

The title of the sermon this morning is "What Fruit Grows on Your Tree?".

I've told some of you before how my Dad liked fruit trees. He planted almost any kind that he could find in the lot in front of our dairy barn up in Indiana. Whenever we got a new Stark Brothers Nursery catalog in the mail, he would scour it to see what might be new in the fruit tree line. Some of his selections gave us wonderful tasting fruit and some were duds and a dud didn't stay in the orchard very long. No need to waste the space in the orchard with a bad fruit tree, that's just good orchard management. As I was writing this sermon I decided I'd look up Stark Brothers Nursery and see if they were still around. Their website said this, "Growing America's Fruit Trees for over 200 years" Since 1816! So I guess my dad selected a good nursery to use.

Well the bible, gives us a lots of information about how to manage our spiritual orchard for Jesus. The bible uses the comparison of fruit or fruitfulness in many places in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament it was more of an indicator of the blessings of God. Things bore fruit if God was blessing them. God caused crops and trees to be fruitful based on His peoples' obedience to his suggestions and commands. It was more of a physical blessing thing in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, bearing fruit became more of a spiritual thing. It became a spiritual identifier of the salvation within disciples of Jesus. If someone was a true follower of Jesus, then their fruit would be an indicator of their change of heart and their surrender to Him. How fruitful the believer was, indicated their commitment to living like Jesus. John the Baptist got the tradition about fruit bearing started when he was preaching out in the desert not far from Jerusalem.

In Matthew 3:4 we read, John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. [5] People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. [6] Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

[7] But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? [8] **Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.** [10] **The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.**

What fruit is John talking about in these verses. He has seen the Pharisees and Sadducees come out from Jerusalem, interested in seeing what this "John Preaching and Baptizing Thing" was all about. The Pharisees and Sadducees were the Jewish Religious leaders in Jerusalem. John knew that they weren't there to repent and be baptized, they were there to protect their religious sand pile and John was digging into it with a scoop shovel. John was preaching something brand new in preparation for the ministry of Jesus. He knew the Pharisees and Sadducees weren't fruit producers. They talked a good game but their fruit didn't follow their talk.

Have you ever heard the gospel song whose chorus says, "Your Walk Talks Louder than your Talk Talks". These guys were all talk and no walk. They were Snakes, Vipers John Calls them and they bore no fruit that was recognizable as, God produced fruit. Who else was called a serpent in the Bible, in the Garden of Eden, Satan himself. Being called a snake in the Bible, is not a good thing!

John was preaching repentance and if a person is truly repentant of the bad things that they have done in their life, then their life will change as a result of that repentance and the fruits of repentance will become obvious in that person's lifestyle. John ends with the verse [10] **The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.**

The bible proves that John knew what He was talking about. In Matthew 23:1 Jesus echoed what John said about the Pharisees.

[23:1] Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: [2] "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. [3] So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. (obey their talk, because they were talking a good game)

But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.
(their Walk, they weren't walking in the fruit bearing walk of obedience)

Jesus goes on saying - [4] They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

These heavy loads are what Matthew has been talking about in his sermons from Hebrews, about strange beliefs, where significant things are added to the gospel from denominational traditions and from many other sources.

Jesus continues on in verse [5] "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide (a phylactery was a small bag hung around the neck with a cord. The bag contained bits of paper with scripture and prayers written on them) and the tassels on their garments are long; [6] they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; [7] they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' or Teacher.

Then Jesus really gets down to it when He says - [8] "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. This particular statement by Jesus would strike down any statement or attempt by the denominational categorization of lay people and pastors or ministers or priests. Jesus makes it simple, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. The Bible says that all of us have to work out our own salvation and produce our own fruit. As a friend once told me, "God doesn't have any grandchildren." No believer should be categorized as anything other than a brother or sister in Christ.

Jesus continues on. [9] And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. [10] Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ.

This verse also calls out those who address people within their denomination as father. Jesus tells us that there is only one who is our spiritual father and that is our father in Heaven, God himself. And Jesus certifies the fact that He is the only one who has the knowledge from God to be our Spiritual teacher.

After all, the gospel of John begins with this statement and John is talking about Jesus - John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was with God in the beginning. [3] Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. [4] In him was life, and that life was the light of men. [5] The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

Then in verse 14 (NIV) John tells us [14] The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John is telling us that Jesus has been with God since the beginning. He existed as the word of God. He created all things as God spoke. He then became flesh in the person of Jesus, so Jesus could certainly tell us as He does in verse 10 [10] Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ.

Jesus continues on and gives us the criteria for Christian service - [11] **The greatest among you will be your servant.** [12] **For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.**

Then Jesus in the next 15 verses uses various words to describe the Jewish religious leaders, who talked the talk but didn't walk the walk. They didn't bear fruit.

Here are the words Jesus uses and they are very similar to the ones that John the Baptist used:

Hypocrites, blind guides, blind fools, blind men, snakes! You brood of vipers. You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. You have neglected the more important matters of the law— justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. [24] You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

Pretty strong condemnation from our Lord and Savior for "religious people" who do not bear spiritual fruit.

However at the end of this discourse by Jesus, He voices his love, care and concern for the Jews and His desire that they would just believe:

[37] "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. [38] Look, your house is left to you desolate. [39] For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

The Bible makes it clear in many places that God desires that everyone would be saved. For example Paul in Timothy 2:1 gives us instructions in how to go about bearing fruit and as a result introducing the gospel those that are lost to Christ.

