



Life on the Rock

Part Three – Richer and Finer Fruit

Message by Pastor Andrew Kulasingham 1st March 2020

Previous sermons in this series:

Part One – Being a Christian is becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. A disciple hears God through His Word and does what God says in obedience to His Word

Part Two – Last week we saw in John 15 that:

- Our Heavenly Father actively tends to our garden to make us fruitful (v1-2).
- The tending of our garden is not about our being but our doing.

Discipleship is about working on the gap between being like Christ and doing like Christ.

We also saw that – Abiding in Christ ensures becoming fruitful like Christ. Without Christ we can do nothing (John 15:4).

Disciples are totally dependent on Christ because without Christ we can do nothing

Today's topic: Richer and Finer Fruit

This week we delve deeper into John 15 and look at the activities our Heavenly Father does in tending to our gardens.

John 15:2 (Amplified Bible)

Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that continues to bear fruit, He [repeatedly] prunes, so that it will bear more fruit [even richer and finer fruit].

The two actions our Heavenly Father does to enable us to bear more fruit are: "He takes away" and "He prunes".

1. **HE "TAKES AWAY"** branches that do not bear fruit - **"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away."**

The phrase "takes away" here and in NKJV, is translated as "cuts off" in NLT, NIV.

It's the Greek word *airō* (Gk) - to lift up, raise up, elevate, or take away.

The primary meaning is to **"lift up"**.

Reformed pastor theologian, James Montgomery Boice, explains the activity of 1st Century vinedressers when tending to a branch that has been weighted down and trailing on the ground.

"It would be a strange vinedresser who immediately cuts off such a branch without even giving it a chance to develop properly. But it would be wise and customary for him to stretch the vine on an arbour or use some other means of raising it to the air and sun... To translate the word *airo* by 'lifteth up' gives a proper sequence to the Father's care of the vineyard.... Thus, He first of all lifts the vines up. Then He prunes away the unproductive elements, carefully cleansing the vine of insects, moss, or parasites which otherwise would hinder the growth of the plant." (Boice, Gospel of John, p227)

The first action Abba Father does in tending our gardens – he deals with our unfruitfulness.

The cause seems to be heaviness of the branch – weightiness that causes the branch to trail on the ground – no air, no sunshine, causing moss and parasites to grow – leading to unfruitfulness.

Hear the words of Jesus - John 16:33 - **“Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”**

-Again, in Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)

Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

Heaviness, the challenges of life, those curve balls that come our way – they weigh us down to the point that it can affect a fruitful life.

So the Father – lifts us up, he cleans up the unfruitful elements that are weighing us down and makes us fruitful.

Hebrews 12:11-12 (NLT) **No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it’s painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees.**

I want to reiterate this with all my heart:

Sickness, diseases and tragic circumstances, are not from God as a form of discipline.

-To think of God this way is an offense to the very nature of God – who is truly good all the time. Life happens – and it weighs us down. But if we trust Him and allow Him, He will lift us up and use any circumstance to train us towards “a peaceful harvest of right living”.

So hang in there, take a new grip on God, strengthen your weak knees – tell yourself – God is tending to that heaviness

The Father “lifts up” a fruitless branch to reposition us, so we can breathe again, be exposed again to sun of righteousness – in order to enable us to bear fruit.

2. **SECONDLY - HE “PRUNES”** branches that are bearing fruit, in order they may bear more fruit.

“prune” - *kathairō* (Gk) – to cleanse, to prune trees and vines from useless shoots.

It’s the act of “picking off shoots, removal of shoots, and needful thinnings of foliage... designed to encourage fruit development while discouraging extensive vegetative growth.” (Derickson, Bibliotheca Sacra).

If the first action of taking away was dealing with the weightiness of life; this second action is working on the busy-ness of life

The story of Mary and Martha comes to mind.

Luke 10:41-42 (NLT) **But the Lord said to her, “My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! 42 There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her.”**

In order to invite us to discover the one thing “worth being concerned about” – God needs to remove the “many things” that crowd out that one thing.

The Father “prunes” a fruitful branch to enable us to bear more fruit.

Why go through the “lifting up” and the pruning? Why allow God to tend to our garden?

It’s because –

Discipleship is a process of becoming like Christ and bearing the fruit of Christ.

2 Peter 1:3-8

... as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

⁵ But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸ **For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

It’s about partaking in the Divine nature – becoming like Christ is our destiny. Imagine a people who have that Christ nature. To be like Christ, to talk like Christ, to do the things Christ did. What would that look like for us, our families and our communities!

Discipleship requires us to allow Abba Father:

- **To lift up/unhinge us from unfruitful areas**
- **To remove useless activities that hinder fruit**

A disciple is one who diligently seeks to add to their faith in order to partake in divine nature.