

Sermon - Holy Spirit - June 7th,2020 Tregear Presbyterian Church  
Georgina Newmarch

Over the last 4 weeks we have had wonderful teaching about the Holy Spirit. Becoming a follower of Jesus isn't just me adding Jesus to my life. This is a deep-rooted change that comes from an outside source - from God. He comes to live in me by His Spirit... we have Jesus' life in us and our life is gradually (VERY gradually) going to look more like Jesus. But yet we are going to become more fully human too - like Jesus - human in the way God designed us and intended humans to be. Paul wrote about this to the Galatians...ch2 v20 "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

The fruit of the Spirit are qualities that the Holy Spirit is growing in our lives. For this fruit to grow we must partner with him, as if we are a gardener. Today we will look a bit more at what that gardening of our life might look like in practice.

So... Have you noticed some fruit in your life this week? What an encouraging reminder to you that God is indeed alive in you and at work in you. How did you go with that sheet that Ash gave us last week with the list of the fruit and their definitions, along with their polar opposites and the counterfeit characteristics?

I found as I was reading it over and reflecting on some of those qualities God really got my attention and he showed me how I was actually blocking the peace and joy in my life because of some of the ways I usually react to things - like things that don't turn out as I want them too. It could be something simple like burning the bottom of the rice. I get angry (usually trying to hide the anger though) and all churned up inside and take it all too seriously instead of truly accepting that ultimately these things aren't important. I feel good about myself if I do something well but if I fail at something I am very hard on myself. What is important is my relationship with Jesus and resting in the peace and joy that he wants to give me in every moment. In difficult experiences is the invitation to keep in step with the Spirit and be led by the Spirit, not led by my own over-reaction. So... that reflecting I was doing on my life is one of the ways we can do some gardening to encourage the fruit to grow. I realised though how hard it is to dig our those weeds. They have deep roots! This is what Paul means in Galatians 5 where he says in v17 "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other. This is HARD work. It's interrupting a habit that's been there for a long time.

One of the qualities that we need to develop is a sense of great compassion for ourselves. When we remember things we've done, or NOT done in the past, what we don't need is to wallow in regret or keep heaping more blame

on ourselves. It is probably these very mistakes, these past sins, that have caused us to grow. Blessings.

I am not saying that disobeying God or being unloving to others is okay. I am suggesting that now, looking back, we can forgive ourselves and we can thank God for the way he uses everything, even our faults and failings for our good and for his glory. When you receive God's forgiveness and you also forgive yourself, the inner wounds can begin to heal. I am a great one for beating myself up over past wrongs that I have committed, but this unkind treatment of myself prevents me from living in the peace and joy that Jesus is offering me every moment.

One of the lies that we might be believing is the lie that says you should be so much further along in your faith than you are now. Let's confront this lie. Who said that? God? Jesus? The Holy Spirit? I don't think so. The truth is that God is here with us where we are right now. We may not be where we thought we would be, or hoped we would be. Paul reminds the Philippians in ch1 v6 that God who began a good work in us is faithful to bring it to completion. And God is in this moment. The more time we spend in our heads in some imaginary place where we think we should be, we miss out on the reality of God being with us in the present moment. It is only in the NOW that we can walk by the Spirit, be led by the Spirit.

We just read Psalm 51 which King David wrote it after the prophet confronts him about the his adultery with Bathsheba. What did David do when Nathan the prophet came to him with words from God about his sin. His conscience was reawakened and he immediately admitted his sin. That is sadly not what I did on an occasion when we were living in Pakistan when our kids were young. A close friend told me about an aspect of my behaviour that she thought wasn't very loving to Dave and our kids. I was so angry. But I tried not to let her see that. I just avoided her and didn't contact her for months. I think maybe she guessed I wasn't happy with her. I was offended. How dare she intrude on my relationship with MY husband and MY kids! I was full of self-pity. What she said just wasn't true - or so I thought. I was totally blind to it. And I wasn't asking God if there was some truth in what she said. Fruits of the Spirit in me? Uh-uh not in that scenario - no love, no joy, no peace, no patience, no kindness, no goodness, no gentleness, no self-control. No. I fuelled the flame of my anger, my self-pity, my self-righteousness, my hatred, my agitation.

Perhaps I'd even been praying the prayer that David prays at the end of Psalm 139... such lovely words... "search me O God and know my heart. Test me and know my thoughts. See if I am on an evil path and then lead me on the everlasting path." So God answers my prayers and in his love sends a kind friend with gentle words.

When God shows us our wrongdoing, it isn't usually pleasant for us to see or hear. Let's face it, we don't really want to be shown that we are wrong in our words or our actions. I sure didn't!!

