

How to love Jesus, part 2—growing, pruning, being fruitful, trusting Jesus for now and forever

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Before we get into the rest of the story, let's review

Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples

- In the middle of the meal Jesus took a loaf and after blessing it he broke it into pieces and gave it to the disciples. "Take and eat this," he said, "it is my body." Then he took a cup and after thanking God, he gave it to them with the words, "Drink this, all of you, for it is my blood, the blood of the new agreement (the new covenant) shed to set many free from their sins. (Matt. 26:26-27)
- Also, in Mark 14:22-25 and Luke 22:19-23
- The new covenant will be instituted with Jesus death that unlike the previous centuries of the sacrifice of lambs will be the final sacrifice that with his resurrection pays the final penalty for sin.
- Again, this is incredibly important and correct we need to remember it, but that isn't all that happened that evening as John will tell us.

Why his account is different

A little background on the gospel of John

- The first three gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the synoptic gospels.
- Here is a good definition of why we call them that:
- Despite their unique qualities, the first three gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—share many of the same accounts of Christ, often shared in the same order and with the same wording. Because of their similar perspectives on Jesus' ministry, together they're known as the synoptic gospels. (The word "synoptic" comes from the Greek word *synoptikos*, meaning "able to be seen together.")
- <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/synoptic-gospels/>
- Dating of the synoptic gospels work backwards from Paul's death about 64 AD, Acts doesn't mention his final imprisonment (2 Timothy does) and Luke wrote it AFTER his gospel, so most likely other gospels written between late 40's to 50's AD.
- <https://carm.org/when-were-gospels-written-and-whom>

The book of John very different

- Written later than these, some dispute, but from best evidence prior to 70
- <https://coldcasechristianity.com/writings/johns-gospel-may-have-been-last-but-it-wasnt-late/>
- All commentators agree it was later and because of that have John assumed his audience would be

familiar with the material in the other three Gospels, so throughout

- Over 90% of what is in John's gospel isn't found in the other gospels
- Though more selective in what he talks about, in many ways John goes into the events in much more detail, particularly the details of what Jesus said.

Where the other's end with the Last Supper, John's section about it starts with it

- John 13 opens with the meal in progress, but the meal doesn't end with "the Lord's Supper"
- Jesus goes on to talk to them around the table and then after they leave and are walking and goes on through John 17 with not only his final messages to them, but his prayers for them.
- It is an extraordinary section and I encourage you to take time to read it quietly and prayerfully and remember that these were the final earthly messages of our Lord before his death to his disciples.
- They were incredibly important to them as they are to us.
- I mistakenly thought I could go over all their content in 2 weeks in this special series for Easter, but I was wrong. As I prayed and thought about what to share with you I didn't want to simply rattle off key verses in this section, but to perhaps focus on less, but dig more deeply into application.

Application important because

- Last week we talked about how to love Jesus and we learned that we show our love by obeying his commands in the same way he showed his love to God the Father by doing what he wanted him to do. He repeats this important idea several times in this passage.
- This is a foundational truth for our Christian lives and how we are supposed to live. He doesn't say we show our love to Jesus by knowing all his commands, but by obeying them.
- In every area of life, we are constantly confronted with the challenge of what to do. In our families or work; our interactions with people around us, with the conversations we have with ourselves.
- Jesus tells us that in each one of these situations we can show Jesus and the people we interact with that we follow him or that we are living for ourselves. We do that by following his commands instead of what we might naturally want to do.
- An example – something happens, and we say to ourselves, I have a right to be angry—so we lash out at the store clerk or the family member
- Does that help? Typically, no—anger is never a welcome emotion

- Nobody will say, thank you so much for getting so angry with me—I now see my dreadful mistake in offending you and I can see from your explosion that you are a follower of Jesus.

If that doesn't make the situation better, what does?

- What would showing our love for Jesus by following his commands look like?
- We need to know in His Word what he says about anger and in general how to react in challenging situations
- Personally, really a challenge to me—my father was a drill sergeant and all my life I've struggled with my mouth and anger issues. So much so that my mother used to say to me, "with a mouth like yours, no nice man will ever want to marry you."
- I'm not sure whether it was a bit of God's grace in helping me make a little progress in this area or his sense of humor that I married a very nice man, who was also a bi-vocational pastor, but regardless...
- A few verses that have helped me:
- One I repeat to myself all the time: "wrath of man produces not the righteousness of God...James 1:20, NIV: "because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."
- Jesus, who in very nature God.... humbled himself in Phil 2.

