

Bearing Much Fruit - Bob Hoekstra

by From the Pulpit & Classic Sermons

Bearing much fruit is a result of abiding in Christ and recognizing our dependence on Him for spiritual fruit.

Duration: 33:38

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 15:2-8, Romans 6:23, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 2:1-2

Topics: "Radio"

Description

In this sermon, Bob Hoekstra emphasizes the importance of bearing much fruit as disciples of Jesus. He highlights that our ultimate goal should be to bring glory to God through our fruitfulness. Hoekstra explains that our role as branches is to be dependent on the vine, Jesus, who is the source of life and productivity. He encourages believers to abide in Christ and allow His life to flow through them, resulting in abundant fruitfulness.

Transcript

Welcome to From the Pulpit in Classic Sermons. Each week, we bring you a different message from some of history's greatest speakers in the Christian faith, and powerful sermons from modern preachers, too. This week we have Bob Hoekstra with his message, Bearing Much Fruit.

Our study is going to be about bearing much fruit. Let's read one of the key verses before we pray together. Verse 8, By this, my Father, is glorified, that you bear much fruit, so you will be my disciples.

Lord, we receive this insightful word from you. We do want to be your disciples, and we want to be clearly shown as your disciples. We want you to be glorified, and we see that's all connected with bearing much fruit.

So we pray even now that you would pour out your Holy Spirit, encourage us, Lord, edify us, instruct us, prepare our hearts and lives for more fruit in the days ahead than we've ever seen in the days behind. Much fruit, Lord, for your glory. We see this is the call of discipleship, and we trust you now to speak to us by your Spirit in Jesus' name, Amen.

Real disciples, true disciples, they bear much fruit. A disciple is a follower after the Lord Jesus Christ. Someone who knows the Lord, who has met the Lord, and is walking closely with the Lord.

The call to discipleship, Jesus said, come follow me. Those who do follow the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of life, they bear much fruit. And this brings great glory to God.

You know, we have that stirring desire, once we know the Lord, to bring glory to Him. Before we came to the Lord, really the only glory we were interested in is if somehow some could be captured by ourselves or given to us. We were created for the glory of God, created by God.

And by this, Jesus said, my Father is glorified. That you bear much fruit. And that is one of the great demonstrations, validations of the fact that we are following the Lord Jesus.

But of course, that raises a huge question. How are we going to bear much fruit? It's great that the Word of God addresses the questions of what? What does God have for our lives? What does He want to see in our lives? What does He want us to be doing in our lives? What does He want to come to pass in our lives? The what questions of the Bible are of huge import. But there's another arena that's just as critical.

Without this other arena, the what questions will just leave us frustrated. What would the second question be? How? How? This is a very majestic what. Much fruit in our lives, much spiritual fruit.

The validation that we truly are following the Lord Jesus Christ, not just living a life by our own will, our own resources and own devices. And the Lord is glorified in that. How are we going to walk that path? Well, Jesus had been addressing the how in earlier verses.

Verses 4 and 5. Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing.

If you have a grapevine and branches, the great demonstration that that is a grapevine is when grapes appear. And if you're going to have grapes on branches, branches need to be connected to a valid, sufficient life source, and that's the grapevine. And that's the picture here.

Abide in me and I in you. That's how the Lord wants us to live. Abiding in Christ, that is living in him and by means of him.

And then the Lord Jesus himself dwelling and living in and through us. That's the simple picture here. And though it can sound very mysterious, and of course the fact that it cannot be seen in its full dynamic makes it kind of mysterious to us, but it's very clear and simple how it operates.

We are abiding in one that we cannot see, though Peter wrote, having not seen him we love him. And he, though we cannot see him, wants to live in our hearts and express his life through us. Now that is, that's just, with God it's just basic fundamental routine.

With us it's kind of staggering. And it certainly is beyond sight. So, the Lord takes a very visible, simple, demonstrable illustration to help us grasp this great unseen mystery.

The great unseen mystery, abide in me and I in you. What's that all about? Well, it's like a grape vine and a grape branch. And here's the truth.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. There is the potential in the Christian life of astounding measures of spiritual fruit. What would spiritual fruit be? Well, it would be Christ-like character growing and developing in us.

