

John 14 – 16, pt.8, 9.13.09

Living in Abundance – Undergoing God’s Pruning

John 15.1–5

Introduction

1. God’s ultimate desire for me...
2. God’s desire for you is to live intimately connected to Christ so that
3. Your abundance/fruitfulness as a believer is determined by your abiding in Christ and your **submission** to the pruning of the Father.

God is crazy about you and wants what is best for your life – J.17.20–24

1. You have to begin here. Jesus brought a revelation of the Father that was so completely foreign to everyone. They had no idea of the Father’s heart of love and tenderness. Everything that Jesus felt flowed from the Father’s heart too.
2. He is for you & not against you; He desires to prosper you in every way; He wants you to encounter the riches of His love in Christ; He wants you to know the height, depth, length and breadth of His love for you.
3. Jesus’ prayer for us – John 17.20–24. He wants us to experience unity/intimacy with Him and the Father and to experience the same love He feels from the Father.

God wants you to be fruitful – John 15.1–4, 8

1. Jesus is the grapevine & we are the branches of the grapevine. Grapevines produce fruit. God designed it so that as branches of Christ we will produce fruit.
2. We produce fruit from a place of abiding/intimacy. We produce an increased measure of fruit through the pruning work of the Father.
3. God created us to be fruitful
 - a. Gen. 1 & 2 – be fruitful and multiply. All of animate creation is fruitful – cells reproducing, animals multiplying, trees reproducing, stars, etc.
 - b. Witnessing life everywhere while at Trinity Pines.

4. Fruit is an indicator of whether or not you are a believer.
 - a. 15.2 – He cuts it off. Judas is an example. I believe Jesus is speaking of those who claim to be followers of Christ, but they aren't b/c of their actions. Judas did as the disciples, but when it came to him standing on his own for the Lord he sold him away.
 - i. What about you? You may come from a Christian family and hang out with Christians, but where is your heart. Are you personally connected to Christ or are you just connected to Christians or a good way of living?
 - b. Luke 6.43–45 – Good fruit comes from a good heart.
 - c. Matt.13.36–43: Wheat & the tares are distinguished by their fruit.
 - d. Matt.25 judgment of the Sheep & Goats is based upon fruit.
 - e. Matt.3.10– every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.
5. You aren't happy unless you're fruitful!
 - a. Everyone wants to make a contribution. "Everyone Serves" emphasis. Everyone wants to make a difference...help the family...pay the bills...assist those in need. It's one of the critical elements of growth in our lives.
 - b. It's a fact that the elderly who sit back and watch lose their mental and physical capacities much faster than those who continue to serve.
 - c. It's a fact that men who don't work tend towards depression much more than those who are working; People who are retired and volunteer have a better quality of life than those who are focused on their own needs.
 - d. Students in college often feel useless. They think their life is at best in neutral and don't see what they are doing will have any application in their life. This desire to work, contribute, produce, express is a God given drive to be fruitful.

Your fruitfulness is determined by abiding in Christ and pruning by the Father – John 15.2–3

1. Illust of farmer, grapevine & branches
2. Pruning means loss, redirection and then growth.
 - a. Prune = to clean up; to take something off. You take off the dead wood and cut back some of the new growth. God cuts off the dead wood, but he cuts back the branches. One is rejection and the other is redemptive.
 - i. The loss is painful. It may involve a dream or direction God gave you...relationships...job... but it's necessary!
 - ii. The harder you try to recapture the dead limb the more difficult it is to enter the next phase of God in your life. Sometimes we try to recapture the past and we grow angry or depressed. We put all this energy into something that is dead thinking we can resurrect it.
 1. We need to release, grieve the loss and move forward with God.
 2. John 12.23–28. In death, life is released. Fruitfulness comes when you submit your will to His – 12.27. Jesus' life was pruned so greater life could come.
 3. You have to lay it down.
 - iii. Our identity becomes so enmeshed with what we do for God rather than who we are in Christ that when God prunes that dream/vision/call/relationship/job/drive we don't know who we are. We feel we've lost our identity. My identity must be linked to who I am in Christ not to what I do for God. Otherwise, I will spend my life always striving to feel Papa's approval through activity.
 - iv. God has prepared works for you and we receive pleasure when we do those works. But how God views and accepts me isn't based upon what I do for Him. Whether I'm fixing an appliance, taking a nap, preaching to a million people or shooting hoops with my kids, the Father is well pleased with me and crazy in love with me. He views me from my position not my performance.

