Sunday Morning Message
August 13, 2017 (Edited from a message originally preached on February 05, 2012)
Title – "Becoming Unfruitful"
Topic – The Problems (Enemies) Associated with Fruit Bearing
Text – John 15:1 – 2; Matthew 13:1 – 9; 18 - 23
Congregational Reading – Matthew 13:3 - 8

Introduction

We have been preaching through a series of messages on the subject of fruit bearing.

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16a)

Review previous messages:

1 Week One – "Without Me Ye Can Do Nothing" – The **Power** of Fruit Bearing – Abiding in Christ.

2 Week Two – "Ask What Ye Will" – The **Prayer** of Fruit Bearing – tailoring our prayer life on the needs of others – specifically praying about fulfilling the Great Commission.

3 Week Three – "Herein Is My Father Glorified" – The **Plan** of Fruit Bearing in a localized setting – direct influence – bearing fruit through:

4 Week Four – "Go Ye Into All The World" – The **Project** For Bearing Fruit Beyond The Local Church

There are two ways that we bear fruit; really two levels of fruit bearing.

1 We bear fruit when we yield control of our lives to the Holy Spirit of God Who indwells us (all believers).

When the Holy Spirit is controlling you and flowing through you, your life will have an impact on the people around you.

2 When we are filled with the Spirit of God, we then become witnesses for Him.

Fruit bearing is natural for the Spirit – Filled Christian. He (or she) is so full of God, that God begins to come out of Him, and is visible in His attitudes, actions, and in our words.

Transition

This week – we will be discussing the problems that will almost always be associated with fruit bearing. We need to understand that there are some earthly consequences for fulfilling the will of God. You need to know what you're getting yourself into.

Becoming a fruitful Christian will not make you popular with the crowd out there:

"And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace." - (Luke 14:25-32)

"And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." - (Luke 9:57-62)

<u>Turn to: Matthew 13:1 – 9: 18 – 23</u>

In the middle two types of ground spoken of in this passage, there was a birth that took place initially.

The seed that started to take root in the stoney ground quickly died away because it had no root system. This may represent the person who gets saved but never gets grounded in the Word of God.

The seed that was sown among the thorns does take root, and for a while does well – producing fruit – but when the thorns come up, they choke the plant, and the plant becomes unfruitful. Jesus tells us that the thorns represent the cares of this world.

The point is that this plant was once fruitful, but later became unfruitful.

This eventually becomes the condition of many, if not most, Christians. Eventually, what happens to many fruit-bearing Christians is that the enemies of fruit bearing will win the battle, and the Christian will simply give up the fight. “They become weary in well doing".

Let’s examine the three enemies of fruit-bearing and how they attack:

I The World Will Want You to Conform

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." - (Romans 12:2)

The world wants you to conform – peer pressure.

The world out there is pursuing possessions, pleasure, and power. The world cares nothing about the will of God.

If you simply want to be a little religious, the world will have no problem with you – in fact it may admire you, but if you ever start really living your faith as a Spirit-filled Christian – if you start living a separated and holy life – if you start bearing fruit in your life, the world will become your enemy.

Nobody wants to seen in a bad light by the crowd. We really don't want to stand out in a way where the world thinks we are crazy. Nobody likes to be the one that's made fun of, and mocked by the rest. However, if you are truly living for God, the world will not only mock you, it will begin to hate you.

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." - (2 Timothy 3:12)

Because the whole crowd is doing it, it doesn't make it right. In fact – the crowd is often wrong.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." - (1 John 2:15-17)

Don't conform – transform – Get into the Word of God everyday, and let your faith grow. You will begin to see things from God's perspective, and you will start to understand that the world is very deceived – and the world is wrong.

Don't saturate – separate

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." - (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." -

(Ephesians 5:11)

II The Devil Will Want You to Capitulate

"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:" - (Luke 22:31)

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" - (1 Peter 5:8)

He wants to devour you.

He uses temptation.

He uses tests and trials. (attacks)

What Can You Do About Satan?

"Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." - (1 Peter 5:9)

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." - (James 4:7)

Don't Surrender – Strengthen – Fight Back

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;" - (Ephesians 6:10-18)

We are at war – this is a spiritual battle. The forces of evil are desperately trying to keep their territory – they don't want to lose any ground. When people get saved – the devil loses ground. He will fight viciously any Christian that is yielded to the will of God and is bearing fruit in their lives.

III Your Flesh Will Want to Be Comfortable

You sometimes just get tired of fighting, so you start giving in. Individual Christians do it – parents do it – churches do it. The world is trying to get you to conform – the devil is trying to

get you to quit – and your flesh just wants to be comfortable. You're tired – "weary in well-doing". You're looking for some R&R. Every Christian that has been in the battle knows exactly what I am talking about; and many Christians will eventually give up the fight. Many don't actually quit altogether, but they will weaken to the point where they are no longer bearing much fruit. They lose their fight – they become less of a threat to the devil, and less of an embarrassment to the world – so the world and the devil leave you alone.

The problem is that God's kingdom stops advancing and Satan actually begins to regain some ground. The people in your life that you were influencing for Christ are no longer being drawn in – and in many cases your "laying down" has caused them to go the other way.

But you're tired – you've been mocked by the world – attacked by the devil – and even some of the people that you have helped have turned against you. You begin to say to yourself, "this just isn't worth it".

But it is worth it.

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." - (Galatians 6:9)

Don't quit – this isn't Heaven, but Heaven will be here soon enough. Stay faithful until the end.

When Paul had "*finished his course*" he said "*I have fought a good fight – I have kept the faith*"

Many turned back – Demas – but Paul kept fighting.

He wanted to quit too:

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." - (Galatians 5:17)

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." - (Romans 7:18-19)

Conclusion

Fruit bearing has its problems. The fruit bearing Christian will have his problems, and the fruit bearing church will have its share of problems as well (discuss some)

But don't quit – stay fervent in the battle. Heaven with all of its rewards will be here sooner than you think.

Illustration – Adoniram Judson – great missionary to Burma

The world didn't want him

Originally intended to go to India – but was ordered out by the British.

He travelled further to Burma.

He labored there for four years before he dared hold his first public service.

He only had eighteen converts after 12 years of labor.

Satan hated him

He was imprisoned more that once.

Judson was imprisoned for 17 months during the war between the United Kingdom and Burma, first at Ava and then at Aung Pinle. Judson and Price were violently arrested. Officers led by an official executioner burst into the Judson home, threw Judson to the ground in front of his wife, bound him with torture thongs, and dragged him off to the infamous, vermin-ridden death prison of Ava.

Twelve agonizing months later, Judson and Price, along with a small group of surviving Western prisoners, were marched overland, barefoot and sick, for six more months of misery in a primitive village near Mandalay. Of the British prisoners-of-war imprisoned with them, all but one died.

The sufferings and brutalities of those 20 long months and days in prison, half-starved, iron-fettered, and sometimes trussed and suspended by his mangled feet with only head and shoulders touching the ground is described in detail by his wife, shortly after his release.

He contracted all sorts of diseases.

He lost two wives while he was there, and one daughter.

He was there for 37 years, and only returned home to the states once.

His flesh wanted him to go home but he didn't.

He eventually contracted a strange disease that killed him at the age of 61.

But he died a fruit bearer. He finished his course.

When Judson began his mission in Burma, he set a goal of translating the Bible and founding a church of 100 members before his death. When he died, he left the Bible, 100 churches, and over 8,000 believers.

He didn't quit – He didn't slow down – He never became unfruitful.

What will cause you to become unfruitful?