

Study

How is my life bearing "good fruit"?
Read and reflect on Galatians 5:13-26.

Is my life rooted and grounded in Christ? Read Jesus' story of The Wise and Foolish Builders in Luke 6:46-49.

In what ways can I grow closer to God and immerse myself in the love of Christ?

Living it out (Application):

What areas in my life are either not producing "good fruit" or very little? Ask God to show you the areas in which he wants to grow you.
How can you immerse yourself in His love?

Coming Up at St Mark's

Don't forget...check your prayer card and get your photo taken this Sunday...many thanks!

Trip to the Holy Land. March 2015. There will be a meeting at church at 7.30pm Monday 7th July.

Compassion Ghana trip, 6th-12th April 2015. If you sponsor a child you can go and meet him/her...cost approx £1550 per person. See Michelle Hayes for details.



Please pray for...

Give thanks for **Geoff and Val Herbert** as we celebrate 50 years since he was ordained. Pray for them that their passion for Jesus and for the gospel would continued to blossom.

Pray for the **PCC on an away day** this Saturday reflecting on vision and plans and future resources.

Plans for our **holiday club** are taking shape. Give thanks that lots of people are involved and pray for the teams that they will be able to prepare well and that young people would be shown God's love.

We've got a big group of young people and leaders going to **Soul Survivor** this summer- pray that it would be a really fruitful time of spiritual growth and development for them.

Pray for **Chris Lawton** for health and strength.

The **Donegan-Crosses** would be really grateful for your prayers at this time as we deal with Ruth's dad reaching the end of his life.

Mission Partner Prayer Focus:

This month we are praying for Peru. Our lovely Peru team are going out this Monday for three weeks. Pray for Paul and Ruth Turner and for each of the team, that God would use them fantastically to build his kingdom and would teach them to rely on him more and more.

Please do take the opportunity for more prayer requests/feedback - it's a wonderful way of sharing.

Thank you for your prayers for this church community!



INDIVIDUAL STUDY NOTES

Week beginning: 29th June 2014

Just everyone a reminder to encourage to come to the prayer meeting on WEDNESDAY 9TH JULY AT 7.30PM...thank you!

Worship/reflection:

Matthew 5: 3-12 is Jesus' description of the heart God wants in each of us. Read each phrase/beatitude and pray in response to it.

Luke 6: 39-49. All a matter of the heart.

I suspect you have heard it said – 'You are what you eat!' The church leadership team meets every Wednesday for a staff meeting. We then all have lunch together, now because of the numerous dietary requirements of the team this usually consists of some vegetable soup (often this has been of a green colour) along with bread and cheese. It's well known amongst the staff team that really I am a meat and carbs man. So if I had a choice between broccoli or French bread, then bread wins every time. Or if the choice was a bowl of strawberries or a doughnut, then the doughnut wins. I like nothing more than a fresh doughnut from the baker, the smell of the freshly baked sweet smelling doughnuts. The crisp sugar coated shell; the soft dough and the warm Raspberry jam that oozes out of the centre.

When you squeeze a doughnut Raspberry jam comes out. What is in the centre has got to come out. What we see here in Jesus teaching is it's not what you see, not what's on the outside that is important. It's what's at the center? What's in the middle of who we are? The bible calls that the heart (not the muscle that pumps blood around the body). It is our character the very essence of who we are, the real you (the you when nobody is looking). The heart is the seat of our emotions and will, the bit that makes rational decisions. In this sermon from Luke Jesus says, "Out as the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks". When you open your mouth we will find out what is on the inside. Rather than 'you are what you eat', perhaps it should be 'you are what you say!'

They say that a picture is worth 1000 words. In the sermon on the plain Jesus continues to paint a picture of an alternate way of life it is a picture of the kingdom of God, living life the Jesus way. Jesus use of word pictures and sketches is clever and humorous it provokes our hearts our imagination and our senses. Throughout his sermon Jesus spoke strongly against the mere external performance orientated hypocritical teachings of the Pharisees. He contrasted their focus on religious behaviour to his own emphasis on the heart attitude. Jesus said 'you've heard it said do not murder, but I say to you anyone who is angry with his brother is subject to the same judgment'. Repeatedly Jesus drew attention to the Old Testament Scriptures but revealed that first and foremost these are a matter of the heart attitude. Who we are on the inside determines what we do on the outside.