Anyway... back to king David. He confesses his sin. Read Psalm 51: v1,2. And he asked God to forgive him and wash him whiter than snow. He knows God well, very well - that he is a forgiving God and merciful. Read verses 10 and 11. We, in these days after the cross, don't need to pray words like this. Christ has died and risen for us. We are forgiven for our sins past present and future. We ARE whiter than snow because in Christ God has declared us righteous once and for all. God has given us his Spirit to live permanently in us. This is God's continual work on my behalf and I can rest in him. As you surrender yourself to him and depend on him you become more healthy as a person - emotionally healthy, spiritually healthy, relationally healthy. Then you are aligned with the truth of the gospel. You know who you are in Christ and you are able to rest more fully in him. All of us can get into unhealthy patterns where our mind wanders off from the truth of who we are in Christ. Forgetting that we are his dearly Beloved children, we can actually be living as if we are an orphan, all alone in life, as if we have no loving, wise, guiding, protecting God with us. How many times do we tackle things by ourselves instead of leaning on God. When I am living like this it is detrimental to myself and all my relationships. Who are you? An orphan with no loving Heavenly Father? Or are you the Beloved of your Heavenly Father?

“OWN UP” as a reminder of steps to follow when you become aware of something in your life that needs transforming. I thought it was a helpful process.

O - Observe. Take notice of what is happening within me. “Oh there it is. My stomach is tightening up. Or...I am starting to feel panicky. ” whatever it is - notice it.

W - Welcome. “Hello little grumpy feeling. Are you trying to tell me something?”

N - Name it. “Hmm this is actually irritation because things are not as I'd like them to be.”

U - Untangle it with the Holy Spirit. He will show you patterns of this attitude or behaviour in your life.

P - Patience as the process of maturing in Christ continues.

[ideas from Marilyn Vancil on Typology #47]

Learning that feelings reside in the body and starting to be curious about it is a good thing. Feelings of rage, sadness, restlessness. Learn to notice the signs in your body. Your body has helpful information for you. Your body knows before your mind realises what it going on. Butterflies in the stomach is a common one that goes with fear or anxiety. I had butterflies this morning. Once we take notice of the feelings, they change and very often

they reduce and even disappear. Sometimes we need to do more work with them - more reflection, some journaling, talk to a wise friend, see a trained counsellor.

We may think our inner critic's words are the voice of the Holy Spirit. But Spirit is gentle and specific. The devil loves to attack our very identity. We feel shameful and worthless, or have a negative dread or blah feeling. The inner critic is not the Holy Spirit. The inner critic brings shame, condemnation, fear, judgement. The Holy Spirit brings peace, assurance, kindness, gentleness, forgiveness, grace, mercy, love. All of these things that are good for us. The more that we drink, the more we depend on that, the more we reflect his glory. Our heart is resting in the finished work of Christ and Christ is satisfying our deepest longings, the longings of the new heart that God has given us. God told the prophet Ezekiel long before Jesus came to earth "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh".

Ch36v26

Understand who you truly are in Christ and have patience with the soul journey that he has you on. In this way you can break free from self-condemnation, fear and shame by knowing and experiencing the unconditional love and freedom in Christ. It is God through the gospel that transforms us and our communities.

John of the Cross

"The Holy Spirit is how God communicates himself to us, not only once but many many times. For God is at work to enlarge the capacity of the soul, which is his temple, his dwelling place. He delights in us, bathing our souls in the light of his glory and richness. This is the sweetness for which every soul longs. This is the transformation: you will be so at rest in the hand of God that he will be able to teach you anything he desires, knowing that you will not complain, resist or argue. Then you will grow rich - rich in the presence of God." (Ch38)

Constant Gardening...

Remind yourself of the Holy Spirit's presence - creation, a candle, set alarm to connect with God later in the day.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly - memorise, meditate on Scripture, audio Bible, read big chunks eg whole of Romans, focus on one verse for a whole week.

Slow down - John Ortberg - For many of us, the great danger is not that we will renounce our faith. It is that we will become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied that we will settle for a mediocre version of it. We will all just skim our lives instead of actually living them.

Silence, solitude and stillness... Real transformation takes place when we combine self-awareness with the silence of paying attention to God. Then

our unique path to spiritual growth emerges. We will not be the same as anyone else. And we will not be the same as we used to be. Silence actually teaches us to listen. It helps us listen to the voice of God, a voice we maybe have not been able to recognise. It helps us listen to the people in our lives who speak loving, truthful words of correction or affirmation to us. For good SSS i need to leave the house or else I get distracted. That reflection I spoke of earlier happened when I had a few hours retreat by myself at Nurragingy Reserve. I made some coffee and sat on a blanket overlooking the duck pond.

#### Morning "ritual"

Do the OWNUP process.

Build closer friendships with people who you can have deep honest conversations with about growing relationship with God. We won't survive without Christian community.

Connect with God all through the day - At the orange light, when we notice something beautiful in creation, hold our teacup...

Examen... you and God spend a few minutes looking back over the day.. what were the moments of joy and delight? You can be thankful and celebrate those. What was difficult or when did you mess up or when did God seem distant? Do this without judging or criticising yourself. Just notice. Leave these with God now and receive his peace.

#### Closing Prayer:

Our dear tender God, our loving Three In One God, we need to be flooded with the love that comes from you. Your constant presence with us is our comfort and delight. Thank you that you have come to us, to live in us through your Holy Spirit. May the blessing of this continually fill us with joy and peace. Thank you that you love us enough to kill the things that would kill us. Thank you that you lavishly pour on us your unceasing streams of grace. Touch us then with your cleansing renewing power. Make our spirits pure and simple and light as you are. Thank you that each day on earth is one day closer to our heavenly land and the feast you are preparing for us and for all your people, your Beloved.