

Sunday July 10, 2022

First Lesson: Colossians 1: 1-14

Gospel Lesson: Luke 10: 25-37

Sermon Series: Fruits of the Spirit: Self-Control
Effect

Preacher: Kirstie J. Engel

We are continuing our sermon series called Fruits of the Spirit; a sermon series that is based off of the scripture Galatians 5: 22-23, that names the fruits of the Spirit to be love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control;

- Where the idea is that now that you and I have been doing weeks of spiritual pruning together in our previous sermon series, so

that we might grow in our faith and spirituality; my preaching goal in this sermon series, is for us to take each spiritual fruit, and examine them weekly, so that we can ensure that they keep growing to their fullest potential in our lives and the community that surrounds us.

- For our goal as a Church in my eyes, on both the individual and collective level, is to become effective in these fruits, so that we can achieve the kin-dom on Earth as it is in heaven.
- Therefore, this week we will examine **the bud of self-control** a little closer.
- And so to begin our conversation together, one of the participants in our Applying the Sermon to Life Class that meets on Wednesday nights at 5:30 in which all are welcome, thought it might be helpful for me to

give a review for each fruit that we have discussed thus far, before going into the fruit of self-control.

- And so lets do that;
- So **the fruit of love...the first fruit...** is the greatest gift God can give.
- [First Corinthians 13](#) says that *agape which is love...is patient. Agape is kind. Agape never fails.*
- Furthermore God desires to show God's perfect selfless love to a world that is routinely confused about what true love is.
- God's children are the conduits of God's love, as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to show one another that same type of love towards one another.

- **The fruit of joy**, where the Greek word for *joy* is *chara*, is the natural reaction to the work of God, whether promised or fulfilled.
- Another way of naming this is that joy begins to form within us, **as a result of us allowing the Holy Spirit to work within us;**
- Joy begins to cultivate within us, as a result of our growing knowledge that we are both loved and lovable;
- In fact by this token, you and I are guaranteed an infusion of joy, when we decide to immerse ourselves in the Holy Spirit.
- This is not to suggest that you and I will not have bad days or disappointments for that matter.
- However, by way of the Holy Spirit, we will understand better by and by as the saints would sing, the essence of what the psalmist

meant *by weeping may endure for a night, but joy will come in the morning.*

- Which tells us that our disappointments will not define us, our setbacks and heartbreaks will not keep us, from evolving into the people we are called to be!
- The **fruit of peace** is a gift that comes from the Holy Spirit; it is knowing that **when we have the spirit in us and among us, we are able to sit in this peace.** We are able to **rest in this peace**, and know that the Holy Spirit is with us **and most importantly—the peace of God is in us.**
- **Peace comes** when we realize that *no weapon formed against us will prosper (Isa. 54:17);*
- **Peace is knowing** that God will carry us through our valley moments;

- **Peace is understanding** that our transformation and restoration is always attainable and before us.
- **Peace is something** that surpasses even our basic human temporal understanding, but our spiritual essence and inner person knows that it is still there, and has never dissipated — nor can ever be taken away from us.
- **The fruit of patience or forbearance** is one of the most challenging fruits of the spirit to cultivate. For it's hard to wait on God and others.....can I get an Amen!
- However, over time, as you and I keep working on our personal spiritual growth, and keep seeking ways to stay in tune with the Holy Spirit, we will learn why **patience is such a virtue.**

- For as I look over my own life, **I have learned that God's plans for me**, is so much better than what I could have ever planned for myself.
- Because **you see for me**, I tend to be my own worst critic.
- **With me**, I tend to sell myself short;
- Can anybody else relate to what I am saying this morning?
- **However with God**, God tends to have a broader and more optimistic perspective for what you and I are really capable of.
- For when you and I allow the Holy Spirit to work within us and through us, this is when we begin to live into this reality that *All things are possible*.
- However, all of this takes a level of patience.

- Furthermore, this type of patience, from my life experience teaches me that it is all worth the wait, when you and I learn how to rely on the kairos time of God's activity, versus the chronos time of our limited expectations.
- **The fruit of kindness** is the Christ-like characteristic of behaving toward others, as God has behaved toward us.
- It's this idea of doing thoughtful deeds to others, just for the sake of doing so; **not expecting accolades or recognition**, but doing so simply just because it is the right thing to do.
- **The fruit of generosity** in a society that revolves around trade and business, can become normative for us and overcomplicated, **but in the Bible**, generosity is so much simpler than this.

