

## **The Fruit of Sharing Your Faith Matthew 28:18-20**

The invitation in this sermon series is for us to seek the Lord more deeply, and when you do that and engage in the things we've talked about (meditating on God's Word, prayer, worship), you begin to experience a deepening relationship with him, intimacy with Christ, and fullness of the Spirit. You experience deeper joy and satisfaction in your soul because that's how God created you. We've been talking about those things the first few weeks.

But it's important for us to realize that it doesn't end there. When you seek the Lord you also experience transformation as the Holy Spirit works in you and conforms you more and more into the image of Christ. That's what God is doing in you. He's making you more like Jesus. So seeking more of God isn't just about your soul finding satisfaction in him; it's also about becoming more like Christ and bearing fruit for God in your life. And that's what we're going to look at for the next few weeks.

In the first week we looked at Psalm 1, which talks about a tree that's planted by streams of water. When we seek God and cultivate our relationship with him we are like that tree – our roots are going deep and we're soaking in nourishment for our souls. But that tree doesn't just have deep roots and a big trunk. As it receives nourishment it grows branches and leaves and produces fruit. When we nourish our souls in God, the Holy Spirit not only satisfies our souls, but he also produces spiritual fruit. God is working in us to make us more like Christ so that we will glorify him and carry out his mission here on earth.

That's the purpose for our lives. God is advancing his kingdom here on earth and he's working in and through us to do that. He transforms, empowers, and sends us out to join him in what he's doing in the world today. We are partners with him – his hands and feet, carrying on the things Jesus did when he was here. So, part of growing deeper with God and experiencing greater intimacy with Christ and the fullness of the Spirit is joining him as he works in us and through us to produce fruit and bring his blessing and his kingdom to other people.

As we continue this series we are going to look at some of the fruit God is producing in our lives and how we can cooperate with him in what he is doing. Like the other practices we've looked at, these will be things we need to incorporate into our lives and form into habits as we seek to follow Christ.

The first kind of fruit we're going to look at is one of the primary things Jesus did when he was here on earth, and then sent out his followers to do, and that was to teach the truth about God and his kingdom to people who didn't know it yet. We call it evangelism or sharing your faith. Jesus did this throughout his ministry. We saw a wonderful example of it when we studied the Sermon on the Mount earlier this spring. The Jewish people had been deceived and didn't know who God really was or what he was doing, so one of Jesus' priorities was to teach the actual truth.

And it wasn't just the Jews who had been deceived – the whole world was lost in spiritual darkness. Every culture had religious beliefs that were far from the truth. Spiritual darkness rested on every continent, every nation, every people group, every family. Jesus brought the light of truth into the world and began to teach that truth throughout Israel, and as he did, he also trained his followers to do the same thing. They would then carry on his ministry after he left and continue to spread the truth throughout the world. Before he ascended into heaven, he told them in Matthew 28:18-20, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

They were to continue the work Jesus was doing. And that mission continues today – you and I are part of that mission. As you seek to go deeper in your relationship with God and he works in you to make you more like Christ, he is going to equip, empower, and compel you to join in this mission. This is not just for a few Christians who end up being pastors and missionaries; this is for all of us. This is part of the fruit that should become evident in all of our lives as we grow deeper in Christ.

Jesus made this clear to his followers in Matthew 5:13-16: *“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is*

*no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.*

*<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*

This is our new calling and purpose. Each of us is to be like salt and light in the world. God is using us to influence people for his kingdom and to reveal the truth about him in the world today. If you think about our world and the people around you, the worldview that seems to be most pervasive in our culture is that of secularism or Atheism along with relativism and humanism. People don't believe in truth. They don't believe in God. They look at life as if it's only natural and God doesn't even exist. Life revolves around us and each of us should be able to do whatever we want to do as long as it doesn't hurt other people too much. Even though this isn't a false religion like in Jesus' day, it's still a belief and value system that's deceived and far from the truth.

Who is going to bring truth into this generation so that people can hear and understand? This is the mission Jesus has given us and he will carry it out through you and me as we become more like him. As we seek him and grow deep roots and satisfy our souls in him, his Spirit is going to change us and transform us and produce spiritual fruit so we continue to carry out his mission. We are partnering with him in the work that he's doing and as we do that and see him working in and through us we'll experience even deeper joy and satisfaction in him.

