

“You Were Chosen”

Deuteronomy 7: 6 - 15; 2nd Corinthians 5:11- 21; 1st Peter 2: 9 – 12; **John 15: 1 - 17 (Sermon)**

In the Old Testament the vine is commonly used as a symbol for the Nation of Israel.

However, in our Gospel lesson Jesus uses a metaphor of a vine and its branches to state the purpose of a Christian’s life.

In this metaphor Jesus clearly identifies Himself as the true vine and the branches are the people who were following Jesus.

In this illustration God The Father is the gardener who cares for the branches.

Two types of branches are described; ones that bear fruit and ones that do not bear fruit.

The branches that do not produce fruit are people who profess to be Christians but their lack of fruit indicates that genuine salvation has never taken place and they have no life from the true vine.

The branches that do produce fruit are genuine Christians.

Again Jesus used this metaphor to illustrate the purpose of a Christian’s life.

So this morning I want us to focus on verse 16.

Jesus said; ***“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”***
(John 15:16)

Chosen means to be selected, to be singled out, for a specific assignment; to be special.

And in our lesson from Deuteronomy we read, ***“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.”***

This verse in Deuteronomy was written to the children of Israel but in Romans 11 we read that branches are Israel and Israel was broken off because of their unbelief.

But thanks be to God in Romans 11:17 we also read that we as Gentiles were grafted into the True Vine.

Jesus said, ***“You did not choose me, but I chose you.”*** (John 15:16)

Sometimes we mistakenly think that we chose to follow Jesus.

We say, *“I went to church. When I heard the pastor’s invitation I got up and responded to Jesus’ call. I prayed for Jesus to save me; I got saved.”*

But here we read Jesus’ words, ***“You did not choose me but I chose you.”***

Jesus is saying, I am the one initiating the call.

Since Jesus chose you that makes you a very special person.

Just think about this: Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords chose you to be on His team.

The fact that we have been chosen must never become a source of pride.

We did nothing to deserve being chosen. Jesus made it clear that He chooses disciples.

Jesus' choice is not based on our merit but on His sovereign mercy.

God chose Israel but not because of their merit. (Isaiah 45:4 and Amos 3:2). God chose prophets but not on their own merit (Amos 7:14-15).

God chose angels (1st Timothy 5:21), and God chose you even though you were a sinner (Romans 5:8).

Jesus made the first choice to love us, to die for us, and to invite us to live with Him throughout eternity.

However, we must make the second choice: we must make a conscious decision to accept Jesus' offer to be His disciple.

Remember before you were saved you were dead in your trespasses and sins.

So we would have no choice to make if Jesus had not chosen us.

We would remain spiritually dead throughout eternity.

Jesus makes it clear that He did the choosing.

Jesus chooses disciples to do a specific job in advancing His Kingdom.

It is a privilege to be chosen by the Creator of the Universe, but privileges always carry responsibility.

Our responsibility in being chosen as disciples is to go and to bear fruit.

We were not chosen just to sit in a pew in church for an hour a week

When we remember that God created us in His image we are reminded that God wants us to have a personal relationship with Him. (Genesis 1: 27)

When we remember that God created us, that God designed us for a specific purpose, and God ordained the number of our days on this earth before we were born we are reminded that we belong to Almighty God. (Psalm 139: 14 - 16)

When we remember that Jesus saved us from spending eternity in hell we are reminded that we owe our life to Jesus.

When we remember that Jesus called us and commanded us to bear fruit we are reminded that we are accountable to Almighty God.

Next we see Jesus said, ***“I appointed you.”*** (John 15: 16)

Appointed speaks of our obligation.

Appointed refers to expected results.

And in verse 16 we see the expected results are to bear fruit.

So exactly what is the fruit that we as Christians are expected to produce?

Some theologians have suggested that the fruit Christians are to produce is obedience.

That certainly fits the context; those who love Jesus will obey His commandments.

We see that in verse 17. ***“This is my commandment: love each other.”*** (John 15:17)

Other theologians have suggested that the fruit Christians are to produce is other Christians.

Certainly one of the signs of life is that life reproduces itself.

This fits with Jesus’ great commission in Matthew 28:19.

“Go and make disciples of all nations...”