Lots of verses in proverbs about anger and mouthing off

- So many in Proverbs:
- Prov. 29:11, NLT Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back.
- Proverbs 10:11 (MSG)¹¹ The mouth of a good person is a deep, life-giving well, but the mouth of the wicked is a dark cave of abuse.
- Prov 15: 18 A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.
- WE can look at Proverbs as descriptions of what happens, but there are also clear commands
- Col. 3:8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.
- I memorize, think about them.....in office, quiet minutes in between computer tasks
- You could have them on your phone—any area of life you want to learn more God's way, look up verses, write down or copy to a file on your phone
- The idea is to learn what is God's way of dealing with this situation. In the case of someone or some situation making me angry—I don't want to be a fool; I don't want to disobey God. I sometimes must repeat these verses lots to calm down.
- Not only will God's way be the best way to deal with whatever it is. Because in the case of anger, it

never accomplishes anything positive—people either agree or submit just to shut you up or react with their own anger, or silently resent, fear, or grow in negative feelings today's you.

- If anger is off the table I am forced to look carefully at the situation, the people involved and to pray for ways to deal with it that are pleasing to the Lord.

This was an illustration of going beyond a quick lecture to you about showing love to Jesus and thinking through, praying about and trying to act on Jesus words that if we love him we'll keep his commands.

- Recognizing the time that took
- This week I realized *I only have time to go over some of John 15*, because next week we need to resume our study going through the Bible – but there is much to challenge and comfort us in this passage, so let's go on in the passage.

From encouragement to exhortation

- As John 14 ends, Jesus has just promised them peace during guaranteed troubles and promised them the Holy Spirit to guide their lives
- Now he says, "Let's be going" so it is appropriate to assume that Jesus is teaching on his way to Gethsemane—he's walking and teaching
- Probably in much the same way he walked and talked with them in the last three years

He starts with a familiar analogy

- *John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*
- *⁵ "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. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*
- Throughout the Old Testament, Israel was referred to as a vine and often not in a positive way, but a vine that wasn't growing in the way it should be.

Jesus redefines the analogy

- He is the true vine; the real thing as we would say today, and he redefines the branches as his disciples

- He goes on to teach them what this means in practice with an analogy of something they knew about—how the vines grew

Characteristics of the vines

- Some from William Barclay's commentary
- The vines he was talking about grew profusely, but they produced two kinds of branches
- One that was useless and one that produced fruit
- If the vine was to produce as it was designed to, the unproductive wood had to be drastically pruned or the whole vine was useless
- The wood pruned out was worthless
- The Jews were required several times a year to bring wood to the Temple to keep the sacrificial fires burning, but the wood cuttings from the vine were so useless they could not be part of these offerings

Application, there is the obvious—that if we want to live a productive Christian life, there will be some things that Jesus will need to prune out

- But as a foundation of that reality of pruning let's talk about Let's talk about what I call "The challenge of forever vs. today"
- The Bible says, "God has put eternity in our hearts"
- I've heard it said that means everyone believes in an afterlife and that is probably true, but we make a mistake when we think eternity is something that starts after we die. We are all eternal creatures now.
- One of the things I think that means is that our desires and dreams will always be beyond our earthly abilities. And the fact we dream in this way is a manifestation that God has given us the ability to "dream impossible dreams"
- There are so many things we want to do, to experience (that is for those of us that have the luxury of being able to do things beyond basic survival— and we do well to remember much of the world does not)
- But given the situation we are in; how do we live with the competing realities of big dreams but in a world that can be a constant frustration?

What we need to have set firmly in our hearts and minds before we go further

- As I said, we are created eternal beings and if we have trusted Jesus as Savior our eternal relationship with him and the kind of life he promises begins now—heaven is our future, but how we live now is also important.
- But for this time on earth, Jesus promised "You will have troubles, but he immediately promised that he had overcome the world"

- So, what do we do when the challenges come? —we'll get into some specific suggestions from this passage, but what is important is to always keep the long view in mind—that you are an eternal disciple of Jesus staring now and forever.

- How do we show the world we are a disciple?

