

“Fruit Salad”

Psalm 8; Galatians 3:10-14

September 3, 2023

I've gotta tell you. I'm a little intimidated by the next couple of sermons, I'm not kidding. This Sunday and next, we're going to talk about the Fruit of the Holy Spirit and, in pursuit of that, I'm going to talk on occasion about growing things. You know, like a gardener or a farmer does. The reason I'm intimidated is because I come from a long line of gardeners and farmers. My dad grew up on a farm and never lost his love for growing produce. He took a special pride each and every summer to deliver some really tasty tomatoes, cucumbers and zucchini. My mom, in turn, loved flowers and she could oftentimes be found in the yard tending to roses, azaleas, you name it. But me? Well, maybe having a green thumb skips a generation, I don't know. Because, well, I don't have the green thumb. As a matter of fact, you might well characterize mine as fairly well black. Case in point. At my very first apartment, my mom did what any mom would do – she got me a fern as a housewarming gift. It was a nice fern and Mom told me it loved sunshine so I put it out on my front porch. What ever became of that fern? Well, it died. Pretty quickly if memory serves. I don't really remember much about it except the leasing office calling me, asking me to dispose of it because it was dead and an eyesore.

But I've been in churches long enough that I've heard the oft-repeated mantra – “healthy things grow” and, I've got to tell you, while it's not a perfect understanding of all the world, that statement does do a fairly good job of capturing the activity of what someone who is in Christ is up to. For to be Christian, is to be on an amazing journey of growth and production. We're to move further and further away from our old selves, with their sin and self-satisfaction and more and more towards the new life that Jesus Christ makes possible through His indwelling Holy Spirit. And this indwelling God in Christ just fills our lives with His glorious fruit.

For the last four weeks, we've looked at Galatians, talking about our justification by grace through faith. Paul, as we'll remember, had planted a group of churches in a region of Turkey called Galatia at the time. These churches were of course near and dear to Paul's heart. After all, it was his effort, empowered by the Holy Spirit, that led to these churches being alive. But, after he departs, a group with seriously different beliefs comes through and begins converting believers. Where they were taught about grace, the new group comes in and places a different emphasis on what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. They believed that you ALSO had to follow the Jewish Law to remain in the grace of our Lord. That is they believed that God gave you a little nudge, but after that, it was all up to you. Now, believe it or not, this is what Catholics sort of believe. So do Methodists, really and a host of other denominations.

And as I've talked about ad nauseam in this sermon series, this relatively small change leads to some massive fissures in Christian belief, according to the Bible. Because the Bible squarely, firmly, entirely, absolutely puts the emphasis on God's work as it comes to our salvation. AS I have said too many times to count during this sermon series, we do nothing for ourselves. Everything has been done for us through Jesus Christ. That's why we call it GRACE. But the argument is, and continues to be, if God is doing all the work, then why would I do anything? I mean, strictly speaking, if it is entirely grace, that means I could go out and do anything I wanted to do, regardless of caring for other people, and I'd still be good with God.

Now look, if I don't read my Bible, this can certainly be where I come out. Thankfully, the New Testament goes to significant lengths to stall this as a workable, Biblical theology. The Apostle James goes into considerable length in his where he writes – (**James 2:14-17**) “*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*” So, while we can make the claim that we have been saved entirely by faith, we cannot faithfully claim that, in Christ, we do nothing.

So what gives? Getting to the bottom of that requires us again to interact with theological language. Theological language can be difficult for us a variety of reasons. Sometimes we just don't know what they mean, at all. I'll never forget hearing the word, eschatology, for the first time at seminary. First

time I heard it, I was like, “what did that person just say?” because I had absolutely no idea what it was or what it means. FYI – Eschatology means what the church believes about the end of the world. So sometimes you’re just running in the dark entirely. On other occasions, you just have the wrong definition in mind.

