on the word, walking in obedience, or just listening?

- **James 1:22-24** *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror, for he observes himself, goes away and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.”*

Are we checking all of the right boxes, or are we engaged in an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ? Are we connected to the vine?

- Second question – “Are we working with God?”

3.) Are We Operating in Love?

Let's keep reading in our passage in John.

John 15:9-13

We are called as believers to live lives that produce fruit. However, the fruit is pointless without love.

Last week, Pastor Steve finished our series on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He referenced 1 Corinthians 13 a lot during that series.

- **1 Corinthians 13:1-3** *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.”*
- I love these verses because the summary is you could be doing what appears to be amazing things and working powerfully, but if you are doing it without love, it is nothing. It is just noise.
- You see, it's not just about fruit. It's not just about cool things and cool opportunities. It is about love.

Love Is Key, Love Is the Fruit.

Vs. 9

- Abide in His Love
- Trickle-down effect
 - God loves Jesus
 - Jesus loves us
 - We love people
 - Love is the fruit

1 John 4:19 “We love Him because He first loved us.”

- He started it! He initiated! He loved first. We are just loving Him back. And one of the ways we love God is by loving His people.
- When we use that word, love. Sometimes I think we need to define it, because the world has messed up the word love and the definition.
 - There are actually different types of love
 - Depends on who you ask, but more sources say 8 types!
 - Everything from unconditional love to friendship love, self-love, and so on.

So when Jesus commands us to love, we may not know what that means.

- Let’s re-read verse 12
- Love one another as I have loved you

We Are Commanded to Love as Jesus has Loved Us.

- Jesus demonstrated love – use Him as the example!

Throughout the New Testament in so many ways:

- Feeding the 5,000
 - Because of Jesus' love for thousands of people, he didn't just meet their spiritual needs and spiritual hunger but also their physical hunger.
- Woman who was bleeding
 - Stopped in the middle of a huge crowd and saw and cared about someone who was considered unclean that no one else would touch or look at.
- Washing disciples' feet
 - This is a big one, and a convicting one for me. I think feet are really gross. Even my own feet. So if we are commanded to love people as Jesus did, then, alright, Joey, be willing to wash people's feet.

I also love the connection between love and joy in verse 11.

- If we are connected to Jesus, if we are abiding in His love, if we are walking in His will, our life will produce fruit, and we will be full of His joy.
- Fullness of His joy. The result of abiding in Jesus' love.

What Does Fruit and Love Look Like in Our Own Lives?

As believers in Christ, this is our calling, this is our mission. To love people as Jesus loves us.

- Can we feed people like Jesus did?
 - Spiritually, physically?
 - Invite a neighbor over for dinner.

- Who has been on your heart? Probably a reason for that.
 - Reach out!

Vs. 13

The greatest act of love is laying down your life for someone else.

- Listen, that is a serious thing to ask someone to do.
- That is the biggest thing you could sacrifice, right?
- Jesus is not asking anyone to do anything He wasn't willing to do himself.
- It is exactly what Jesus did
 - Greatest act of love ever
 - The Gospel message
 - Available for each one of us today