

**Life of Faith – Bear Fruit**

November 20, 2016

**Colossians 1: 10-20:**

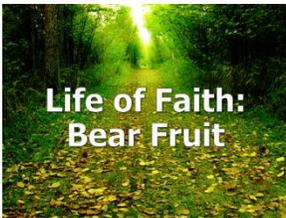
*<sup>10</sup> Then you will live a life that honors the Lord, and you will always please him by doing good deeds. You will come to know God even better. <sup>11</sup> His glorious power will make you patient and strong enough to endure anything, and you will be truly happy. <sup>12</sup> I pray that you will be grateful to God for letting you have part in what he has promised his people in the kingdom of light. <sup>13</sup> God rescued us from the dark power of Satan and brought us into the kingdom of his dear Son, <sup>14</sup> who forgives our sins and sets us free.*

*<sup>15</sup> Christ is exactly like God, who cannot be seen. He is the first-born Son, superior to all creation. <sup>16</sup> Everything was created by him, everything in heaven and on earth, everything seen and unseen, including all forces and powers, and all rulers and authorities. All things were created by God's Son, and everything was made for him. <sup>17</sup> God's Son was before all else, and by him everything is held together. <sup>18</sup> He is the head of his body, which is the church. He is the very beginning, the first to be raised from death, so that he would be above all others. <sup>19</sup> God himself was pleased to live fully in his Son. <sup>20</sup> And God was pleased for him to make peace by sacrificing his blood on the cross, so that all beings in heaven and on earth would be brought back to God.*



Over the course of the last two weeks we have talked about standing firm for our faith and holding fast to our faith.

Today, we shift from the “how” to the “why” in our ‘Life of Faith’ series. Today we will look at our call to ‘Bear Fruit’ for the kingdom of God and at the ways we can do that individually and as a congregation. Over the course of the past two months, we have also talked about our “faith stories”. One of the GPS questions three weeks ago asked you to begin to formulate your own faith story. One of the primary ways we ‘bear fruit’ for the kingdom is by sharing our faith stories with others. Let us pray.

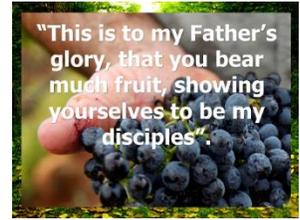


To begin today, we must first define what it means to “bear fruit”. In Matthew 23, we find the parable of the sower. It is here that we first encounter the concept of bearing fruit. In

this parable, when the Word of God that is sown takes root, that is bearing fruit. The parable ends with the idea that sowing seeds of faith in others produces a ‘crop’ of new believers – sometimes thirty fold, sometimes hundred fold. The spreading of the faith is bearing fruit. For most of us, sowing seeds of faith is done on an individual basis, one person at a time. It is often a long and involved process. Sometimes the growth is slow and laborious. Sometimes the fruition of our efforts is not even seen by us. It may be years later and we may never even know it happened – that someone we shared our faith with has claimed Jesus as Lord and was saved for Christ.

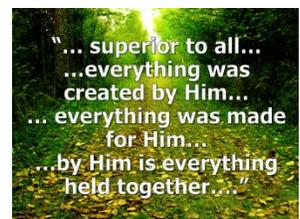


Bearing fruit can also mean growing to become more like Jesus. This is our own personal journey of faith. As we grow in our faith and become more and more and more like Jesus, our spiritual growth and how we live out our life is the 'fruit' of that journey. As we grow to be more like Jesus, our thoughts become more like His thoughts. Our actions become more like His actions. Our purpose in life comes to reflect His purpose for life. In Galatians five, we see what this looks like. Verses 22 and 23 state, "*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*" When our life is typified by this fruit, then we are living out our faith. When other people look at us and see kindness, joy, self-control and so on, they see our faith being lived out. In this way we are also planting seeds that may one day bear fruit in another's life. This idea is summarized well in John 15:8, "*This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples*". When we live as disciples of Christ, we bear fruit.