And with Jesus’ command in Acts 1:8: ***“You shall be my witnesses...”***

Other theologians have suggested the fruit Christians are to produce is the fruit of the Spirit we read about in Galatians 5:22 & 23.

“... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

So what is the fruit that we are to produce?

Without a doubt the fruit we are to produce is spiritual fruit.

The New Testament describes fruit as Godly attributes (Galatians 5:22-23), righteous behavior (Phil. 1:11), praise (Heb. 13:15), as well as leading other people to faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 1:13-16).

The only way we can lead someone to Christ is for our lives to reflect the holy attributes of Jesus.

This is clear in Matthew 7:16-18. ***“By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.”***

We will be fruitful when we are obeying all of Jesus' commands.

Then other people will see Godly attributes in our daily lives and those people will be attracted to Jesus Christ.

In verse 5 we see that the key to producing fruit is remaining connected to Jesus.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

We remain in Christ Jesus by staying closely connected to Him.

We stay connected to Jesus by reading and studying our Bibles every day.

Reading and studying our Bibles is critical if we are to stay connected to Jesus.

The Bible is God's Word to us.

2nd Timothy 3:16-17 says, ***“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”***

Every person in our church family needs to be involved in at least one of the Bible study groups that we offer at Mt. Paran.

We also stay connected to Jesus in prayer.

Prayer is much more than giving God our wish list.

Prayer is an ongoing conversation with God.

In 1st Thessalonians 5:17 we are commanded to ***“pray without ceasing”***.

Throughout the day we are to seek instruction, wisdom, encouragement, and strength from our Wonderful Counselor.

Remaining in Christ is thinking, talking, and acting like Jesus.

Our lives are to reflect the love, the joy, the peace, the hope, the compassion, and the forgiveness of Jesus.

Matthew 5:16 says, ***“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”***

When we shine like Jesus, people will be attracted to Jesus and we will produce fruit.

In this passage Jesus talks about no fruit, more fruit, and much fruit.

And verse 2 contains a clear warning to us.

“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”

Jesus chose you to produce fruit.

So if you are not producing any fruit then you need to reevaluate your relationship with Jesus.

Remember unproductive followers are the people that are not abiding in Christ and they will be cut off from the life-giving vine and they are cast away.

A person cannot produce fruit by themselves.

Jesus makes this plain in verse 5. ***“Apart from me you can do nothing.”***

Jesus invites everyone to respond to His invitation to come to Him and abide in Him both now and for ever more.

We have the choice to accept or reject Jesus’ offer.

However, if a person rejects Jesus’ offer of eternal life they will remain spiritual dead throughout eternity.

If you are only producing a little fruit you should expect The Lord to do some pruning in your life.

And pruning is always painful. In verses 2 and 3 Jesus makes a distinction between two kinds of pruning.

One kind of pruning is separation from The True Vine and the second kind of pruning is cutting back.

Fruitful branches are cut back in order to produce more fruit.

God disciplines His children to strengthen our character and our faith.

Remember Jesus chose you to produce fruit and the key to producing fruit is staying connected to Jesus The True Vine.

Contrary to popular belief God did not choose you just to come to church and listen to a sermon on Sunday morning.

Jesus chose you to work in His kingdom every day of the week.

Jesus chose you to serve Him by producing fruit.

We have looked at the reality of Jesus’ call, the responsibility of Jesus’ call, and the reward of Jesus’ call is in the last part of verse 16. ***“...and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”***

Remember this promise a part of the verse that states that the purpose of a Christian's life is to bear fruit.

Jesus chose to love us and to die for us so that we could be with Him both now and throughout eternity.

So if we accept Jesus' free gift of eternal life it is only reasonable that we should want to remain close to Jesus and produce fruit.

The closer we are to Jesus the more fruit we will produce.

God's word to us this morning is crystal clear.

Jesus chose us to be His disciples and when we chose to accept Jesus' offer of eternal life Jesus expects us to bear fruit.

So the first question is; "*Are you producing Godly fruit?*"

The next question is "*how fruitful are you?*"

Remember you will be fruitful when you are obeying all of Jesus' commands.

Then people will see Godly attributes in your daily lives and they will be attracted to Jesus Christ.

AMEN