

Union United Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **Called to Bear Fruit in the Divine Purpose & Vision of Christ.**

May 21st, 2023. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Acts 1:1-9; John 15:1-10**

1. **The Divine Purpose & Vision of Christ**

God has a purpose and vision for all humanity.

There are many parts to God's purpose and vision. These include salvation and redemption from sin and its consequences, reconciliation of humans with God, giving us the ability to live a holy life that pleases God, etc. The scriptures paint a very rich picture of God's purpose and vision and our role in that. In today's sermon, we focus on just a couple of parts of this vision.

- **Salvation for All in Christ - the Four ALLs.**

The early Methodists in 18th century Britain emphasized specific points about our salvation in Christ. John Wesley preached many sermons on these themes.

British Methodist Christians have neatly summed these points on salvation into what is called the Four ALLs:

- **ALL need to be saved.**

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23 NIV

- **All may be saved.**

"God our Savior, ... wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" 1 Timothy 2:4 NIV

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

17For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. **18Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."**

John 3:16-17 NIV

- **All may know they are saved.**

“To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” John 1:12 NIV

“God's Spirit makes us sure that we are his children.” Romans 8:16 CEV

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,” Romans 8:16 NKJV

- **All may be saved to the uttermost.**

Paul prayed this prayer for the Christians in Thessalonica. It indicates what God is able and willing to do for us in Christ, as we remain in Christ.

“May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.”

1 Thessalonians 5:22-24 NRSV

- **Divine Reconciliation for All - Our Collective Ministry**

In Christ, God’s vision is reconciliation of all humans with God. From the time of Adam and Eve’s sin, spiritual death and separation from came into the world, putting a gulf between humans and God. God wants that gulf removed. God wants renewed fellowship with humans. This is God’s heart and desire. This is why Christ came.

As Christians, we experience this renewed fellowship with God. We experience the love and peace of God. We experience the joys of being in fellowship with God. We experience the grace of God that enable us to overcome the problems brought into the world through sin - humanity’s problems have spiritual causes.

God has called all of us Christians to help other people to become reconciled to God. Paul calls this our ministry of reconciliation.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation:
The old has gone, the new is here!” 2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV

18“**All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; 19that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us 20So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.**”
2 Corinthians 5:18-20 NRSV

2. Called to Bear Fruit: John 15:1-10

In John 15, Jesus paints a picture of the relationship between every one of his disciples and himself and God. He uses the vine that bears grapes to illustrate this.

- God the Father is the vine grower.
- Jesus is the Vine
- The disciples of Christ are the branches of the Vine.
- Fruits of the Vine are borne on the branches of the Vine.
- As in a vine, the branches get their nourishment from the vine.

• As branches of Christ, we must bear fruit. Not optional ...

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. 2He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.” 15:1-2 NRSV

• Without Christ and His Anointing, We Cannot Bear Fruit

“You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. **4Abide 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. 5I 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.**”

John 15:3-5 NRSV

- **Two Important Fruits**

There are many types of fruit mentioned in the scriptures. For instance, we are to bear the fruits of repentance (Matthew 3:7-8). But today I would like to highlight two specific important fruits we are to bear:

- **Winning Souls for Christ**

As explained earlier, we are called to be Ambassadors for Christ, letting God make his appeal to unbelievers through us. We are specifically called to be witnesses of Christ, sharing the gospel and inviting people to come to Christ.

Recall: the early Methodists asked themselves this question:

“What is the best general method in preaching?”

The answer was (and still is):

“To invite,

To convince,

To offer Christ; and, lastly,

To build up,

- and to do this (in some measure) in EVERY sermon.”

- **Prayer Fruit**

In John 15, Jesus also emphasized prayer fruit. We are to engage God in our affairs and that of other people through our lives of prayer. God expects us to bear prayer fruit. Some things can only be achieved through prayer. So, prayer is a vital part of the work we are to do to see God’s will done on earth.

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.” John 15:7-8

3. Power to Bear Fruit: Acts 1:1-9

- **Jesus Taught & Did, We're Called to Continue with Him**

"In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that **Jesus did and taught** from the beginning **until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen**"
Acts 1:1-2 NRSV.

"Very truly I tell you, **whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these**, because I am going to the Father." John 14:12 NIV

- The Anointing of Christ, the Holy Spirit, Empowers Us To Bear Fruit

"He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but **to wait there for the promise of the Father**. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but **you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now**"

Acts 1:4-5 NRSV.

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Acts 1:8 NRSV

"When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, ... 14All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer"

Acts 1:13-14 NRSV

**"Those who wait on the Lord
Shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint"**

Isaiah 40:31 NRSV