I remember once in seminary I made a friend that was Lithuanian. She spoke English fairly well but it had been learned in her native country. That is to say that she hadn’t been in America very long. Certainly not long enough to learn things like product names. So, there we were one night, studying for our church history final. It was a tough, tough class and it had a large, comprehensive final that was pretty scary. After all, 2000 years of the church, one three-hour exam can lead to some pretty hair-raising moments ahead of time. So, we were studying. At a certain point, this Lithuanian student asks what everyone wants to drink. It was very gracious of her, wasn’t it. Well, I got a water but my friend Meredith asked for a Dr. Pepper on ice. Off into the kitchen went our friend. When she came back, there was my water but, in Meredith’s cup was something rather strange. It was, no kidding, a cup of ice water that had black pepper sprinkled in it with water. We laughed as the young woman from Lithuania hadn’t understood the difference between black pepper and Dr. Pepper.

But things like that can happen. Sometimes, we don’t understand a word properly or, more likely to be the case with theological language, that we understand the world’s definition of a thing, rather than the way the Bible looks at a thing. Take, for example, sin. Use sin in an ordinary conversation today and chances are you’re talking about a minor faux pas or peccadillo. But, biblically speaking, sin is a much, much bigger and more sinister thing. Sometimes we don’t know what a word means and, on other occasions, we have an inappropriate definition. But, either way, we’re going to get things wrong if we don’t learn.

Today, in order to talk about what we do in Christ AFTER we’ve been made alive by Him. That’s called sanctification and is something different than justification. Justification, as we’ve talked about the last couple of weeks, is one concept we need. Simply put, justification is “the act by which God moves a willing person from the state of sin (injustice) to the state of grace (justice).” This is a big, big move and one that we’re grateful for. God, in justifying us, moves us from the category of sin into the category of righteousness by His own power! We don’t do anything to bring this about nor can we lose it, I don’t believe. We’ve talked about what a big word justification is. Not only are you forgiven of your sins, you’re restored into full relationship with God the Father AND you’re spared from everlasting death by Jesus Christ’s atoning death and resurrection. Being justified is a big and wonderful deal.

But it just doesn’t END there. Just because God HAS DONE something with you, doesn’t mean that that’s all He’s going to do with you. You’ve been justified but now, your life is going to be sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit. And we talked about this throughout the series as well, especially when we looked at all those passages about grace that made it seem like it was MORE than just an unmerited gift. Remember, looking at Scripture we deduced that not only is grace the gift of God, so too does that gift come with direction and energy to help you do things to glorify God.

Receiving God’s Grace through the channel of faith means that we know what’s been done for us and by who. That is to say that we are NOT unaware of our salvation. And that awareness, that intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ and all that he’s done for us, MOVES US. The same power of the Holy Spirit that justified you in a once-and-for-all event when you came to believe, is now going to move you in different directions.

The Bible makes it clear that everyone receives the Holy Spirit the moment he or she believes in Jesus Christ: **Romans 8:9** – “*You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.*” **1 Cor. 12:13** – “*For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*” **Ephesians 1:13-14** – “*In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory.*” So, it is the case that the Holy Spirit is with every believer from the moment that they come alive in Jesus Christ. And, thanks be to God, that same spirit remains dwelling inside of us. We

know that, again, thanks to Paul in **I Corinthians 3:16** – “*Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*”

Guess what? The Holy Spirit DOES NOT lay dormant in the lives and hearts of men and women who are truly brought alive through Jesus Christ. Charles Spurgeon said it best, writing – “The grace that does not change my life cannot save my soul.” This is how come James can talk about faith without works being dead. It is simply the case that those who God justifies, so too will God sanctify.

John Calvin thought a lot about this as well writing in the Institutes – “Our justification and our sanctification are inseparable because Jesus ‘contains both of them.’ They are gifts of grace that we receive because we are one with Christ. To separate these things is to tear Jesus into pieces. In other words, there is no salvation without justification, and there is no salvation without sanctification because Jesus – salvation’s source – gives both to those who are in Him. As we dwell in Christ, and He dwells in us, we are forgiven and free. Consequently, our new obedience to God is of grace just as much as our pardon. It is grace all the way.” So, in Christ, we know that we will receive the blessing of justification but, a closer look at our Bibles, informs us that we will also be sanctified.

