

St Martins C3 – March 30, 2025

Creating Fertile Soil - Groundwork

Sermon Notes:

Jesus tells the Parable of the Soils, revealing why some grow and bear fruit while others do not. Today, we conclude by focusing on how to do the groundwork and prepare our lives for spiritual fruitfulness using three tools.

1 – The Pickaxe: Remove Hardness

Read Jeremiah 3:1-4

Hard soil rejects the seed just as a stubborn heart resists God. Hardness comes from sin and personal struggles:

- **Sin:** Blocks spiritual growth and must be removed
- **Shadows:** Hidden fears and motives influence our actions. We must surrender pride and control to God, allowing Him to gently transform us.

Think about the hardness God wants to remove from your life and then ask Him to gently work in your life.

2 – The Watering Can: Listen to God

Read Matthew 13:23; Isaiah 55:10-11

Jesus explains that good soil represents those who "hear and understand". The watering can represents God's word that we should pay attention to. We must not just hear but actively listen and respond.

It's worth considering whether you have a listening posture. If God were to speak to you would you be open enough to hear what He is saying?

Spend time with God this week, asking Him to speak. Read Scripture with an open heart asking God if there is something He wants to share with you.

3 – Fertilizer: Understand God's Ways

Read Colossians 3:16

Just as fertilizer enriches soil, we need to find things that deepen our faith. It is worth considering the things that will help you grow in your faith. This requires intentional learning—reading, study, discussions, and prayer.

Identify one practice—Bible study, discussions, or a podcast—to help you grow in understanding.

The Final Ingredient: Time

Read James 5:7-8; Galatians 6:9

Spiritual growth requires patience., we need to not give up, trusting that God is working even when we don't see immediate results.

By using these tools—removing hardness (pickaxe), actively listening (watering can), and deepening understanding (fertilizer)—we prepare for a life that bears fruit for God's kingdom.

Questions for Connect Groups:

Key Point

Prepare your heart for growth by removing hardness, listening to God and seeking deeper understanding of His ways.

Questions

What stood out to you from this week's message?

What does this message tell you about God and humans?

What would fruitfulness look like in your life?

Pickaxe:

Why is it important to remove hardness from our hearts?

What is an example of a hidden area you have surrendered to God? What did it look like to go through that process.

Name an area of hardness God might be working on?

Watering Can:

What obstacles might be preventing you from hearing and understanding God's word?

How will you make time this week to truly listen to God? What part does Scripture reading and prayer play in this for you?

Fertilizer:

What enriches your faith?

What specific step will you take to apply what you've learned and grow in your faith?

Monday Devotion: What is Fruitfulness?

Read Genesis 1:28; Psalm 1; Matthew 7:16-20

This week we are looking at the ways that we can be fruitful as Christians. The passage that we have been exploring shows that the ultimate goal of our discipleship is “fruitfulness”.

But what was fruitfulness to Jesus. For a long time, I assumed that it was solely about making new Christians. This led me to despair as I hadn't prayed the sinners prayer with anyone. Did that mean that my life in God was ineffectual and that I was not a very good Christian?

Over time I began to see through Scripture that fruit was much more than just the winning of souls.

This week, as we look through these scriptures, we will see that fruit and scripture means so much more. Consider the first mention of fruitfulness in Genesis 1. The first people are to go out into the world and to make something of it. They are to grow the world. They are to expand it and let it live up to its God-given potential.

This week we will see that an abundant life can be seen in four different areas. As we explore these areas my hope is that we see the good fruit that God is already growing. May we also invest in seeing other fruit grow more and more.

Today spend some time reflecting on the fruit that you see in your own life, ask God to show you where he can give you more.

Tuesday Devotion: Fruitfulness with Jesus

Read John 15:1-8; Colossians 1:10

The best passage for looking at fruitfulness in our lives is John chapter 15.

In it we see that we can do nothing without a relationship with Jesus, but if we stay in close relationship to him, we will have a fruitful life. Part of that fruit is seen in our relationship with Christ.

