



# SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

October 11, 2015

"Glorify!" (The Vine Series) - John 15:1-8

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**J**ohn 15:1 - *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. 2 He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. 3 You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.*

*4 - Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.*

*5 - I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6 - Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.*

*7 - If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 - My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.*

That last verse is what we are going to talk about today. Fruit. And how to glorify God.

According to that one verse, it gives us a simple, clear concise sentence of what Jesus sees our purpose is here on this earth.

*"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples." John 15:8*

Glorify God by bearing fruit, and deciding to be a disciple of Jesus.

People often ask me what is the will of God? Here it is sweet and simple from verse 8.

#### **Our Purpose Here on Earth:**

- Glorify God
- Bear Fruit
- Become a committed, follower of Jesus.

Let's break this down and then we will really go down deeper into things that might help us.

First, "Glorify God" and some historical context. In 1646, theologians and lay people wanted to bring the Church of England the Anglicans together with the Church of Scotland—the Presbyterians, and so they came up with the Westminster Catechism to help new Converts know the very basics of the faith. These two great denominations agreed on this great truth.

It began with this question – what is the chief end of man? What is THE purpose for all humankind?

The answer they came up with? "The Chief purpose of

humans is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

I believe our verse today greatly influenced them, so this is a really important verse.

What does "glorify" mean? It's not a word we use in every day language like I want to glorify my company or glorify my family or glorify my car?

To glorify(in English) means "to honor, to revere."

But in Hebrew, the original language of the Old Testament, the word for glory is *kabode* which means "weighty or heavy."

In Greek, the original language of the New Testament, Glory means "fame". The Greek word is actually *doxa* where we get doxology, the song that says: "Praise God from who all blessings flow."

So what does that mean if we combine the two—heavy and fame? It means we need to live in a way that helps people see the heaviness or the weightiness, the rock-steady dependability of God.

God is like a heavy pillar we can depend on. And when we combine it with *doxa*, it means that by the way WE live, we will spread His Fame! That's heavy, man!

**B**y the way we live, experiencing God's weight of faithfulness, we advertise or communicate or announce the heaviness of the importance of God, and hence we make Him famous—and we glorify His name.

Now this is tough for our secular minds which tends to be so self-centered and sinful. Why should we glorify Him? Why should we make Him famous?

We sometimes think God's main purpose and priority in life is to make us happy and to love us and make us famous and popular.

We're not really here to make Him famous. I want Him to answer my prayers to make me famous.

While it is true that He loves us, His main job is not to make us happy...but that His glory is our top priority. And so maybe in our selfishness, we say, "What a bummer! It should be about me! You should exist so I don't have any pain and so I can have some glory in my life."

Yet, when we glorify HIM, especially in our pain, we discover finally what we have always wanted—His fruit—fruit for our benefit and the benefit of others.

So it is all inter-connected. We glorify God. And He wants us to make fruit by being committed to Him. But when we are committed to Him, we glorify God and we bear fruit.

And what is this fruit? It's what we have always wanted! The Bible says in Paul's letter to a church in Galatia: "...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

*"And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Gal. 5:22-25*

The Greek word for Fruit of the Spirit is the same word that Jesus used when He said He wants us to bear fruit which is *kaptov*.

You know what the Greek word for Fruit means in English? Fruit! (Trick question).

Let's back up a bit as we are now into Part 5 of our sermon series of "The Vine".

Jesus says He is the Vine, the Father God is the Vinegrower, and we are the branches. He told us that we are to always remain or abide or be connected to Him, the Vine, for the rest of our lives or else we will wither like a dead branch.

But now He adds that when we are connected to Him it is not just to keep all the good nutrition for ourselves, but that we are to bear fruit...fruit that will be good for us and good to share with others, and so that God gets the fame!

I mean when you heard the list of fruit that God allows us to bear in our lives—who wouldn't want love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and if truly loving and kind then generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in our lives?

Now here is the thing with fruit. If you are a mango tree, it should be normal that you grow mangoes. Mango trees normally grow fruit. They don't work at it. It is natural. Mango is, by the way, my favorite fruit so next year if you

ever have a bumper crop, please remember me.

I love mangoes, mango shakes, mango chutney, mango sorbet. (Meet me at the Church Bazaar at the chutney table!)

So if you are a mango tree your fruit can bless many others and the tree is designed to make fruit. It was born to make fruit. Christians should naturally bear fruit.

But you may say to me, "But Dan, I am really trying to be a fully committed, dedicated follower of Jesus. But I don't naturally bear the fruit of love, joy, peace patience, kindness, generosity etc. Why is that?"

This is where it gets a little serious and a little funny. First the serious part.

One of the reasons why we don't bear fruit is because of fear. I would say fear, worry, or anxiety in our lives are indicators on how we are doing in our faith walk.

They are indicators how our fruit-bearing is going. Anxiety can confuse our understanding of what the true fruits of the Spirit are. It can block the bearing of fruit in our lives.

What do I mean? Let's take the first fruit—love. When God says we can bear the fruit of love He is talking about the unconditional, love-the-unlovely, committed, covenantal kind of love of God. But when we have fear, it perverts or waters down this great love.

