

SERMON - Pastor Leena Jensen

We Are To Bear Fruit

Grace, mercy and peace to you from the Christ our Lord and Redeemer.

It is spring and the start of our growing season. I have ancestry that were farmers for a few centuries back and my mother has the greenest thumb of anyone I know. She has the most beautiful blooming houseplants. She is 87 now and no longer keeps a garden. But she does a great job with trimming her honeysuckle hedge, her rounded evergreen tree in the front that adorns her Christmas lights each year. She is a marvel. I am what you might call a hack at growing things. Currently I have this humongous Christmas cactus. Up until this past Christmas, it produced so many flowers and I was so proud I would post a picture on Facebook and bask in the glory of compliments for this magnificent cactus that came to full bloom just before Christmas. Well, last summer, I messed up, I either didn't fertilize it properly through the summer months or I did not split and transplant into multiple pots. Well since it did not produce its beautiful mass of flowers I will be splitting it into multiple pots this spring and see what happens when I bring it in after summer. If it bears flowers for Christmas, I will again post it on Facebook and brag about its beauty! I am anxious to see what happens. Anyone interested in a good-sized potted Christmas cactus? I will have a couple of extra to give away!

Today Jesus talks to his disciples of about sticking with him. Like branches of a vine. Jesus being the vine from where the branches grow from. The disciples of course are referred as the branches bearing fruit. God being the gardener providing nourishment and careful pruning so that the branches will produce good and abundant fruit. He takes pride in his crop. But this means that he also prunes the vines and removes the dead wood. We as Christians have understood humankind to have a special place in creation. We are not everlasting, spiritual beings like angels or do we live a physical existence like birds, mammals or

fish. We are not Gods, as we might like to think from time to time, but we embody the Holy Spirit, the sap that flows through the vine, we take on godlike characteristics. In Genesis 1 :27 “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” — man and woman equally in the image of God as we were made.

Jesus describes us as the branches connected to the root of life by the vine. This is an image of being connected to God, with God’s life, power and blessings flowing through us. The emphasis is on the internal rather than the external.

We are encouraged by Jesus to remain with him, acknowledging that we can be separated from Jesus, just like a branch of the vine might be separated if it does not receive nourishment to bear good fruit.

The term remain, refers to our relationship with Jesus, staying connected. To nurture our relationship with Jesus is seen as our life journey where we walk with Jesus through life, as opposed to striving to get to him only at the end of life in heaven. We nurture our relationship with Jesus when we accept God’s will for us rather than our own. Also practising spiritual disciplines enable us to nurture our relationship with Jesus and open ourselves to this life that flows through us.

So, as I prune the branches of my cacti and provide it nourishment, I can anticipate abundant flowers again. So, it is with us and our growth and bearing fruit of the Spirit, where we take on the characteristics of God. The Fruit of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, generosity, faithfulness, kindness, and self control. (Galatians 5:22-23)² These characteristics of the spirit both glorify God and bear witness to God’s power to those around us. Another fruit is that of people who see God’s love and power in our words and deeds and respond by placing their faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Branches are not intended to be brittle dry or dead. But expected to bear fruit.

We grow in our faith when nurtured through the vine, Jesus Christ. Our faith journey is not about trying harder, but being

connected to Jesus the vine, God's spirit runs through us. This results in transformation and fruitfulness within us and which in turn transforms the world in which we live. AMEN