



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

Giving God the Glory In Bearing Fruit

John 15.1-17

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Introduction

1. Like most kids, I sometimes needed corrective discipline from my dad. I don't recall ever being surprised; I generally knew what was / wasn't expected, even if a specific instruction was lacking.
2. That doesn't mean I didn't try at times to justify my behavior or find a loophole in an expectation. One of my favorites—*usually* said in jest—was my (mental) response when he said, "behave yourself." "Behavior" could be good or bad; I reasoned that "behave" covered both kinds.
3. Dad did sometimes say one thing I didn't like as much, especially as I began venturing out on my own: "Remember who you are." In other words, I represented the family and what I did would reflect on all of us. I don't recall ever wanting to embarrass my parents or not caring if I did.
4. That helps me begin to understand the meaning and lessons of our text. When Jesus spoke about glorifying God and bearing fruit, he was in effect saying that we need to remember who we are.

Body

- I. Defining: Glorifying God.
 - A. One of the distinctive features of the Gospel of John is the use of "glory" and "glorified."
 1. "Glory" (δόξα; *doxa*) appears a little more often (19x) than in any of the other Gospels.¹
 2. "Glorify" (δοξάζω; *doxazō*), however, appears many more times in John than in any other book: 23 of the New Testament's 61 uses; no other book has it more than nine times (Luke).
 - B. More complete understanding of what it means to glorify God begins by considering the word's meaning and the use of the idea in the Old Testament (Burge, 269).
 1. The word originally meant, "opinion or a well-formed reputation."
 2. New Testament use was influenced by the Old Testament idea of God's glory (כְּבוֹד, *kāḇōd*); his radiance, not his actual presence (cf. Exod 16.7, 10; 24.16; Isa 6.3; etc.).²

¹ Uses in the Synoptics: Matthew, 7; Mark, 3; Luke, 13. Comparing uses to the total number of words in each book shows that John also uses *doxa* more frequently than the others. The word is used a comparable number of times in Romans (16), 1 Corinthians (12), 2 Corinthians (19), 1 Peter (10), and Revelation (17).

² See 1 Samuel 4 where the Philistines defeated Israel, killed Eli's sons, and captured the ark. Eli's daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, died shortly after giving birth to a son she named, "Ichabod (אִיכָבֹד *I-kabod*), saying, "The glory (כְּבוֹד, *kāḇōd*) has departed from Israel because the ark of God has been captured. . . ." (1 Sam 4.21).

- C. A working definition of the word as used in the New Testament is “to influence one’s opinion about another so as to enhance the latter’s reputation, . . .” Where God’s glory is the subject, it meant “to cause to have splendid greatness” (Bauer, 258).
- D. Put another way, to speak of glorifying the Father or Son is similar to what my dad meant when he told to remember who I was.
 - 1. He wanted me to act in such a way that I would uphold our family’s honor or reputation and /or not do anything to tarnish it.
 - 2. To glorify God and the Son is to act so as to enhance their reputation; to bring honor to the family name of the Godhead, as it were (cf. John 17.10).

II. Defining: Fruit-Bearing.

- A. The word, “fruit” (καρπός, *karpos*) appears 10 times in John, less often than in both Matthew (19) and Luke (12) (Mark used it 5 times).
- B. Seven are in our text (15.2 [3x], 4 [2x], 8, 16; cf. 4.36; 12.24) where we see that fruit-bearing is both important and expected.
 - 1. It is by bearing fruit that the Father is glorified (v. 8).
 - 2. The fruit of each branch will be pruned, a trimming designed to stimulate growth (v. 2).
 - 3. Failure to bear fruit will result in the branch being removed and thrown away (vv. 2, 6).
 - 4. In order to bear fruit, the branch (disciple) must remain in the vine (the Son) (v. 4).³
 - 5. This is vital because, apart from the Son, no branch can bear fruit (v. 5).
 - 6. All disciples should live in a way that allows their fruit to abide (or remain) (v. 16).
- C. What does it mean to “bear fruit”? Verse 8 explains: “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”⁴
 - 1. In other words, live so as to enhance the Lord’s reputation by embodying his character.
 - 2. Galatians 5.22-23 provide the best commentary on fruit bearing.