That is spiritual fruit. There would be ministry impacting others and their growing. That's spiritual fruit.

Folks coming to Christ, a spiritual harvest, a fruitful harvest of righteousness. All of those things are spiritual fruit. Giving thanks and praise to God, Hebrews says, is spiritual fruit.

So a godly, Christ-like, God-exalting, life-touching, life-shaping and developing work is the fruit of God being developed and coming forth. And this is the way it is with a vine and a branch. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

Grape branches don't actually produce grapes. They bear grapes. The productive cause and dynamic that actually brings the grapes forth is the life that is in the grape vine.

And that's the picture with us. We don't actually manufacture spiritual fruit. But we are called to bear much fruit.

To carry it around wherever we go. The temptation for the natural mind is, I've got to get busy, make this happen. What does fruit look like, and I'll manufacture some.

Well, yeah, and you know what it'll be. Wax fruit. Man does the same thing with natural fruit.

Man can't produce natural fruit, but for decorative purposes, there's a real market for producing what appears to be genuine fruit. In fact, man has become quite expert at that. And haven't you seen decorative fruit that you want to get over closer and just, that's got to be real.

And of course, the final proof is when you take a bite. Wax. No life, no edification.

And even that has implications for us. We can try to do those things that look fruitful. We can strive to have the appearance of bearing much fruit.

But if it's not coming the way the Lord designed it, it's imitation fruit. It's of the flesh. And sooner or later, it will prove to be lifeless and unedifying to anyone at all.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself. We could add, as the Christian cannot bear fruit of himself or herself. Unless that branch abides in the vine.

That's the secret for a great branch. That's the hope. Because in the great vine is the life.

That is to flow out through that branch. And bring forth fruit that the branch cannot produce. But once produced by the life in the vine, can bear it about any place.

To be an honor to God, pleasing in the sight of God. To be a blessing and encouragement to others. A confirmation to others.

And be a nurturing influence in their lives. You know, fruit is the ongoing development of life. Until it becomes what it was intended to be.

Full and mature. And it's tasty, it's sweet. And it's nurturing, it's edifying.

That's what the Lord wants in our lives. And it's good to be reminded. That we are the branch, we're not the vine.

In fact, verse 5 spells it out very clearly. In case any would miss it. I am the vine, you are the branches.

He who abides in me and I in him, bears much fruit. For without me or apart from me, you can do nothing. Jesus is the vine.

He's the life source. He said, I am the way, the truth and the life. John 11 he said, I am the resurrection and the life.

Jesus is our vine. How important is a vine, a grape vine to a grape branch? Well, you could say it's everything to the branch. The branch would have no life, no existence without that vine.

And absolutely the branch could not be fruitful without the vine. Jesus is our vine. He says, I am the vine, you are the branches.

You are the branches. It's kind of a humbling word, but it's also an encouraging word. To hear that we are the branches.

We would rather be the vine. In fact, the false gospels of the world. New Age philosophy, you know.

What's the gospel of the New Age? Self-realization. Why is that the good news? Because if you only realized it, you are God. And we are sitting here underwhelmed, right? I'm God? What a letdown.

I was looking for good news. This is worse than no news at all. But that's the way of the world.

And you can trace this right back to the Garden of Eden. This was the lie that Satan bought himself. I will be like the Most High God.

He wanted a throne like God. He went into the Garden of Eden and enticed Adam and Eve. You know, come on, get away from the tree of life.

I mean, what can that bring you? Well, you might say life. No, no, no, leave the tree of life alone. Hang out at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

You know, you investigate and you discover and you examine. And you decide what's good or evil. You'll be like God.

Well, that's the philosophy of the world. You know, take our program, take our procedure, take our philosophy, take our therapy. We'll make you in charge of your own life.

You'll be your own God. No, the Lord alone is God. I was just reading yesterday actually in Isaiah, how many times God said, I am God, I am He, I am the first and the last, I am the Almighty and there is none else.

So this is a humbling word. You're the branches. The branches.

We're not the source of spiritual life. We're branches. That's a place of humble dependency.

We're branches. We're branches. We cannot get along without our true vine.

