

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

A Life Changed by Jesus

WEEK FOUR: Galatians 5:16-23

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): Luke 10:25-37

The first fruit that Paul lists in Galatians 5:22 is love; a virtue that is universally valued. The New Testament, as we might expect, has a Christological understanding of love. In other words, it takes its meaning from God in Christ. In 1 John 4:16 we have the briefest and most succinct definition of love, "God is love." If we want to know what love is we need to start with God. It is in meditation upon and imitation of God's character and actions that we will be led in the ways of love.

More specifically, however, it is God's action in sending Jesus that is the defining demonstration of God's love (See John 3:16; 1 John 3:16). And it is Jesus' self-sacrificial death on our behalf that we are to imitate in our actions with others. As the apostle John says, "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." (1 John 3:18)

While this provides a clear command for us – love others with the actions of Jesus – the example of Jesus can often feel a bit beyond us! What we often need are examples that align with Jesus' example but are a little more attainable for us. In the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) Jesus provides us with just such an example.

In a conversation with an expert in the law of Moses Jesus is asked to further define who our neighbour is – the ones we are to love to fulfill the law (Leviticus 19:18). In answer, Jesus tells a parable of a man (presumably Jewish) beaten and left for dead who is met with compassion by a Samaritan. The compassion of this stranger is self-sacrificial and expressed in actions. Risking his own safety (for who knows if the thieves were still around), using his own resources (bandages, oil, wine), changing whatever plans he had, this Samaritan cares for one who would, in normal circumstances, be an enemy (or at least one viewed with great suspicion), spending two days wages (plus whatever other needs might have arisen) to provide for the man who is silent (possibly unconscious!) throughout the brief story.

Jesus concludes by saying that we are to act like the Samaritan. This expansive vision of "neighbour" (including our enemies) is one that invites us to love outside of our comfort zone and the extensive description of the Samaritan's actions invites us to risk a bit more in our love for others.

There's more.

Our love for others, as a fruit of the Spirit, is one that is aligned with God's purposes in the world (just like Jesus' demonstration of love towards us). In Colossians 3:12-14 Paul speaks of putting on the virtues like one might put on clothes. As a metaphor, clothing serves a purpose – we dress appropriately for what we are doing: old clothes for yard work, a suit for a wedding, athletic gear for exercise. We put on the virtue of love for the work that requires it; the work of God.

In Galatians 5 Paul urges us to keep in step with the Spirit. Like following the leader, watching carefully and imitating their actions and movements, we are invited to follow the Spirit as he brings the work of Jesus to completion according to the will of the Father.

What opportunities might we have to demonstrate the fruit of love – actions in line with God's purposes in the world – to those we meet this week?

Questions to Ask

1. What are some of the ways that our culture defines love? In what ways are these descriptions aligned with the biblical definition? In what ways do they differ?
2. "Love is to will and work for another's good at cost to self, in alignment with God's character and purpose." Discuss.
3. "God is love." What does that mean to you? How would you explain this to a friend who was exploring faith?
4. Adam described a situation where he experienced the love of God through others. Do you have a similar story? To what degree do those examples motivate and inform your own acts of love?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray for each other and for our community of faith that the fruit of the Spirit 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.

- I John 3:11-24
- 1 Corinthians 13:1-14:1
- 1 John 4:7-21
- Colossians 3:12-14
- John 3:16

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. As we head into the Christmas season we wanted to remind our community of faith of three opportunities at GBC where a small gift can make a big difference. The *Hopefield Giving Tree* begins in the next week or so and is a chance to make a small donation towards a Christmas hamper for those in need. The *GBC Endowment Fund* is another potential place you might like to make a small donation. Our hope, over the next ten years or so, is that this fund might slowly grow until it is large enough for the interest to create an ongoing income stream. Finally, while we are tracking well against our *ministry budget*, a small donation at the end of the year would enable us to fund a couple of small projects around the building (e.g., new carpet in the old auditorium for our kid's ministry). More information can be found at linktr.ee/gymeabaptist.