- v. Ultimately, we have to trust the Farmer. He owns us and knows what is best. We think we can coach Him into pruning the stuff we dislike. Yet, His target seems to be on those things we most enjoy. We want Him to take the broccoli, but He goes for the dessert.
- vi. By resisting the pruning, we deny God's goodness towards us. He's pruning us out of love!

b. Pruning purpose is greater growth!

- i. God removes sucker shoots from our lives, b/c they drain us from the most important things. You can be so involved in many things you aren't productive in anything. He removes the extraneous growth so there can be a clearer focus and greater strength.
- ii. God prunes us for more production. There is not an ounce of retribution or anger. DO NOT misread pruning as a sign of judgment from God. It is an indication of His love for you.
- iii. It is painful. There is real loss! There is blood! There is death! Jesus' physical life was pruned, but in that pruning came...
- iv. A radical, unexpected and incredible change. There is an empty grave...there is now no fear of death...no grip of sin...no victory for satan...there is now complete access to God...there is now the fullness of the HS...there is now friendship with God. Pruning is for growth.
- v. Receive His pruning as a gift! It's not a sign of rejection, but an indicator of His love.

3. God's Pruning Techniques.

a. Scripture

- i. John 15.3 – His Word. Heb.4.12 – His Word is living and active and it cuts and separates. It reveals the thoughts and intentions of the heart. God uses His Word to convict us of sin and to align our minds with

His will and to reveal Himself to our hearts.. His uses His Word so that we're thinking and acting in agreement with His desires. This is why soaking in Scripture is so vital.

1. Ps.119.9-11
 - ii. Heb.12.11 – His discipline. This includes both when we stray and as we are growing. Discipline isn't always in response to sin, but often it's for growth. It's like the young soldier in boot camp. He's being disciplined so that he can be the best possible soldier. He comes in overweigh and unsure of himself and leaves fit and confident.
 - iii. 1 Pet.1.6f – God uses trials to strengthen our faith, so it will bring much praise to God.
- b. Biblical Examples:
- i. Job's trials, Joseph's dungeon, Moses' desert, David's cave, Gideon's reduction, Daniel's imprisonment
 - ii. John the Baptist's decrease, Jesus' cross, Paul's thorn in the flesh, the apostle John's exile.
 - iii. These were all hard pruning experiences, but life, power and increase came from them!

4. Response to Pruning

- a. You have to reorient yourself to the new reality. You cannot continue to maintain the same mindset. It's a new situation. I've witnessed people who've had traumatic loss get stuck in the loss. They live in perpetual grief or hurt or trying to recreate the past. This leads to all kinds of heartache.
 - i. Michael Jordan's petty comments during his speech at his induction into the Hall of Fame.
 - ii. Pruning shuts some doors, but it opens others.
- b. You can't make automatic new fruit. The stage is set for fruit, but it may be a while before you see it produced.
 - i. Seeing people come to Christ and have quick fruit; then they experience a pruning and grow discourage.

They think God has moved past them when He is redirecting them. They see this as a desert when it's a positive hibernation. You have to be able to navigate the pruning to get the next level of productivity.

1. Illust – going to college and seminary thinking at times it was a waste. But, there was a grounding that was needed; maturity needed time to grow; etc.
 2. Do you want fruit for 2 years or 70 years?
- c. Draw upon your life in the vine. Quit scrambling to fill the gap with something else. Find your life in Christ. Press into Him and His heart. Learn to find your identity in Him rather than your service for Him.
5. The Fruit God wants to find:
- a. Gal.5 – The Fruit of the Spirit
 - b. John 14.12 – greater works
 - c. John 14.27 – Peace
 - d. Is.5 – Justice and righteousness

Summary – Your fruitfulness is determined by abiding in Christ and your submission to the Father's pruning. God subtracts to multiply!

Where is God pruning you? What attitude, action, relationship, position, etc do you feel being wrenched from your hand? Where do you feel pinched? Pain? These are the areas the Lord may be pruning. Are you submitting?