I remember a time that my sister and I were carrying out a gardening task for my parents. We were moving a huge pile of gravel from the front garden to the back garden. My sister soon got bored and lost interest and so started winding me up and distracting me. I lost my temper and threw the spade in the pile of stones. At that moment she moved her head and the spade and her head collided. There was blood everywhere. I was in big trouble.

I was made to sit in the back of the car with my arm round my sister, to show her that I loved her as we set off for hospital. Inside I felt guilty about what I had done but at the same time I felt angry and hard done by. I was playing by the rules, doing what had been asked of me. I was working hard; I have a real sense of self-righteousness and indignation. If she hadn't been messing about I wouldn't have lost my temper and this wouldn't have happened. It was her fault not mine so now I was being made, by my parents, to show her I loved her whereas I was feeling anything but love for her at that time.

I wonder how often we end up focusing on our behaviour rather than addressing the fundamental issue of the heart? Perhaps you have tried to cut gossiping about others or you have tried to stop moaning and complaining about your situation. Perhaps you have tried to stop being so cutting and sarcastic. What is in the center has got to come out. Whatever we allow to brew in the cauldron of our hearts is what comes bubbling up out of us, and that is the fruit, or the produce of our hearts.

Jesus preaching has been about the need for heart transformation rather than behaviour modification. As if to emphasize the point Jesus tells a story about two trees and two different types of fruit. Does that sound familiar, or remind you of anything? The Garden of

Eden perhaps! The fruit of one tree leads to life, beauty, goodness and fulfillment and one to judgment and separation from God.

So Jesus compares two trees a fig tree and a thorn bush. But interestingly it's not really a choice between two kinds of fruit. Rather it is a choice between figs or thorns. Now if you had the choice between eating figs or thorns what would you choose? Well there is no contest. It's not a hard choice. The figs taste good and they bring life. Who would collect thorns rather than figs to satisfy themselves? Or who would collect a handful of briars to eat rather than the squashy, juicy tasty grapes? It's not a hard choice. A good tree produces good fruit and a bad tree produces bad fruit.

Something of the meaning is often lost in the translation into English from the original language. When Jesus says a 'good' tree he is using good in terms of a sound, healthy, solid tree. A tree that has a good solid trunk and well developed root system. This tree is strong reliable, sturdy. It is a good tree. When he says it produces 'good' fruit, it is the same word that is used in Genesis 1. After God had created 'he saw that it was good'. God's creation was beautiful and excellent in every way. It was good. A good tree produces excellent, beautiful life giving fruit.

Now it might seem obvious to say but; apples grow on an apple tree. A tree bears fruit naturally, that's just what it does. You don't have to do anything to make it happen. Fruit is organic; it's what naturally comes out of a tree. If you are a fruit tree you bear fruit. What's in the center has got to come out. It's organic, it's natural. When we lived in Kent we had 2 apple trees in our garden. One was good and strong and sturdy and reliable. Every year there was loads of blossom and the tree bore loads and loads of fruit. So much so that the branches would droop with the weight of fruit. The other tree produced no fruit. Nothing in the 4 years we lived there. One tree was good and one was bad.

I don't know about you but some days I am like the apple tree that bears fruit. I am full of love, life, joy and peace and gentleness. The fruit is a natural out working of my life being rooted in Christ. My heart is immersed in his love and I am being shaped and molded by his infinite, unconditional love for me. I am naturally fruitful. But there are other days when I am like the tree that has born no fruit. So what should I do? Well I shouldn't pick up the apples and hang them on the tree. That would be ridiculous. But isn't that what we end up doing all the time. We try to address the issues in life without getting to the root. We try to change by not saying certain words, or not speaking in a certain way. Doesn't that sound a lot like hanging apples on a bad tree?

What's in the centre has got to come out. "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks". We need our heart to be continually renewed and changed by God. We can't change our heart only God can do that. "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you" Ezekiel 36:26. As we place ourselves in the flow of his love, so He is at work by His Spirit transforming our heart. It is His work not ours, but we co-operate with the Spirit. We put ourselves in the place where God can do His work. What's in the centre has got to come out.