

Life Group Notes

Sunday 10th July 2022

Speaker: Andy McCullough

Title: A Community of the Spirit: Fruit of the Spirit

Passage: Gal 5:16-6:9

1. Not individual, community fruit (5:19-23)

Paul draws two pictures of the world. Two kinds of society – one of flesh, one of Spirit: both are full of community dynamics. Which community do you want to be part of? Which field do you want to be in? A field of weeds, or a field of watermelon??

This is not a picture of your interior moral choices. Otherwise one ends up thinking about how you behave not about in whom you believe, about what we do rather than about what Christ did.

The idea here is that the community reaps what the individual sows. Selfish thoughts, actions, omissions are the building blocks of a world in which no-one wants to live. Similar idea to the climate emergency: individual decisions bequeath a world that has been ruined.

Gal 6:7 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

True, but for the gospel. Because in the gospel, God sent Jesus to reap what we have sown and to sow what we can reap! Exchange. We sowed to the flesh and Christ reaped death. Christ sowed to the Spirit and we receive life.

2. Not “do this” but “this is done” (5:24-26)

Faith in Christ got you here, but what keeps you here is the fact that the crucifixion of Jesus is an epoch-changing, cosmos-transforming, history-redefining decisive, once-for-all act of God. It’s a hard line. And you’ve crossed it! There is no going back!

Language is similar to Genesis: Adam and Eve in a garden, eat the fruit that God told them not to eat (Gen 3:17-19). Christ bore the curse, was crowned with thorns, to bring us into a garden not of our own planting.

3. Not static, missional/expanding/transformative.

The fruit of the Spirit is about mission. The parable of the sower pictures mission as the sowing of seed. We are called to transform the wilderness of the world by sowing love, joy, peace etc. And ultimately the Gardener plants communities of the Spirit (churches) throughout the world. And harvest/ reaping is also mission language.

4. Not just for now, for eternity (6:8-9) – the fruit of the Spirit is ultimately about heaven.

The Spirit is given as a taste of the world to come, bringing the Kingdom from the future into our present experience. The prophets (eg Isaiah 55: 12-13) pictured fruitfulness as a sign of the end of time. And Revelation 22 pictures heaven as a fruitful garden. I Corinthians 15 speaks of our personal bodily death and resurrection as sowing and reaping. The fruit of the Spirit is a sign and a foretaste of the eternal Kingdom.

The picture “fruit of the Spirit” is a much larger idea than one first imagines. What a great wonder to be called into the grace of Christ!

Suggested questions:

1. What did you learn on Sunday, and what are you going to do about it?
2. In what ways do you see the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Reading Family Church?
3. How does Christ reap what we have sown? How do we reap what Christ has sown? Discuss this “great exchange.”
4. In what areas are you “sowing” at the moment? Pray for these seeds to bear fruit.
5. Pray for the garden of God to spread throughout Reading!