The word that is used here is the word abide. As we live with Jesus, we begin to see the world the way he does, and that changes us from the inside out.

Colossians tells us that we are to bear fruit in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God. Our Christian fruit comes from that place of close relationship with God, seeking to know Him and His ways.

This means that we need to devote ourselves to prayer, spending time not only talking to God, but listening to God.

We also need to devote ourselves to obedience, loving God's word and doing what it says. As you desire to be someone who lives in fruitfulness, may it overflow from the life committed to Him.

Why not spend some time in prayer now asking God to meet you and to fill your heart and life with His love, so that you may bear fruit for Him.

Wednesday Devotion: Inner Fruitfulness

Read Galatians 5:22-23; Romans 12:2

The next kind of fruitfulness we see is inner fruitfulness. Consider the example given to us by Paul in Galatians chapter 5. This is the passage known as the Fruit of the Spirit. This is the fruitfulness that shows not just through external works, but a transformed heart and character.

Yet this may seem strange to us. We are used to fruit being seen as something external, something that is bright and visible on a tree. However, this is not always the case.

Consider our beloved chocolate. Chocolate comes from cacao beans that grow inside a thick pod. So, it is in us.

Often the most fruitful work God wants to do in our lives happens inside of us before it is seen by anyone around us. Much of our spiritual growth happens inside our hearts before it is outwardly expressed in our actions. That means character fruit is both the most hidden and the most visible.

How does we produce this kind of fruit?

It happens by renewing our minds submitting our thoughts and attitudes to God. Character fruit takes a long time to grow. We need to continually challenge the lie and replace it with the truth.

Consider whether character fruit is showing in your life. What do you need God to come and transform?

Thursday Devotion: Outward Fruitfulness

Read Hebrews 13:16; Titus 3:14; 1 Peter 3:13-17

We continue our journey looking at the fruitfulness that God wants to produce in our lives by exploring how we can produce fruit that positively impacts others.

One way this is seen is in our generosity and good deeds. Hebrew 13 shows us that we should give God a sacrifice of praise through generosity towards others. This can be in our time, with our finance and with our energy. As we sacrificially give to others, we are showing the fruitfulness of a life that is changed by God.

Titus 3 tells us that Christians should devote themselves to good works leading to productive fruitfulness in serving others.

1 Peter 3 talks of sharing the gospel, which is surrounded by verses that speak again of “doing good”. Isn't it an interesting concept that has repeated over and over in the scriptures? Fruitfulness is doing good to others.

The difference in 1 Peter 3 is that it speaks about doing good, even if we suffer persecution from others.

We shouldn't just do good because it is good for us. We should do good and show the fruit of Christ, even if it is rejected by others. As we consider being fruitful in our own lives, let's look at the ways that we can serve those around us for their benefit, showing them the wonder of what it is to live for Jesus.

Friday Devotion: Making Disciples

Read 2 Timothy 2:2; Matthew 9:37-38; Matthew 28:16-20

I began this week by sharing that when I was younger, I felt that fruitfulness was only sharing the gospel with other people and seeing them become a Christian.

I am glad that my view of fruit has expanded. However, it should not diminish. A key element of fruitfulness is seen in bringing others into a life-giving relationship with Jesus.

That is why Jesus encouraged his followers to pray to God for more workers in the harvest field and He asked his followers to go and make disciples. That is why the apostle Paul told Timothy to pass on everything that he had learned and heard.

We need to be those who boldly often look for ways to bring others into a lifesaving relationship with Jesus. That is the kind of fruit each of us should long for.

A follower of Jesus is called to be much fruit, which glorifies God and proves true discipleship. Fruitfulness is about relationship with Jesus, character, good works, and disciple making, all flowing from an abiding relationship with Christ.

As you look at your life, can you see the fruit He has formed in you? Take some time to thank God for the work that he has done. Where there is no fruit, come to him in repentance and ask him to bring new fruit.