For example, let's say a guy says, "I love my girlfriend. I won't be able to live without her. I can't imagine life without her. I need her. I love her so much."

**J** That's not true love. That's fear, a fear of losing her. It's disguised self-absorption.

Fear blocks the fruit God wants us to have. We say we are committed to Jesus but then our fear blocks our abiding and trusting in Him..

See it comes down to motivation and when we get to motivation we detect if we are really following false gods, as opposed to following the real Jesus. Fear often is camouflaged and sometimes we don't even know we are following a false god.

For example, for many we are people-pleasers, not God-pleasers or God-glorifiers. But if we always want to just please people then actually we are living a fear-based life because we are fearful we will lose friends and we won't be liked.

And when we please friends we have to keep pleasing them because we fear we will lose them. Hence, it becomes a vicious cycle. Suddenly popularity becomes a false god. Rather, we should all be in the business of glorifying God and pleasing Him above all things.

If you are in a business, your business should ultimately be about glorifying God and showing the fruit of the Spirit in the office. 100%. Don't try to take 50% of the glory and give the other half to God. No, we live to give 100% glory to God.

That's the only reason we should have. It's not ultimately about money. You see if we really trust God—really trust God—then He will take care of the money issue.

It's when we make our business only about money that we could end up like a failed company

like Enron or an imprisoned embezzler like Berne Madoff and less like the bearer of the fruit of love, joy, generosity, kindness.

If your main work is in the home, then again the business of the home is to glorify God in our running the home.

We must always work on our motivation in life— and truly be honest about it.

You see, we really have to be in touch with our motivations in life for therein lies our heart and false gods. It can be the false god of, "If I don't accomplish that, then they won't like me."

But then we do accomplish it and now we are stuck and dependent on the merry-go-round of people liking us and the fear and anxiety continues. It becomes the false god of people-pleasing.

I once told you this funny story but I want to say it again but with a new twist of how it breaks the cycle of people-pleasing by being honest.

A fire breaks out in a factory and the alarm goes out. Five engine companies arrive but the blaze is too big for them. It is getting out of control and will endanger the town unless someone does something. Firemen are in danger!

Suddenly in the distance a siren can be heard. The firemen turn around and see a Volunteer Unit—a fire truck with lights flashing and sirens blaring heading straight toward the building.

The truck smashes into the burning building, into the middle of the flames, and the brave firemen on the truck jump out with axes to cut away burning

debris to save people, and with hoses shooting out water in all directions.

Miraculously, they extinguished the center of the fire dividing the flames into two easily controllable parts that the other units could take care of.

The next day the Mayor honored the fire unit and praised them for their courage and valor. He presented the volunteer fire department with a check for \$1,000.

The Mayor then asked the unit's leader what they planned to do with the funds.

The volunteer fire captain looked at the Mayor and said, "That should be obvious; the first thing we're gonna do is get the brakes fixed on that stupid fire truck!!"

In that brief moment, the fire captain was truthful in the motivation as to why they went into that burning building. It was due to broken brakes, not because they were courageous. He broke the cycle by being honest and didn't fall into the trap of people-pleasing.

So the key to glorifying God and the key to producing the fruit of the Spirit is to be incredibly honest about what is our motivation in life.

Is it to glorify ourselves? Or will we take the plunge and truly try to glorify God in all that we do, to spread HIS fame? And when we do that, I believe God's spiritual fruit of love and joy and peace and patience etc. will more naturally be borne and flourish.

Here's the deal...the paradoxical deal.

If we can admit that we are often following false gods of money or fear or anxiety or people pleasing, and say to God, "Help me, I want to follow You"...then we will be saved. In admitting these weaknesses, we will bear fruit on our branches and experience the wonder and nutrition of that fruit.

But if we keep on lying to ourselves that we don't need help, then we will not bear fruit and our branches will be withered...if not already.

Here's the essence of the paradox. If we admit that we are at times spiritually blind and we need God's help, then we are actually glorifying God and seeing Him with greater clarity.

But if we deny we are spiritually blind, then we probably are.

Let me say it again. If we deny we are following false gods, then we probably are. But if we say we are sinners too often trapped the worship of false gods, then we are on our way to glorifying God.

When the slave trader John Newton realized that he was in a depraved business of sin, where he may have gone to church but he didn't really live for Christ...when he could say that he was a wretched man....that was the beginning of his writing the most popular known hymn in America, "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see."

One final point. We might say, "How do we glorify God when we feel so empty? What can I give to the God?"

Imagine a little boy saying to his father, "Daddy, can you give me

a dollar so I can buy you a gift?" And the dad says, "Sure son."

And the son comes back after buying something and gives it to his dad, the father doesn't say, "Hey, now I got my money back and I'm a buck ahead." No, he takes the gift and he revels in it even though he put up all of the money and gave it to the son. He revels in it because of the motivation of the son who wanted to honor and glorify his father.

And that's how it works with the Vine. Jesus the Vine asks us, the branches, to be connected to Him. He gives us all of the sustenance and nutrition and health that we need in order for us to bear fruit.