We would not be in Christ Jesus. We would not be born again. We would not have our sins forgiven.

We would not have passed from death to life if it were not for our true vine, the Lord Jesus Christ. And praise the Lord. This is the heart of what Jesus came to give us.

He says, I came that you might have life and that more abundantly. Fits perfectly the truth of John 15. We're the branches.

We're needy. We're not the life source. People say, I'm taking charge of my life.

We ought to weep and wail for them. Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that. They're all excited and beaming.

Like they want us to pat them on the back. Now you got it. Oh, you're taking charge of your life.

Well, what a shame. What a shame. We thought there was hope for you.

The flesh wants to be the dynamic that causes it all. Why? Because that's where the glory goes. You did that.

You produced that. Wow. Glory be to you.

Really, everything in creation is here that God might be glorified. And there are many reasons that God wants to see much fruit in our lives. He wants us to grow.

He wants us to develop and be good stewards, good disciples, fruitful, effective. He knows in our home and our friendships and our family and relationships, there are many who need to learn of the Lord and see the Lord at work and be touched by the presence of the Lord. There are nations that need to be reached.

There are nations that need to know who the true vine is. And as this process is going on, God is glorified. People's attention is shifted from man to God.

From self and that meager existence here on earth below to the Lord of life up above and what He can bring to us now and what He has reserved for us forever. I am the vine. You are the branches.

It's a humbling word, but it's an encouraging word too. Encouragement is branches aren't expected to manufacture fruit. They're just expected to be dependent depositories of that fruit.

Wow, that's a load off our backs. Yeah, the Lord wants to be the dynamic behind a fruitful life. I am the vine.

You are the branches. May we embrace that. Lay aside that kind of self-exalting, self-striving mindset of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

And just be content to be branches in the true vine. Better to be a humble branch in the true vine where there is life in the Lord than to be a pusher and a mover and a shaker and some noisy active whirling who's trying to build their own little kingdom. Can you imagine? I just had the strangest thought.

Donald Trump came to mind. I don't know. I don't know where he stands with the Lord.

If he stands with Him at all, it appears to be, let's say, a meager beginning. An immature start. A babe in Christ.

I don't know that he knows the Lord at all. I've never heard any indication or seen it. And he comes up on the news all the time.

And you know, among humankind, this is a man to be impressed with. I mean, this is THE Donald. Ooh.

THE Donald. Not Donald Duck. THE Donald.

And actually, the things that he's accomplished on this earth are quite impressive if that's your frame of reference, you know? But it's kind of like a little child, a little preschooler, a little toddler in your family den building a little crooked house of blocks, you know? And you can have fun with that and they get blessed when you encourage them, you know? And it shows love and you want them to progress. All that's fine. But, you know, the house isn't much.

And it doesn't take but one little slip of the toddler's foot and the house is all gone anyway, you know? So it is with the kingdoms of man, you know? The Trump empire. Even nations. The mighty Roman empire, you know, that persecuted God's people and controlled them and razed the city and tore down the temple and all of that back in the first century.

And they ruled the world. Where are they now? It's gone. This is what the Lord wants to build.

An everlasting kingdom of spiritual fruit that brings glory of God and hope and help to other people. And branches. We actually get a full participation in this.

I am the vine. You are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit.

What an encouragement. Just abiding in the vine. Drawing life from Him.

Letting His life develop in us the life He wants. And have that life flow out in our words, our deeds, our attitudes, our perspectives, our priorities, our relationships one with another. And on and on it goes.

What a phenomenal privilege this is. You know in the world you always want to get on the top of the hill. In the kingdom of heaven your heart is drawn to the foot of the cross.

Not I am going to show people I am a vine, I am a producer. I can develop the dynamic that will blow you away with the life you see. It's not it.

It's not it. You can't proceed at all in growth or fruitfulness or effectiveness in the kingdom of heaven with that attitude. But gladly being a branch, looking to the vine.

We can actually bear much fruit. I think back on the old life I had in Adam. Really existing in death, dead in trespasses and sins.

That's a little over 40 years ago now. What a waste. What a waste.

What unfruitful years. What barren years. What self-centered years.

And now we rejoice just to be a branch in the vine. A branch. Here's a big important reminder though as we wrap up our study.