In order to bear fruit, of course, we must be solid in our own faith. In our passage today, we heard the importance of understanding the supremacy of Christ. Reading from verses 15 through 17, "*He is the first-born Son, superior to all creation. Everything was created by him, everything in heaven and on earth, everything seen and unseen, including all forces and powers, and all rulers and authorities. All things were created by God's Son, and everything was made for him. God's Son was before all else, and by him everything is held together.*"

Once we understand the supremacy of Christ, then we come to know Jesus as



our all in all. Once we profess our faith in Christ as the Lord and Savior of our lives, then we begin to worship Him and to live lives worthy of Him. Once we understand what Jesus did for us on the cross, then we understand the good news that we must share with others. In doing so, in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, we bear fruit.



The great commission directs us to go forth and make disciples of all nations. As we seek to reach new disciples, we bear witness to our faith not only by how we live our lives, but also by telling the story of what Jesus has done and continues to do for us, in our own lives. It is through watching how we live and by hearing our faith stories that people can come to know Christ for themselves.

In general, there are three primary ways that we can reach new people for Christ. All are means of bearing fruit for the kingdom of God.

They are summarized by the words make, go, and share. The first, "make", entails actions such as making a meal for a family who is battling a prolonged illness or who has had a



sudden loss. "Make" can be buying groceries for a family when someone loses a job or when a divorce causes financial hardship. "Make" can be something like the "Faith Fudge" or the "Christmas Shoebox" projects that our church as a whole undertakes each year.

The second, "go", entails things such as going to the Banquet in Sioux Falls to serve a meal to the homeless and economically disadvantaged. It entails going to visit those from our church who are in the Elder Inn or Golden Prairie or Long Term care facilities or who are shut-ins at home. "Go" can be something like the "Trunk or Treat" event we just had here at the church, an event that transforms the church from 'place to attend formal worship' to a safe and welcoming place to celebrate Halloween with one's children. Much like "make", "go" is also fairly easy to participate in and to commit to. Both are relatively safe.

The third, "share", entails engaging someone so that we can share our faith story with them. It is the step beyond 'make' and 'go'. When we 'make' and when we 'go', we are preparing the soil for 'share'. "Share" is the most important thing we can do with our faith. But of the three, it also the one that is most often skipped or that we tend to avoid. Many here this morning have practiced some form of 'make' – made a meal for someone, helped with the Faith Fudge, brought a Christmas shoebox to church. Most here this morning have probably practiced some form of 'go' as well – visited a sick neighbor, helped at Trunk or Treat, took an elderly neighbor to get groceries or shoveled their walk when it snowed. All of these are important things. They are important because they open the door for 'share'.

To be able to share our faith with others, to bear fruit for the kingdom of God, we must be willing to be in relationship with the lost and with the broken. This is why it is the most skipped of make, go, and share. It is messy. It is hard. It takes a lot of time to invest in someone to the depth required to help them to

come to a relationship with Christ. And this does not even begin to get into what it takes to help nurture that young faith, to walk with them through those first few storms until they can begin to walk on their own. It is an investment. And we know it is an investment worth making. Parents - you just have to look back over your life to see how much you were willing to pour into your children so that they could have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to know how important this investment is. And if you have children who do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior, is there anything you wouldn't do to see that relationship develop? It is that important.

Back in about 2008, I went to Denver with a group of men from the church to attend a Promise Keepers event. We had been to several Promise Keepers events over the past few years, so I knew what to expect. We would sing lots of songs, hear from powerful speakers, share in meaningful times of prayer. It would be a weekend that filled us up spiritually and would send us back home as better Christians, better husbands, better fathers. As a teacher at a middle school in Rapid City, I hosted a weekly Bible study one morning a week before school in my classroom. For several years prior to 2008, this little group had planned, publicized, and hosted the "See You at the Pole" event each year in September. This is a national, one-day event, where parents, staff, and students gather at the school's flagpole on a Wednesday morning to pray for the school, staff, and students. Well, it just so happens that this Promise Keepers event in Denver was the weekend before the "See You at the Pole" event. At the Promise Keepers event, I noticed that they would run announcements and advertisements on the screens between sessions. So I decided to find the right

people to have the "See You at the Pole" event announced on those screens so that Dads from all over could go to their children's schools to pray with them. I thought it was such a great idea. I found the right people. They were aware of what the "See You at the Pole" event was and I explained it was the next Wednesday and that it would be so great to put that up on the screens so all these Dads could go stand with their children and pray for them and their schools. I was flatly told 'no'. I was so disappointed. This event was not sponsored by or connected to Promise Keepers so they would not announce it. I was so disappointed. And maybe even a little angry.