So what does that mean? “Sanctification is one of those religious-sounding words that people in the church use, but may not understand what it means. In its most basic sense, to sanctify something is to set it apart for God’s special use and purpose. Therefore, God’s people are sometimes said to be sanctified because they are set apart for God’s special purposes in the world: “*Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy; for I am the Lord your God. Keep My statutes, and do them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you*” (**Leviticus 20:7-8**). As this verse helps us see, the word sanctification is closely related to holiness. The word sanctification can be used similarly in the New Testament. Thus, in one sense, believers are already sanctified because of what Jesus has done for them.

Hebrews 10:10 tells us that as followers of Christ “*we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*”

But most of the time when Christians use the word sanctification, they are referring to the progressive work of God to make a believer more like Jesus Christ. As such Paul can write, “*For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality*” (**1 Thessalonians 4:3**). He commands Christians to “*present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification*” (**Rom 6:19**). Because believers have been set free from their slavery to sin, “*the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life*” (**Romans 6:22**).

In sanctification, both God and the Christian have specific responsibilities. Paul commands believers to “*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure*” (**Philippians 2:12-13**). God is the one who does the work of making us more like Christ, and we participate in that work by a life of continually turning away from sin and demonstrating our faith in Christ by obeying God’s commands. The Holy Spirit plays a key role in this process; as we walk in the power of the Spirit, we “*will not gratify the desires of the flesh*” (**Galatians 5:16**).

But the great joy that comes about is that, as you are being sanctified, you produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit. And I want us to notice one thing from our respective lists from our Scripture passage this morning. While the list of life-draining actions is all plural, the fruit of the Holy Spirit is singular. That is to say that you’ve got one fruit, with nine different flavors as a way of thinking about things. And as your life fills with this fruit, you’ll be more and more equipped to help shine the light of Jesus Christ in a world still darkened by sin.

Oscar Romero was the Archbishop of San Salvador in El Salvador during a tumultuous period in the late 20th century. He initially had a conservative reputation but underwent a profound transformation as he witnessed the suffering of the poor and oppressed in his country. As he became more aware of the injustices and violence inflicted upon the marginalized, Archbishop Romero spoke out fearlessly against the government and the military, who were responsible for widespread human rights abuses. He used his position to advocate for the rights and dignity of the poor and to denounce the violence and oppression that plagued El Salvador. Despite facing threats to his own life, Archbishop Romero continued to preach a message of love, justice, and compassion, even when it put him in direct conflict with powerful forces. On March 24, 1980, while celebrating Mass, he was assassinated by a

sniper. Oscar Romero's life and martyrdom exemplify the idea of "dying to self" in the service of others through Jesus Christ. He willingly sacrificed his own safety and comfort to stand up for the rights of the marginalized and oppressed in his country, ultimately giving his life in the pursuit of justice and peace. His commitment to the Gospel teachings of Jesus Christ inspired many and continues to be a powerful example of selfless service in the name of faith.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

Scripture and Quotes

James 2:14-17 – “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Justification – “The act by which God moves a willing person from the state of sin (injustice) to the state of grace (justice).”

Romans 8:9 - You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him

1 Corinthians 12:13 - For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit

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1 Corinthians 3:16 – “Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?”

Charles Spurgeon– “The grace that does not change my life cannot save my soul.”

John Calvin – ““Our justification and our sanctification are inseparable because Jesus “contains both of them.” They are gifts of grace that we receive because we are one with Christ. To separate these things is to tear Jesus into pieces. In other words, there is no salvation without justification, and there is no salvation without sanctification because Jesus – salvation’s source – gives both to those who are in Him. As we dwell in Christ, and he dwells in us, we are forgiven and free. Consequently, our new obedience to God is of grace just as much as our pardon. It is grace all the way.”

Leviticus 20:7-8 – “Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy; for I am the LORD your God. Keep my statutes, and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you”

Matthew 7:15-20 – “⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.”