- For generosity is the solution to food insecurity, poverty, famine and more.
- Generosity, which is often associated with monetary gifts, extends well beyond money, **and includes** small acts of kindness and compassion from a loved one, friend or even a stranger.
- **The fruit of faithfulness** can be a challenging trait to possess.
- However, faithfulness comes from a place of trust and loyalty.
- Hebrews 11:1 says it best, “Now faith is a confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”
- It is this idea that just because we cannot see the evidence of God working in our lives, **does not mean that God is not working in our lives.**

- Faithfulness embodies this idea that God is the same yesterday, today and forevermore, and that this truth will never change!
- **The fruit of gentleness** is the opposite of harshness with others.
- It is power over one's Spirit, that mirrors a meek and mild person like Jesus.
- **Gentleness is** embodying the art of the old adage, of just because you can, doesn't always mean you should.
- **Gentleness involves** you and I not viewing ourselves as better than someone else.
- **Gentleness is** choosing not to assert superiority over one another;
- On the contrary, someone who is gentle wants to help others, even when they have been done wrong.

- Lastly, **the fruit of self-control** comes in our first lesson, where the letter comes to the Colossians jointly from the leaders Paul and Timothy.
- And these letters are referring to the readers who are addressed as saints and faithful family members of Christ, who similar to the Philippian greeting, the **saints** (*hagioi*) are not necessarily referring to exceptionally mature Christians, but rather all who are truly “in Christ.”
- You see Paul and Timothy are talking to a group of folk, where the **saints** are not to be a separate group from the faithful; but the saints are characterized by siblings of Christ **who are faithful.**

- Another way of saying who the audience they were talking to, **the audience they were talking to** is you, **the audience they were talking to** is me;
- **Folk who are taking** the time to invest in their spiritual faith and journey by way of worship, small group classes, service, giving and more;
- **Folks, who** as one of the old church mothers from my first ministerial context in Wichita would always say when someone asked how she was doing;
- Mrs. Emmadelle Robinson who just celebrated her 82nd birthday would say; “I am working on being gooder and gooder!”
- This is the audience church family, that Paul and Timothy were talking to.

- **Folks who have not** already arrived, but are eagerly and actively engaged in their own journey towards arriving .
- **Folks who show** their faithfulness to this spiritual process by being here.... whether it is online or in person,
- **Folks who sometimes** even struggle with some of the concepts of what it means to bear this spiritual fruit, but their prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness shows that **they are still faithful to it**, which is all God would ever ask from us.
- Which is why on a slightly different note, our Great Plains Conference has encouraged us pastors and teachers of the faith, not to be discouraged by the shrinking weekly worship attendance because of the pandemic and global concerns that surround us;

- But to instead focus on building meaningful connections with the people **that desire to be here;**
- **They want us to focus our teachings** on the people who make it a point to be here, whether in person or online, and then grow from there;
- And I have to say that I am in awe of the wisdom from our leaders from the conference level, because they are right in line with our scripture this morning;
- Where Paul and Timothy were abiding by the same counsel, **and focused their teachings** on a group of saints and faithful disciples who were ready to be in the here and the now....
- So if you are here today, can I have about 15 folk in this space along with my virtual worshippers, who would be willing to put your

hands together and give God some praise because you are here today! Hallelujah!

- **So to the people who are here**, both physically and virtually, I stopped by to suggest that like Paul and Timothy, who sensed that the people needed a bit of encouragement in their spiritual coursework;
- I offer the same level of thanksgiving to you all for being here today or whenever you choose to tune into this message;
- For what the leaders of that time period in which I will strive to capture today wanted the people to know is this;
- That you and I already bear some semblance **of the fruit of self-control**; the final fruit of this Galatians text today.
- You see Church, this is the essence of what our first lesson is naming;

- That you and I essentially have the potential of these fruits already in us;
- For think about it, from birth, **most of us** came out ready to love and be loved;
- **Most of us** have it in us to be able to know and furthermore produce joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness; we have it in us to do it all;
- But what keeps us from doing it is the million dollar question?
- One of our class participants mentioned that for some of us, it could be a lack of confidence from doing so.
- For it is difficult to stand up for something if everyone else chooses to sit down.
- It is difficult to speak up for something, if everyone is quiet.

- So how self-control plays into this, is sticking with the spiritual teachings, trusting that the Holy Spirit will give us the confidence to be able to stand and speak up when we are called to do so.
- You know, I saw this level of confidence within a couple who are members of our church, that I did a pastoral visit with on their farm this past Thursday.
- It was a radiant day for this city girl and it was a day I will never forget.
- For I was fed both physically and spiritually. For I had a salad straight from the garden, and now I never want to shop in the grocery store again for my produce!
- I was in awe as the wife drove me around in her pick up truck, and her and her husband's

cows came to us immediately upon seeing the truck.

- For when I looked at the vast amount of acres of land that they had, I could immediately see their plight; for it takes two of them and then some to keep up with their work. For the farmer's work never ends!
- However, by God's grace, only one of them is able to do the work necessary to keep up with the tasks of their farm; for the wife is struggling with some health setbacks.
- So where I saw a major measure of confidence required within this couple, was when they shared how her ability to farm has been impacted by her sudden physical ailment, that has compromised her immobility.
- As a result, the couple has had to rely on the Holy Spirit and their God given fruit of self-

control, to trust and believe and have the confidence in the Lord, that her strength would be restored, so that she can get back to farming again.... And you know what... I believe that God will equip this couple to do so!