And when that fruit is born, we know we have made that, but we glorify the Vinegrower because He ultimately enabled us to bear the fruit that pleases God.

Here's the proof in the pudding. The true test of whether we are connected to the Vine—the true evidence of whether we can produce fruit—is normally in the midst of suffering. How we act when we face trials and tribulations will either make us wither or we will glorify God and fruit will come.

This past week was hard for me. I lost one of my best friends from high school. He fell and hit his head and died three days later. Out of sadness, I turned to God for consolation, and God came through. All glory to God.

Pam's first cousin Tod lives in Roseberg, Oregon. His wife works at Umqua College. When the shooting began last week, Pam texted her cousin to make sure he was okay.

Tod didn't know where his wife was as he was up in the mountains with bad reception, but he got a text about a shooting at the school. What shooting? He couldn't reach his wife. He called. He texted, but with no response. He did it four more times. Nothing. He only had two bars of service that was going in and out.

Should he stay or drive down which would take 40 minutes to get into better reception? He jumped in his car and tore down the mountain and finally when reception came up, his phone lit up with many messages asking how Jeanine was? In agony, he didn't know...but then he saw a text from his wife that simply said, "I'm okay."

He had turned to God and prayed all the time he was speeding down the mountain with tears and a quivering voice.

That ended well. But what is the test when things don't end well? How will we act in the face of suffering? Will there be fruit and glorifying God by how we act then?

Three months ago, almost to the day, 21-year old Dylann Roof walked into Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina and shot and killed nine people during a Bible study.

If anyone really examined that incident, they would have seen God being glorified, not in the violence, but in the response to violence.

God was glorified because during the court trial, each of the nine families of the victim's got up one by one and told Dylann Roof that they forgave him.

**T**o God be the glory, the Source of their strength. And the fame of their testimony of God's supernatural power in their lives went around the world.

Nadine Collier daughter of Ethel Lance said to the murderer, "I will never get to talk to her ever again. I will never be able to hold her again, but I forgive you and have mercy on your soul. You hurt me. You hurt a lot of people. But God forgives you and I forgive you." [Blood at the Root, In the Aftermath of the Emanuel Nine," by David Remnick, The New Yorker Magazine, Sept. 28, 2015].

That is the fruit of the Spirit.

The husband of victim Myra Thompson said this, "I forgive you and my family forgives you, But we would like you to take this opportunity to repent. Repent. Confess. Give your life to the One who matters the most: Christ. So that He can change it, can change your ways, no matter what happens to you, and you'll be okay." [Ibid., Remnick].

How could a husband of a murdered wife say that unless he was glorifying God and felt the fruit of love and peace and faithfulness in his heart?

We may have forgotten this, or are too young to know this, but in 1974, six years after Martin Luther King Jr. was murdered in Memphis, his mother, Alberta Williams King was playing the organ at the Ebenezer Baptist Church—just a hundred yards from her son's grave in downtown Atlanta—when a young man entered and fired two pistols and killed her and a church deacon.

The reason? The murderer who was African American said, "All Christians are my enemies...and

black pastors are a menace to black people." Even back then from Atlanta to Umqua, Christians were being killed.

He said he was actually looking for Martin Luther King Jr.'s father but since he was not there, he killed the mother as she was playing *The Lord's Prayer* on the organ!

Her daughter, Christine King Farris forgave her mother's killer, just as her father said he forgave Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassin for killing his son and leader of his people.

How could they have possibly done this UNLESS God bore fruit in their hearts and as they glorified Him?

Christine King Farris said, "Hate won't bring back my mother or brother back. It will only destroy me." [Ibid., Remnick.] She bore the Fruit of the Spirit: peace, love, and the generosity of forgiveness.

The history of the forgiveness of the African American church shows real muscular Christianity—not some pop culture of "I follow Jesus only when things go right".

You've heard the commercial, "What's in your wallet today?"

I ask, "What's in your heart today?"

Is there room to grow fruit and glorify God or just keep doing things your own way without Jesus?

You see if we truly follow Christ, and are plugged into the Vine, then it is not a myth that we can bear fruit. Real fruit is not a kumbaya time around the campfire.

Real fruit is when we can show love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, generosity, and self-control...

even in the face of hatred, even in the face of disappointment, even in the face of things terrible not going the way we want it to.

And when we act in the Spirit, God is glorified. This is truly what it means to glorify God, to speak of His heaviness, His weightiness of dependability even in sorrow. And then as we see in the forgiveness of the Emanuel Nine, God's fame spreads throughout the land. Glory hallelujah!

If we only follow God when things go right, then it is just sentimentality. To become a committed dedicated follower of Jesus means we have the chance to be strong, courageous, and forgiving. We can glorify God and bear fruit once again.

Will you consider today, being connected to the Vine...to truly be a follower of Christ and to glorify our heavenly father?

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*Note: Sunday sermon texts are also available at [fpchawaii.org](http://fpchawaii.org). The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. You may also request the audio version by visiting: [fpchkoolau@gmail.com](mailto:fpchkoolau@gmail.com)*