This passage answers that question

- That we "bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." John 15:8
- How do we do that?
- Jesus goes on to tell us that he will make us clean and he will prune us.

Jesus says we "are clean through because of this word" John 15:3

- A constant theme in Quotes OT and then NT application in 2 Cor 6:16-7:1, As God has said:
- *"I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."*^[a] *Therefore, "Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."*^[a]
- ¹⁸ *And, "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."*^[e]
- *7 Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

Cleansing a key

- ^{2 Tim. 2:20} In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use.²¹ Those who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.
- God's Word can be the soap
- It tells us the clean and right way to live
- If we fill our thoughts with it, it washes away sin
- If you have a "besetting sin"—a focus on it doesn't work—but God's Word can be like the new growth that pushes dead leaves off the trees.
- And what a wonderful goal to be *instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.*

In addition to doing what you can to be clean, may some pruning may also be needed

- More to being a disciple than just avoiding sin
- A disciple of Jesus should be like Jesus
- And the overwhelming message of this passage is that Jesus lived to serve; to equip others, to encourage others
- He does not in any this trying time focus on himself
- It would seem then that to be a disciple of Jesus

would be to be someone who life reflects a focus on serving others

You may not be doing bad things, but what is the focus of your life?

- This is the pruning part
- There may be some areas that are perfectly good, (not sin, not evil, truly good or morally neutral) but God cuts them out of your life for a reason
- It may be incredibly painful, and we may question why for many reasons—sometimes we might have a hint, many times we won't
- Some little; some big
- Maybe a hobby too time or money consuming
- Maybe a life-style, maybe a person
- Maybe an attitude of I deserve this or that because of my position or previous loss or whatever, we hold tightly to our demands or hobbies or self-indulgences
- Hate to tell you this, but nobody cares as much about either your position or pain as much as you do
- We all have done and do this.... but
- This is where you need to go back to the long view of being an eternal creature – in the light of eternity, of serving as a disciple of Jesus in this present assignment, what might he be pruning out of my life so I can produce fruit?

God doesn't do it to me mean

Pruning is so we can bear fruit

- We don't become a Christian for our every dream to be fulfilled, no matter what some current technology and some churches might tell you
- Pruning is so we can bear fruit—why is fruit important

But also, don't be too easy on yourself

it doesn't hurt to be a fruit inspector of ourselves

- Known by our fruits Matt. 7:20
- So how do we want to be known and is the fruit we are producing exhibiting the kind of life we want to live?
- We keep track, log calories, food, money
- How are we doing in the areas of love, etc.?
- *Maybe a checklist might be helpful—of course Bible verses are, but also throughout history, various Christians have made lists of actions*
- *Rule of Benedict chapter IV*
- Johnathan Edwards Resolutions ...I'll have links on the website
- Read these and perhaps—make your own.

We've run out of time

Much more Jesus said on his way to the cross in John 13-17, please take time to read

- But to review what we've learned

- Bear much fruit and it shows we are his disciples John 15 ref.
- Let's look at little more at the importance of fruit

So many kinds of wonderful fruit—exterior and interior

- Fruitfulness a sign of true salvation: Parable of the seeds—good seed, produces fruit, many times Matthew 13:1-13
- Fruit as in people in ministry
- Also, tremendously important—fruit of the spirit But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. NIV
- ²²⁻²³ But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. MSG

About fruit

- Important to remember with all kinds of fruit—it doesn't spring from the ground fully mature
- Can take months, years to be quality, fruit
- sometimes our gentleness or self-control or whatever it is we might be working on might look more like a wormy, half-grown apple that drops to the ground too soon and not the red, juicy, mature fruit it will be someday—but it's still fruit....
- "God's not finished with me yet...Don't be too hard on yourself
- Love Jesus by obeying his commands
- You'll learn them from time in his Word
- God's Word will also keep you clean
- It will show you what needs to be pruned away so that you can be a fruitful Christian in the lives you influence for Jesus and in the characteristics of love.... etc. fruits that develop in your life
- And if on the way, it seems some dreams must die and you lose some people or hobbies, careers or home precious to you, remember to take the long view. I truly believe that every good dream Jesus gives us, if it is from him if he takes it from us for a short time now, he will fulfill our dreams more wonderfully than we can imagine in his time, in his way and his eternal plan for us.
- 2 quotes that have helped me live a long view—read to you now—again pics of them on the websit

