



**Series: Seeds**

**Sermon: A Fruitful Life**

### **Galatians 5: 1, 13-25**

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. By contrast, 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.

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#### **Monday: Read 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13**

The Corinthians were actively pursuing some of the things that Paul mentions in the opening verses of chapter 13. There may be nothing wrong with such things in themselves, but if in the process people forget about loving their brothers and sisters, such things end up being worthless. Without love, it does not matter what budgets, buildings, or missional strategies we have. Such things do not give the church the shape that God desires. We may pursue various forms of spirituality, or worship practices, or activism in the name of justice. In our pursuit of these

otherwise fine things, however, we must not forget that the church is called to be a community that practices love. A minister visiting another country encountered a missionary pastor of a new church. He asked the pastor if the new building would attract people to Christ. He said, “No. It might get them here once or twice. But they won’t come to Christ because of this building.” He asked if the preaching of Christ would do it. The pastor said, “No, even that won’t do it. They won’t believe us unless we show them love.” How does our church show people the love of Christ? Do we care more about our budget? Building? Worship practices?

*Prayer: God, Help me love others with the same love you have shown me. Amen.*

### **Tuesday: Read Isaiah 52: 7-10**

The word shalom in the Hebrew is usually translated as “peace,” but it is important to remember that shalom means far more than the absence of war. Shalom means health and wholeness — wholeness that encompasses all of creation. Perfect shalom brings with it a harmony and unity of all peoples and all of creation. Shalom is living in a right relationship with God, with one another, and with God’s creation. That is why in Isaiah we are given that beautiful vision of shalom where all natural enemies shall live in harmony with each other; all suffering, sorrow and tears shall come to an end (Isaiah 11:6-9). The writer of Isaiah 52 proclaims, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace...” It is often said of Christians that we are the only hands and feet of Jesus in the world. Have you ever thought of your feet as beautiful? Do you consider yourself God’s messenger? How do you proclaim the good news of the gospel to others? In what ways do you live out a sense of shalom in the world?

*Prayer: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Amen.*

### **Wednesday: Read James 5: 7-10**

Patience is the theme for today. Patience makes possible a life of deferred gratification, waiting for fruit to ripen before harvesting it. It is difficult to imagine a more countercultural way to live in our materialistic, fast-paced society. I grew up with “snail-mail.” Now I’m impatient if e-mail takes more than a few seconds. We know very little about the patience of waiting for fruit to ripen. We purchase already ripened fruit at the supermarket. While John Mayer sings, “We keep on waiting, waiting on the world to change,” Fredrick Buechner says that spiritual patience is not a passive, pious waiting. He suggests that patience is active. As we live in patience for the *fullness of God’s reign*, we practice an active patience that calls us to “be Christ to those who need us to be Christ to them most and to bring them the most we have of Christ’s healing and hope because unless we bring it, it may never be brought at all.” Do you struggle with patience? Have you ever considered that being Christ to another was active patience? How might Buechner’s teaching help you practice patience in a new way?

*Prayer: God, help me to patiently act as your change agent in the world. Amen.*

### **Thursday: Read Colossians 3: 12-17**

As ones God has chosen, set apart as holy and loved, Paul reminds the church that they should make sure their behavior matches up with their identity; their outside should match their inside. Knowing who they are helps them to clothe themselves with behavior that fits. Just as ill-fitting clothes detract from the beauty of a person, so too do ill-fitting behaviors detract from the image of Christ that believers should exhibit. The qualities Paul recommends paint the picture of a gentle person. Too often in our culture gentleness is regarded in a negative way. We have a tendency to think of gentleness as the opposite of strength. Yet conducting oneself in a gentle manner requires great spiritual strength. Kindness, humility, patience, and forgiveness are garments of gentleness, and love is the belt that binds them together. When you are getting dressed for church on Sunday mornings do you remember to put on kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness, and gentleness? What about during the week?

*Prayer: Dress our congregation in the garments of your holiness, O Lord. Amen.*

### **Friday: Read Proverbs 11: 24-28**

Paul tells the church at Galatia that living in the Spirit will produce generosity. Today’s reading from Proverbs reminds us that withholding our generosity has dangerous consequences. But let’s face it: giving freely is a difficult spiritual practice to learn. Parents and teachers know this all too well from their need to conduct repeated lessons on sharing. When it comes to sharing freely we all seem to be remedial learners. The world teaches that it’s a “finders keepers”, “first come, first served” kind of world. Yet, God calls us into a new way of living. A way that teaches us to let go of hoarding and tightfistedness, and releases us to be a blessing for one another through our sharing of resources. Who in your life lives out God’s call to be generous? In what ways might you need to grow in your ability to give freely?

*Prayer: Make me generous in heart and mind that I might live in your Spirit, O God. Amen.*

### **Saturday: Read Micah 6:1-8**

The Good Samaritan who dares not pass by another human being, even when that other was considered an enemy. The father of the elder son in the prodigal son who did not choose one son over another but found his two arms wide enough to embrace both his sons. Mary and the other women who stand at the foot of the cross, no matter how painful and frightening. Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah, who weep together in their grief. The woman with her alabaster flask, who broke it open and poured it out without holding back. And Jesus, who wept, prayed, broke bread, touched, and healed. All these people are real flesh and blood examples of loving-kindness, loving tenderly, loving steadfastly. And yet in our society, loving-kindness does not come easily. Perhaps this is because loving tenderly involves one knowing confidently one is loved and is able to take the risk to be moved, to be vulnerable, and to be able to see another person's suffering as one's own. When has someone shown you loving-kindness? How did it make you feel? To whom might God be calling you to act with loving kindness in this next week?

*Prayer: Holy God, strengthen me to live as you require. Amen.*