

# THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

A Life Changed by Jesus

## WEEK FIVE: Philippians 1:3-11

### The Fruit of the Spirit: A Brief Introduction

This term we will be focusing on what a life changed by Jesus looks like using the metaphor of the fruit of the Spirit. This common biblical metaphor describes the outcomes of a life lived with God; the virtues and characteristics that out to be the harvest of our lives.

Our central text will be Galatians 5:16-23 but we'll also incorporate other texts that reflect on fruitfulness.

### Sermon Outline:

#### A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

**Key Text(s):** Philippians 1:3-11

The first fruit that Paul lists in Galatians 5:22 is love; a virtue that is universally valued. The second is joy; a virtue that on the surface seems... odd. Unlike the other characteristics which can be practiced, joy appears to be something that happens to us. Furthermore, while joy is a good thing, its benefit for a community doesn't appear to be as significant as, say, love or kindness or self-control. What is the benefit of joy for a community and how might we practice it?

Joy has been linked to certain health benefits; increased immune response, lower stress, etc. However, Paul is not interested in the well-being of the Galatians (at least not in this way!). More biblically mainstream is the connection between joy and suffering. Joy, especially in the New Testament is a regular companion of suffering. Most famously in Hebrews 12:1-2 where Jesus, "for the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame." This seems to suggest that there was a great joy to come that enabled Jesus to endure its lack, but elsewhere we see that joy is to be found in suffering! James, Jesus' brother, opens his epistle with these words, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds." This same pattern is found in the book of Acts where the apostle rejoiced that they had been found worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus (Acts 5:41).

The sustaining power of joy in the midst of suffering has its foundation in the Old Testament where joy is found in the provision of God for his people. Whether the provision is the harvest or the great reversals of God's rescue of his people – this is the source of joy (See Psalm 126:1-3). The feast of Purim (and many of the other festivals) recalled such a reversal and the celebration of the feast was meant to repeat the joy of the past and rehearse the joy of the future in the present. Joy is found in the overlapping of God's past and future actions. Plutchik's emotion wheel places joy between anticipation and trust – a good place to put it!

However true this is, it is not the reason Paul speaks of joy in Galatians. He is not primarily encouraging them to persevere, but to get along! The benefit of joy – in health or perseverance is important but there must be more.

Which brings us to Philippians 1:3-11. In this epistle, Paul is addressing another community of faith that is experiencing relational troubles (a very common pastoral concern in the epistles!). He opens with an expanded thanksgiving in which one thing becomes very clear – Paul loves the people in Philippi. And this connection of love and joy is, I believe, deliberate. In Philippians 2:1-11 Paul urges them towards greater Christ-like love in order that his "joy might be

complete". This same connection between love and joy is found in John 15:9-11 where Jesus urges his followers to love each other in order that their joy might be complete.

Paul lists joy second because it is love's pair. This makes sense because joy is proximate; we experience more joy with those we care for and over things that matter to us. A wedding photo shoot of an unknown couple is lovely and will draw a smile from us as we pass by, but we won't experience the same joy as we will when it is a close friend whose photo is being taken!

This "location" of joy – close to love – introduces us to how we might practice seeding the ground for a harvest of joy. To begin with Paul notes that he gives thanks when he thinks of the Philippians. Gratitude seeds our hearts for joy. It involves a conscious use of our memory to recall God's goodness to us in and through others.

Second, he prays with joy because of their partnership in the gospel. Being united in a deeply loved mission/task is good for us, sustains us in hardship, and becomes seed for joy. The more we make the mission of God in the world and in our lives the heart of what brings us together the more seed we sow.

Finally, let us love one another deeply so that our joy might be complete! In our love, in our shared mission, and in our gratitude lie the seeds of joy. This joy is good for us an appealing to those in our world who, along with more love, kindness, and self-control, could also use a sustaining joy!

## Questions to Ask

1. Describe something or someone who brings you joy.
2. What do you think the benefit of joy is for a community of people? What other factors might contribute to the seeding of joy?
3. Gratitude involves a conscious use of our memory. For what are you thankful (and try to get beyond those things we are generally thankful for such as nature, freedom, etc. – what are we deeply thankful for; what really, really makes us grateful?)
4. How might we practice gratitude with one another?
5. Joy is proximate. It is experienced in (and with) people and things that matter to us. How can we make others and the mission of Jesus more important to our community?

## A Prayer to Pray

Pray for each other and for our community of faith that the fruit of joy (and love) might become more and more evident in our lives.

## A Practice to Try

We were challenged to ask the Spirit to reveal one of the fruits that he desires a harvest of in our lives. Make this a focus of prayer this week.

## Readings to Read This Week

The following readings were cited or alluded to in the sermon.

- Psalm 126
- Esther 9:20-22
- Isaiah 61:1-3
- Philippians 2:1-11
- John 15:9-11

## A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

Our vision as a community of faith is to see lives changed by Jesus. In this series we want to consider what that really means – what does a life changed by Jesus look like?

## A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

Each week we will provide you with a key aspect of our community news that we would encourage you to remind your Life Group about.

1. The Hopefield/GBC Giving Tree launched on Sunday. Our target is \$9000 to provide Christmas hampers to those doing it tough in our wider community. Any excess will go to other support services.
2. Our AGM I is on Sunday November 30 after the service. This is the meeting where we pass our budget for 2026 and appoint members of the Church Council and Elders. Please remind your group to have a look at the documentation and to attend on the 30<sup>th</sup> – either onsite or online.