Verse 5 Without Me you can do nothing. This is a very critical part of this entire process of bearing fruit. Realizing that apart from the Lord we can do nothing.

I know early on as a young pastor in the 1960s and early 1970s, I would read this verse and I actually thought it meant without including the Lord in your life you're not going to accomplish half as much as you

think you will. Bob, what is it about nothing you don't understand? Oh, it's so easy to kind of strain these through the natural mind of the flesh and lose the bite, lose the majesty. Apart from me, Jesus is saying you can do nothing.

Now wait a minute, wait a minute. Do nothing. We can build empires and empire state buildings and Trump buildings.

We can build nations. We can build spaceships. We can build an astounding worldwide electronic web which by the way is catching many, strangling many, tearing many down.

But what do you mean apart from Him we can do nothing? Well, the whole point is all of that amounts to nothing without the Lord. But the precise context here is spiritual fruit. And apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, we can do nothing in that arena.

That is exceedingly humbling. But you know it is good to be humbled in the Kingdom of Heaven. Men scrap and fight and they strive and they are fretting and worrying and scheming how to avoid being humbled, you know.

How to avoid looking like you're inadequate, ineffective, don't know all you think you know, can't do what you say you'll do. People, they'll virtually sell their souls to avoid being humbled. Have you noticed though the persistence of the Lord? He just keeps coming up with things that humble us.

And really, it's great wisdom to stop the fight. The Scriptures call us to walk humbly with our God. That's not something to dread.

That's something to embrace. God is opposed to the proud. He gives grace to the humble.

Don't we want to live by the abounding grace of God? Oh, if we don't get in the Word, God will change our heart and mind. What heart is open to the grace of God to do a further work each day? The humble heart that is one who admits their need. And it's not just partial.

It is comprehensive. Apart from Me, you can do nothing. How would God want us to respond to that? You know? He would actually want a hearty amen, at least in our hearts.

Wow, apart from Me, you can do nothing. The flesh wants to fight it. The natural mind rebels at it.

It's hard to imagine that the way on to bountiful effectiveness starts out and proceeds with man admitting his nothingness when it comes to capacity to produce, to take the place of God in the matter of life-giving, life-developing fruitfulness. Apart from Me, you can do nothing. So, humility and faith are in these two verses.

The humility is branches can't produce fruit of itself. Without Jesus, we can do nothing. That's the humility part.

But here's the faith part. Truth to believe. I'm the vine.

He who abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit. We can believe that. Day by day, we can proceed with this perspective.

I'm a branch joined into the vine that is Christ. He is my life source. I cannot produce the life that He wants to see that brings Him glory and touches others, but I can abide in Him, count on Him.

How do you know if you're abiding? Well, listen. If we're as willing to depend on the Lord Jesus for any spiritual fruit as a grape branch must depend on a grape vine for one grape, then we are ready to abide in Christ. It's a full dependency.

Giving Him the trust that He is worthy of and He will bring the life that we desperately need. It takes life to produce fruit. Jesus is our daily life source.

Let's just trust in Him and watch Him bring forth much fruit in our lives. Others will be touched and God will be glorified. You might say, well, where am I going to be? You're going to be rejoicing, exploding with thanksgiving that God would use us in such a majestic plan.

Well, let's pray together, okay? Let's stand together. Lord Jesus, this very moment we want to confess You, Lord, as our true vine, our life source. We want to humbly admit that in and of ourselves we cannot produce this life and the subsequent fruitfulness at all.

We can do nothing in that realm on our own. So Lord, we're looking to You this day. There are places You want us to go this day, this week, and bear fruit and be fruitful and effective.

We need You for it all. We look to You to be working in and through us, demonstrating Your life through our relationships, our work and our walk. And Lord our God, we pray this brings You great, great glory.

And we know it's going to bring great joy to our lives. And Lord, we give You thanks in advance and pray that from this precious congregation of believers, a staggering, bountiful harvest of righteousness will grow up right on top of and in and through and around the wonderful fruitfulness You've already developed here. Jesus, we look to You.

We're so thankful to be Your branches. Do this wonderful work in and through us as we trust in You, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

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