So I encourage you, as much as you devote yourself to seeking God and finding your joy in him by meditating on his Word, prayer, and worship, you also need to seek him by being transformed by him and joining him in spreading the truth. It needs to become a regular practice and habit in our lives.

Now you probably know that we have a spiritual enemy and he does not want this to happen. He does not want the truth to spread. He did whatever he could to stop Jesus and failed. He then did whatever he could to stop the first

disciples, and failed again. The good news has spread and is spreading and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. But Satan will never give up until he is finally defeated and cast into hell, so you and I will face barriers to sharing the truth.

Some of these come from without and some within. There are some people who are enemies of God and so darkened in their understanding that they will oppose and try to stop us from sharing the truth. They will spread rumors to convince people not to listen. They will try to threaten or ridicule us. Some governments are controlled by Satan and pass laws that make it illegal for people to share the truth and imprison those who do.

We also face barriers within ourselves. I think Satan tries to deceive and lie to us to keep us from sharing the truth. He tells us: "No one will listen. You won't know what to say. You're going to look stupid. People will insult you and reject you." So we face fear, intimidation, timidity, social awkwardness. You might be an introvert or have a quiet and reserved personality. You might think you have to do it a certain way that makes you feel really uncomfortable, or use a certain method that's awkward. Busyness can keep us from even thinking about how people need to know the truth. Maybe it feels arrogant to say that we know the only real truth.

These barriers keep many Christians from sharing the truth and part of our role in cooperating with God's work of growing this fruit in our lives is seeking to overcome these barriers.

How do we do that and make this a habit in our lives?

First of all, we need to make sure we are abiding in Christ and doing the things we've talked about the last three weeks. It is by abiding in Christ that we receive the filling of the Spirit that we need to care for the lost, see them as God sees them, and have the courage to say something. When Jesus ascended to heaven, he didn't tell his disciples to go out right away and start sharing the truth. He told them to wait for power from on high. So they went back to Jerusalem and devoted themselves to prayer and after 10 days of nourishing their souls in prayer, the Holy Spirit came, they were filled, and they went from there. Sharing the truth about God and salvation is not something we can do on our own; we need the filling and power of the Holy

Spirit. And that comes from abiding in Christ. In John 15:4-5 Jesus says *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”*

The second thing we need to do is pray – pray for open doors, courage, and for the Holy Spirit to work in people’s hearts. The Apostle Paul was always praying as he went to different cities to preach the gospel and calling the believers to pray for him. In Ephesians 6:12 he says, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” And in Ephesians 6:19-20 he said: *“and (pray) also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup>for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”* We are in a spiritual battle and God uses our prayers to defeat the enemy, demolish strongholds, and overcome the barriers of timidity, rejection and fear that hold us back. Pray for yourself; pray for other believers; and pray for those you want to share the truth with.

Third is this – position yourself to be in places where you’ll have the opportunity to build relationships and share the truth with unbelievers. This is going to be easy for some of you because you interact with unbelievers on a daily basis at work or school or even in your own home. But for others, you have to be intentional. I could basically live my life in a Christian bubble, so I have to be intentional about getting out of that bubble. This is the primary reason I coach track and participate in the Hi-rise ministry, because it gives me the opportunity to get to know, care about, pray for, and interact with unbelievers.

Fourth is: know the truth you need to share. I don’t encourage you to learn just one particular method of evangelism and try to force that into every conversation. It just isn’t going to work. But knowing something like the Romans Road is going to help you know what you need to share about the truth when the opportunity arises. Each of us needs to know a few basic

things about God, salvation and our own lives in order to convey the truth to other people:

- We need to know where humans come from and why we were created.
- We need to know what humans have done to ruin our relationship with God and what the consequences are.
- We need to know what God did to remove the problem of sin and its consequences.
- We need to know what a person must do to be saved.
- We need to be able to explain how that happened in our lives and the difference it's made.

There are other things that can help, but these four will equip you to have conversations and share the truth as God places opportunities in your life.

Sharing our faith with others is part of the fruit that comes from deeper intimacy with Christ because as we seek him more and more we become like him, and Jesus was here to spread the truth in a world filled with darkness.

Two people share about opportunities they had to share truth:

- Jeff Kiel
- Perry Anderson