

“The Fruits of the Spirit: The Fullness of Pentecost”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden
for FUMC Grand Junction, Sunday, May 30, 2021

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ
website: <https://www.fumcgj.org/sermons/>

Scripture Text:

Galatians 5:16-18, 22-23 [NLT]

OPENING

(*Reminder about where we've been the last several Sundays taking another look at the fruits of the Spirit*):

- *Guidance* in response to a trusting heart in the account of the Ethiopian official and his baptism / immersion in Acts 8.
- *Partnering with the Spirit in ministry* in connection with the Church Council meeting in Jerusalem in Acts 15.
- *True life in Christ* in the context of Paul's confession in Galatians 2: "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. ..."
- *A world turned upside down* as Paul declared a complete reordering of society in his words to the Galatians that "...there is now no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female, for all are one in Christ Jesus."
- *Service* in light of the witness our work in ShareFest provided back in late April.

(*The fact that all of this stemmed from the coming of

the Holy Spirit as we celebrated in music last Sunday – Pentecost Sunday – and the birth of the church.*)

TO THE SCRIPTURES

Well, today, we get to the list of the fruits of the Spirit that we are probably much more familiar with: the list that the Apostle Paul provides near the end of his letter to the Galatians.

If you look more closely at Galatians 5, you'll notice that I left out several verses in the reading, and they're those having to do with the vices we're left to when we give in to what Paul calls "the desires of our sinful nature". I had those verses skipped in the reading, not because I think they're unimportant, but because they need some interpretation in our day and age.

The list starts out with three sins of the body: "sexual immorality, impurity, and lustful pleasures" [NLT]. It then moves on to no fewer than eleven(!) of what we could call "sins of the heart": idolatry, hostility, jealousy, and eight(!) others before Paul gets tired and says, "and other sins like these".

Today, even today, we tend to be so fixated on "sins of the body" that we don't hear the rest of the list. And so, we are quick to condemn those engaged in the sins of the body – especially if those things happen not to be our sin areas – and completely miss the fact that one or more of the far greater number of the "sins of the heart" indict us and make us just as ineligible to "inherit the Kingdom of God", as Paul says, as those we judge of being guilty of the sins of the body.

As Paul asks in Romans 6, am I now saying, “We should keep on sinning, so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace?” As Paul says then, too, “Of course not!” That’s not what I’m saying.

What I am saying is that life in the Spirit is intended to free us – all of us – from every manner of life that keeps us from living as men, women, and children of God. It’s one of the questions we ask of persons wishing to join the church:

Jesus taught that we should have nothing to do with sin, evil, and spiritual forces of wickedness that destroy our lives with God. Do you embrace this teaching of Jesus, repent of your sin, and vow to resist anything that threatens to take God’s rightful place in your life?

The “*anything that threatens to take God’s rightful place in your life*” includes “the sins of the body” we are so easily embarrassed by AND “the sins of the heart” we much more readily engage in but, concerning which, we give ourselves “a pass”.

We’re not to live like that. As Paul says, *we’re to let the Holy Spirit guide our lives. Then we won’t be doing what our sinful nature craves.*

Instead, our lives will be characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

SERMON THOUGHTS

The fruits of the Spirit that I just named are intended to be reflective of the Spirit’s indwelling. They cannot be sought after or prayed for individually: “O Lord,

please grant me more love for others or more patience or more gentleness.” That’s not how it works. It’s “O Lord, please fill me with and guide me by your Holy Spirit. The end.” And you know what then? The fruits of the Spirit become manifest in our lives as the Spirit takes over.

It is good to know these, so we can be on the lookout for them in our lives, lest we assume the Spirit is in us but is not. There are a number of ways we can memorize this list, and we probably learned some variation of the song that helps with that in Sunday School, camp, or somewhere else. (*Sing through this in a fun way...*)

But I’ve asked Glenna Brayton to come up and share with us a visual learning tool to help us with memorizing this list. (*Invite Glenna forward and work through this with the congregation.*)

CONCLUSION

At the end of the day, as Paul writes in numerous places, it all comes down to the grace of God that we see in Jesus Christ. And that grace is much more effective in helping us to live Godly lives than the law.

That is not to say that living graciously is easy. In fact, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whom I’ve referred to before, wrote of grace being costly. Grace may require us to lay everything on the line to bear witness to the realm of God in our midst.



Anonymous story of a friend who was a flight attendant many years ago who shared me with me an account of grace:

- “Grace”, the plane (above – see the graceful swan on the tail);
- Grace, the desperately ill little girl / infant who needed a breathing apparatus plugged in to aircraft AC power for her flight with parents to a life-saving operation at a highly reputed medical facility;
- and grace that was extended by my friend AND the FAA office at the destination airport in violation of Federal Law: life-saving devices cannot be plugged into AC power outlets on commercial aircraft for liability reasons. There is no backup power supply, so if power fails and the person dies because of that, the lawsuits would be horrendous.

Let us pray:

(*Include a reference to the costly grace we observe today in remembering those who gave their lives for our freedoms.*) Their grace was one extended to those they knew, for sure, but to countless more they

didn't know. And it falls to us this Memorial Day Weekend to remember and to be grateful for their sacrifice and that of their families and loved ones.

Prayer Concerns to include

Our prayer concerns can be found on the second page of the 11 AM Worship Order: Go to the Church's webpage, fumcgj.org, click on the “Worship” tab along the menu bar at the top of the homepage (*Ppt slide #10*), and then click on the link labeled “Order of Worship” (*Ppt slide #11*).

- Praying for our District Churches (1 every week) – Delta UMC as they reach out into their community.
- Florence Schroeder who passed away at HopeWest on Saturday, 5/29/21.
- Phillis Schuhmann who had to admit her husband, Frank, to the VA Hospital (5/17) because of Alzheimer's problems. Care cards can be sent to them at (*address in Prayer Corner list.*)
- Max Stites, recovering at home from spinal surgery in his neck.
- Betty Allen is now home and recuperating.

Action Steps for the Closing of Worship

- ❖ See the *E-blast!* for this weekend. Go to the Church's webpage as before, fumcgj.org, click on the "Worship" tab along the menu bar at the top of the homepage (*Ppt slide #12*), but then click on the link labeled "What's Cookin'" (*Ppt slide #13*)
- ❖ Scholarship app's being taken through this coming Tuesday. Applications on the Church bulletin board or through Laura TerLouw, Sue Yeager, and the Church office.
- ❖ Family Fun Day – for the WHOLE CHURCH!! – at Sherwood Park, next Saturday, 10 AM. Bring a white T-shirt to tie-dye! Snacks provided.
- ❖ Children's Sunday School upstairs in the "Purple Room" after the 9 AM service. (*Is there a Parents' time, too, Anna?*)

BENEDICTION

Memorial Day blessing and other...