III. Learning from Our Text: How To Bear Fruit.

- A. Have the greatest *esteem* for the Father and Son (vv. 9-11).
 - 1. I am using “esteem” for ἀγάπη (*agapē*), used five times in verses 9-11.
 - a) Culturally, we use “love” for a wide range of things that differ in importance and value, typically thinking of it in terms of romance, sex, warm feelings, and liking something.
 - b) That creates problems when we encounter commands that tell us love our enemies, or when we try to talk about the difference between the different things we “love.”
 - c) In the New Testament, *agapē* is the big idea that should govern how all other ideas of “love” are used.
 - d) “Esteem” is not a perfect synonym, but it gets us closer to the idea (cf. KJV’s “charity”).
 - e) Jesus’ declaration of the two greatest commands helps us understand.

³ In light of Old Testament texts about the Jewish symbol of the vine (e.g. Isa 5.1ff.; Jer 2.21), Rogers and Rogers write: “This is one of the most prized of plants and thus represents the most privileged among nations and men. It is also emphasized by being placed after the emphatic ἐγώ εἰμι [*egō eimi*] and by the use of the adj. following the noun (Schnackenburg). This refers to the idea of a fruitful Israel obedient to God” (Rogers and Rogers, 217-218).

⁴ Glorifying here is to be seen as a completed act (Greek aorist tense), contingent upon (subjunctive mood) bearing fruit and thereby fulfilling the purpose of a disciple (rendering the force of the aorist subjunctive form of the verb γίνομαι; *ginomai*) (Rogers and Rogers, 218).

- (1) Esteem/value God with *all* your heart (decision making/will), *all* your soul (ψυχή; *psuchē*; life force), *all* your strength, and *all* your mind (Luke 10.27).
- (2) Esteem/value your neighbor just as much as you esteem/value yourself (v. 27).
2. The first step toward fruit bearing that honors God is esteeming the Father and Son as much as the Father and Son esteem us (cf. John 15.12-15).
- B. Make your priority the *imitation* of Jesus (vv. 9-10, 12, 17).
 1. To fully see this what this entails, we need to look at other passages in John that talk about glorifying and bearing fruit.
 - a) Jesus did not seek his own glory (5.44; 8.50, 54), in contrast to the Pharisees (12.42-43) and all who do religion to be seen by others (Matt 6.2).
 - b) Several times in John, Jesus' glorification involved the cross (12.23-24; cf. 7.39; 12.16; 13.31-32; 17.1, 5). For Jesus, "success" came through sacrifice.
 2. Jesus went to the cross because he was committed to complete the Father's work as the Father commanded (17.4; providing commentary on 15.8).
 3. To bear fruit and glorify the Father, we must be determined to do as Jesus did.
- C. Submit to Jesus.
 1. If we are serious about glorifying God and bearing fruit, we must follow Jesus' example of submission (15.10, 12).
 2. This is not a burden (1 John 5.2-3), but is a vital part of how we rely on him.
 - a) It entails submission to the pruning necessary for growth (John 15.2; cf. 2 Cor 3.17-18).
 - b) For him to abide in us, his *words* must abide in us (John 15.7; cf. Matt 11.29).
 3. Submission understands that we can be no more successful in being self-sufficient as disciples than we could be in bringing about our own salvation (John 15.3-4).

Conclusion

1. In 2010, members of the Zoe Group wrote the song, "All To Us." The chorus is in effect a prayer of commitment and surrender: "Let the glory of Your name / Be the passion of the Church. / Let the righteousness of God / Be a holy flame that burns. / Let the saving love Christ / Be the measure of our lives. / We believe You're all to us."
2. Whether that prayer is a reality in our lives will depend on whether we esteem him first, imitate him consistently, and submit to him always.
3. Whether we do those things will depend on how seriously we take his command and promise in John 15.4-5.

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