[2:1] I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— [2] for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. [3] This is good, and pleases God our Savior, [4] **who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.**

Prayer is bearing fruit for God. It is the most powerful tool that we can use to change things in our own life, in the lives of those around us and in our country and in our world. Fruit bearing begins with accepting Christ as our savior with the companion repentance, faith and trust that must accompany that decision. Then praying for God's will to be accomplished in our lives begins the process of our sanctification (becoming like Christ). As we become more Christ like, the fruit on our tree becomes more spiritual and of greater value to God and to those around us.

In Matthew 7:[15] Jesus gives us the rules for discerning whether a person is a true brother or sister in Christ.

"Watch out for false (teachers). They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. [16] By their fruit, you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? [17] Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. [18] A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good

fruit. [19] Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. [20] Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Matthew 21:43

[43] "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you (talking to the Jews, specifically the Pharisees and Sadducees) and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Or Those who accept Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah)

That is why it is so important that we read, know and understand the Bible and what it teaches, so that we can discern what is being proclaimed and bear truthful fruit rather than flawed fruit or no fruit at all. We must be able to discern the truth of God's word and apply that to our lives. We must be able to test everything we hear and see against the scriptures and determine for ourselves what is truth and what is false. That is why I tell all my classes and you this morning if you hear me preach or teach anything that does not line up with the scriptures tell me, call me on it. I do not want to be guilty of not proclaiming God's truth.

Now back to what kind of fruit grows on our tree.

In Luke 6:43 (NIV) which is similar to what we read before.[43] "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. [44] Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. [45] The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart, his mouth speaks. Let me repeat that.

For out of the overflow of his heart, his mouth speaks.

What we speak is evidence of what is in our heart.

Our speaking and what we say can be fruit bearing. Here is what Hebrews 13:15 says: [15] Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. [16] And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Ephesians 5:5 (NIV)

[5] For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. [6] Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. [7] Therefore do not be partners with them.

[8] For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light [9] (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) [10] and find out what pleases the Lord. [11] Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. [12] For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. [13] But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, [14] for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said:

“Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

This is the biblical contrast between one who loves the Lord and one who does not. Those who love the Lord produce fruits of light as opposed to fruitless deeds of darkness produced by those who choose to ignore God.

Paul says this to the Christians in Phillipi - [3] I thank my God every time I remember you. [4] In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy [5] because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, [6] being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

[9] And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, [10] so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, [11] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

And to the Christians in Colossi Paul says Colossians 1:10 (NIV)

[10] And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, [11] being strengthened with all power

according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. [13] For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, [14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

In John 15 Jesus gets to the point of where our wisdom, ability and power to bear spiritual fruit really comes from. Although we have been using the fruit bearing tree analogy, Jesus uses the analogy of a similar type, that of a vine and its branches. Jesus says in John 15:1

[15:1] "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. [2] He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. [3] You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. [4] Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

[5] "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. [6] If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. [7] If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. [8] This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Jesus makes it clear. Without the spiritual sap flowing into our beings from God to our indwelling Holy Spirit we cannot be fruitful. We will just wither and die without the spiritual sap coming from God renewing our spirits. I witnessed a great practical earthly example of this in the spring when I trimmed the lower branches off of the small trees out here in our adjacent lot. I brought the pole saw and trimmed off those lower branches. Went home to get the trailer to haul them away. Came back within a half an hour to pick them up and it was already obvious in the tone of the leaves that they had lost their source of replenishment. They were wilted, they had lost their source of power and strength.

That same thing happens to the Christian when we aren't absorbing on a continual basis the life giving, fruit bearing, spiritual sustenance which God's word and the Holy Spirit provides for us.

Another great example of this could be taken from the coffee pot. This is going to be an audience participation example. How many here like to drink coffee. What does it take to make coffee? A coffee pot, water, coffee. Is that all? That's all if you like cold coffee. Energy has to be applied to the brewing device to make the water get hot and brew the coffee. It can be electricity, a camp fire, a stove top, any source of energy that can produce heat.

Like the coffee pot, a Christian must have a constant supply of spiritual energy to remain on fire for the Lord. That comes from studying God's word and listening to and obeying the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus continues on in John 15:[9] "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. [10] If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. [11] I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. [12] My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. [13] Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

What kind of fruit is growing on your spiritual tree? What kind of fruit will last for eternity?

Galatians 5:22 gives us an idea of what kind of fruit we should bear, if the Holy Spirit lives within us. [22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. [24] Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. [25] Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. [26] Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

In Matthew 28:16 Jesus gives us our marching orders just before He ascended into Heaven. The Great Commission. Here is what he wants us to do to bear fruit.

[16] Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. [17] When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. [18] Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

John 14:23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. [24] He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

1 John 2:3 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. [4] The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. [5] But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: [6] Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

1 John 3:23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. [24] Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

How is your fruit bearing coming along. Have you gotten the process started by accepting Jesus as your Savior and making Him Lord of your life. Are you drawing spiritual sap from the study of God's word and by letting the Holy Spirit direct your thoughts and actions. Everything that we do or say can be fruitful for the Lord if we obey His plan for us. Our love for Him and our love for others is the great evidence of our spiritual condition. The Bible say that if we love Him we will obey Him. Everything that we do should be for His Glory and Honor and the bringing of others into God's family by the way we live.

Let's pray.

Communion Time

As we come to our communion time, we are to remember what Jesus did for us on the cross and how His body was broken and His blood shed in our place for the sins that we have committed. He set aside this communion remembrance so that as we meet together to Worship Him we will be reminded that Jesus gave His life to pay our sin debt.

We invite any believer in Christ to participate in this remembrance, to come and get the bread and the cup, return to your seat and we will then partake together.

Lets Pray.

1 Corinthians 11:23 (NIV)

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." [25] In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." [26] For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

[27] Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. [28] A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. [29] For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.