Well, one of the folks in that room asked if I'd be willing to go to the prayer room so they could pray with me for the "See You at the Pole" event at my school and at other schools too. I reluctantly agreed to go. We had small talk as we walked over to where the prayer room was. He explained to the folks in the prayer room why he had brought me there. They asked me to stand in a circle of people I had never met before so that they could lay hands on me and pray for me. It was a neat experience. I could sense the presence of God in this place of prayer. After the time of prayer ended, I was ready to head back to my group and to continue with the conference. As I was starting to head for the door, a young lady stopped me and asked if she could share something with me. I said 'sure' and did not really know what to expect. What she proceeded to share absolutely blew me away. This young lady shared that while others were praying, she had a vision. She said she saw me in heaven wearing this big charm bracelet. On the charm bracelet were lots of children, each one representing a young person that I



knew and had a hand in their coming to Christ. It left me in tears as I walked back to my seat. It was great reassurance to me that the efforts to share my faith and to help young people to come to know Christ was bearing fruit. Powerful, powerful experience. Blessed me beyond words. This experience began me on a journey that has brought me to this time and place. It is part of my faith story as well.

God has a story like that for each of us. There are so many who do not know Jesus. There are so many who are lost or who are broken. God wants to use each of us to help others to come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Your story of how you came to faith in Jesus is a story that will help someone else come to know Jesus. Maybe you just need to start 'making' – doing what you can for another as a witness to the love of Jesus in you. Maybe you are at the place where you just need to 'go' – finding someone or some place that you can begin to be the light and love of Christ for. Maybe you are doing these things already and you are ready to 'share'. Wherever you are, I encourage you to take the next step to bear fruit for the kingdom of God. This is my prayer for our church and for each one of you. I pray for this every day. Sharing our faith is the greatest way we can share Jesus' love with others. It will bless you and will bless the one you share Jesus with.



As I said earlier, it is messy. It is hard. It takes an investment. And sometimes we do not ever get to see the seeds bearing fruit. But we are still called to plant seeds anyway. To end, a funny story to illustrate that it is really about the

planting. Only God can make those seeds grow into faith. Bill Hybels is a pastor who shared this story in a book I read. Bill is a bit of an amateur sailor. He tells the story of a man who used to be amongst the sailing community in his home port.

The man was pretty rough and tumble. Swore a lot and drank a lot. But Bill needed a hand on his boat, so he decided to try to mentor this man. After three years the drinking and the swearing were all but gone. They had talked about God, religion, and faith, but the man still hadn't accepted faith for himself. The seeds had not yet taken root. Then one day a friend of Bill's needed a spare man for a sailing competition he was going to in New Zealand. Bill made the connection and the man went along. On the second or third day of the trip, Bill's friend called and told Bill he wouldn't believe what happened. The man had come to Christ. Bill's response was, "NNNOOOOO!!!!!! I've been working for three years on him. This isn't fair!!!!"



Whether or not we are blessed to be there when someone accepts Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior does not matter. That is the point of this story. What matters is that they are saved and now live with Jesus in their heart. We are simply called to bear fruit – to live out our faith, to share our story, to do what we can, when we can, for the building of the kingdom of God. We are called to plant seeds of faith both by our words and by our actions and then to trust God to do the rest. May we do our part, being true to our calling, ever seeking to bear fruit for the kingdom of God. Amen.

**GPS – Grow, Pray, Serve**

1. As you look back over the past few years, how have you grown closer to Christ in your faith journey? What steps do you need to take next?
2. How do you practice reaching new people for Christ in the “make” mode? What other ways could you make a difference for the kingdom?
3. How do you practice reaching new people for Christ in the “go” mode? Who else are you being called to ‘go’ to, to build the kingdom of God?
4. Specifically, who is God calling you to ‘make’ for and ‘go’ to in order that you can one day “share” Jesus Christ with them? Pray for first steps.