- **Another reason that keeps some of us** from living out our fruits, we can see in our gospel today.
- For as I bring our gospel into this conversation, that our budding preacher Alex alluded to last week on the good Samaritan from the aspect of gentleness, (didn't he do such a fine job?!);
- But I want you to take note of the similarities from our gospel today on the Good Samaritan, and the gospel that Pastor Caity preached from out of Luke 9: 51-62 ; when

Jesus entered the Samaritan village searching for people who would be willing to follow Him in his work;

- In both instances, when it came time for the people to really take a stance and put their spiritual fruits into practice;
- The people from Luke 9 and our gospel today provided excuses **for why they could not step up to the plate.**
- Luke 9 as a refresher; *As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” 58 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” 59 To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” 60 And Jesus[c] said to him, “Let the dead bury their own*

dead, but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” **61** *Another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.”* **62** *And Jesus said to him, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”*

- Then our gospel today as I paraphrase just a bit, Luke 10; the lawyer wants to know what must he do to inherit eternal life;
- Jesus said, What is written in the law? What do you read there?” **27** He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.” **28** And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

- But then when the lawyer asked “who is my neighbor?”; **which lets the reader know that the lawyer is already looking for an out;**
- Similar to Peter asking in Matthew 18: 21-22...”how many times am I supposed to forgive my neighbor?”
- I stopped by to proclaim that according to Jesus, there are no conditions to this kind of love that we are called to....there are no shortcuts to it... there is no out to this!
- To reiterate my assertion, Jesus gives a story of the good Samaritan and we witness two individuals; a priest and a Levite choose to pass up this man who needed help, for a myriad of good reasons and excuses from their perspective, I am sure.

- But once again the reader can glean that Jesus was not supportive of their responses or lack there of;
- Making the moral of the story that I believe Jesus was telling this lawyer then and to us now...
- **Enough with the excuses....** when it comes to matters of love;
- **Enough with the excuses....** when it comes to why humanity treats one another in the deplorable ways that we tend to do;
- **Enough with the excuses,** for us not seeing the hungry and choosing not to feed them;
- **Enough with the excuses** for us not seeing the thirsty and not at least taking the time to give them a drink of water;
- **Enough with the excuses** Jesus is saying, for like he told the righteous people in

Matthew 25:40 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these people of mine, you did for me.'

- **So enough with the excuses....**
- **For Philippians 1:6 says it best; *I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete^[a] it until the day of Jesus Christ.***
- Which means for me that ...**We have it in us** to be loving;
- **We have it in us** to be joy producers;
- **We have it in us** to be peaceful and produce said peace
- **We have it in us** to be patient,
- **We have it in us** to be kind,
- **We have it in us** to be generous,
- **We have it in us** to be faithful,
- **We have it in us** to model gentleness,

- **We have it in us** to have the self-control to choose to as our founder of Methodism said; *Do all the good we can, by all the means we can, in all the ways we can, in all the places we can, at all the times we can, to all the people we can, as long as ever we can.*”
- **We all have it in us** to be this Good Samaritan...who our Applying the Sermon to Life class noted that the lawyer couldn't even say the word Samaritan out of his mouth, simply because of the vitriol that Israelites had towards Samaritans who were not like them;
- So I will reiterate it again...**we have it in us to embody all of these spiritual fruits;**
- However there are three different philosophies of life being represented in this story Jesus told.

- The robbers said, “What’s yours is ours and we’ll take it.”
- The priest and the Levite muttered, “What’s ours is our own and we’ll keep it.”
- But the good Samaritan said, “What’s mine is yours and we’ll share it.
- These three philosophies can be put even more briefly.
- That of the robbers was, “Beat him up!”
- That of the priest and Levite was, “Pass him up!”
- That of the Samaritan was, “Pick him up!”
- You see it **is not until** we decide collectively that we are one another’s keepers;
- **It is not until** we see that we are the solution to our own crises that we are in;

- **It is not until** we do whatever we can to resurrect these collective fruits that are within us all, that will take a measure of self-control which we do all possess— we just have to be committed to doing so every second, every minute, every hour, every day that our feet is blessed enough to kiss this earth with our presence;
- **It is not until** we can come together and **begin to pick up the pieces** that this tornado of hatred, apathy, racism and evil has left among us;
- **To pick up** those who are broken;
- **To pick up** those who are hungry;
- **To pick up** those who are thirsty;
- **To pick up** what is left of our humanity;

- **We must pick another up** through our love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control;
- So that thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as is in heaven;
- May the words from my Holy Spirit inspired mouth, and the thoughts of all of our collective hearts, equip us to be able to pick up our Church community and extended community that surrounds us,
- Oh Lord of Infinite Grace and Mercy, equip us with the self-control to do so today and forevermore;
- Let the people say Amen!

•