

Life Group Notes 4/24/2022

Pastor Bill Pelletier

If these notes are useful to you, and you've enjoyed them, or if you have observations or questions feel free send me an email with your comment or observations at tbeachhead@comcast.net. -Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.

(This is written to give you good things to enjoy, because look again at what Paul told Timothy (1 Tim 6:17-18)! I think he was thinking of us at the time: **17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be conceited and not to put their hope in the uncertainty of wealth, but in God, WHO RICHLY PROVIDES ALL THINGS TO ENJOY. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, and to be generous and ready to share...**)

The following ice breaker is just a starter for your group. The message comes after the bar. Please enjoy!)

CROWD BREAKER How are you doing? Check in with each other. If you had a choice, what kind of tree would you be.

Note: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP. The purpose is to unite, not divide; to proclaim fearlessly the freedom the gospel brings. Any part of these notes might be appropriate as a crowd breaker for your own group. The goal is to create memories from Sunday that will serve for a long time. BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study. This study is also a great devotion, taken slowly through the week.**

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions raised by Pastor Bill Pelletier's message from this Sunday. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.**

If you haven't already, answer this question: If you had a choice, what kind of tree would you be

Pastor Bill says, "Bad trees do not bear good fruit, and good fruit does not come from a bad tree." Do you agree? Are there exceptions? Why are the simplest concepts so easy to ignore?

Pastor Bill says parables give us the occasion to look at ourselves in the mirror. **How does that work?**

A Call to Repentance

[\(Joel 1:13–20; Amos 5:4–15; Zephaniah 2:1–3\)](#)

¹At that time some of those present told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ²To this He replied, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered this fate? ³No, I tell you. But unless you repent, you too will all perish. ⁴Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam collapsed on them: Do you think that they were more sinful than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you. But unless you repent, you too will all perish.” ***Do bad things happen to good people? Do good things happen to bad people? What does that prove? If, when you do a bad thing, nothing happens, are you safe? What does Jesus say here that you must do? What is guaranteed if we do not repent?***

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

[\(Isaiah 5:1–7\)](#)

⁶Then Jesus told this parable: “A man had a fig tree that was planted in his vineyard. He went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. ⁷So he said to the keeper of the vineyard, ‘Look, for the past three years I have come to search for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Therefore cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ ***Answer the question? By what right does a fruitless tree cling to its space?***

Think of John 3:16. How much love is involved? Answer Pastor Bill’s question, does God love you in your unrepentance? Will we live as if God doesn’t exist, and think God will say, “I love that”?

Look up John 3:36:

³⁶[Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever rejects the Son will not see life. Instead, the wrath of God remains on him.](#) ***What does this warn of in your own words?***

Look up Ephesians 2:10 ¹⁰[For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life \(that we should walk in them\).](#) ***What were we created for? How does this apply?*** Bill says, “Think of this. God created us, and in advance, he created the fruit that we should bear...the works that we should do. ***What comes to your mind as you read this? Answer Paul’s question in Romans 8: What can separate us from the love of God?***

Look at what John the Baptist said about repentance in Luke 3 ⁷Then John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce fruit, then, in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ⁹The axe lies ready at the root of

the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.” ***How does this foreshadow what Luke is relating in chapter 13 that we just read? What’s missing in John the Baptist’s warning about the tree that does not bear fruit and the axe? How much help is it that your grandmother was “Christian”? Is reading your Bible every day any help at all? In what way?***

Bill says, when you go to a Bible study and you say, “That’s what I want to be like,” and you learn to be like Jesus was, and say what Jesus would say, that’s producing fruit. ***How does that work? When you imitate Jesus, whom do you look like? What if we all looked like Jesus. What impact would that have in today’s news?***

Pastor Bill says, “Then there are the fruit of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness and self-control.” ***How are you doing? Can you see the Spirit’s contribution to your own life? Do you have a testimony as to how you have grown in this?*** He continues, “These are things that God does in you by the Holy Spirit in you, not because of circumstances, but *despite* circumstances.” ***What does that mean? How good are you at loving those who are hard to love? Look at this: How do the fruit of the spirit relate, each one, to the relationships we have?***

He continues, “When God created Adam and Eve, He told them to be fruitful and multiply. When Noah was there after the flood, He told him to multiply and replenish the earth.” ***How important is fruit to the life of creation? How does bad fruit interfere? (Why was the flood necessary? What was multiplying?)*** “When Jesus ascended into heaven, He said, ‘Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations.’ ***How is that like what God told Adam and Noah? What happens if we do not? What is the alternative?*** Bill says, “We need to be fruitful. But what if there’s no fruit? ***What’s up with the tree?***”

Look at Mark 11: ¹²The next day, when they had left Bethany, Jesus was hungry. ¹³Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if there was any fruit on it. But when He reached it, He found nothing on it except leaves, since it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴Then He said to the tree, “***May no one ever eat of your fruit again.***” And His disciples heard this statement. ***Why would he curse a fig tree when it’s not the season for figs?*** Bill talks about the magnets...the repelled each other until turned around, and then they attracted each other. “That’s what faith does. It changes the attraction. Fruit is the natural by-product of our faith.” ***Does this help?***

Look up James 2: ¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if someone claims to have faith, but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you tells him, “Go in peace; stay warm and well fed,” but does not provide for his physical needs, what good is that? ¹⁷So too, faith by itself, if it does not result in action, is dead.

¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith and I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹You believe that God is one. Good for you! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

How well does this fit into what Pastor Bill is saying? What do you see? Look at verse 24: 26As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. **How severe is this statement? What does it make you think? Bill says, "Faith produces fruit." Is that what James is saying here?**

Look up John 15. 1"I am the true vine, and My Father is the keeper of the vineyard. **2**He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, and every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes to make it even more fruitful. **Compare this to what Luke just told us. Compare it to what James is saying.**

3You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. **4**Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. Just as no branch can bear fruit by itself unless it remains in the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me.

5I am the vine and you are the branches. The one who remains in Me, and I in him, will bear much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing. **6**If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers. Such branches are gathered up, thrown into the fire, and burned. **7**If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8**This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, proving yourselves to be My disciples. **Who looks good when we look good? List the benefits of "bearing fruit."**

How does this apply to what Jesus says in Luke? How is pruning like "dunging" the roots of the tree?

Look at verses 16-17: 16You did not choose Me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will remain—so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you. **17**This is My command to you: Love one another. **What are the promises extended here? Is failure possible? What is required to bear fruit?**

Pastor Bill spoke of those who come to church week after week and year after year, but they have not joined a life group or taken advantage of what is offered. **What is the promise for them...if they continue to come, and continue to hear, if they do not give up or give themselves over to discouragement? What cannot stay the same because they are hearing week after week? What's their first step to finally bearing fruit? When should that happen? Have you felt that there is something more? Do you need help or ideas? Have things for you gotten worse? Or better since you began coming to Grace? Do you have a testimony? A prayer request?**

Finally look again at Luke 13:8'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone again this year, until I dig around it and fertilize it. **9**If it bears fruit next year, fine. But if not, you can cut it down.'" **What quality does this statement illustrate? Who is advocating on behalf of the fig tree? How much grace is there? Is it unlimited? How much dung will it take? Connect this parable to the warning Jesus issued above in the first verses of this chapter.** Bill says, "If there is no fruit in your life, don't stay where you are." **Who would know if there's fruit in your life?**

Are you willing to allow Jesus to dig, to dung and to prune? Jesus said, "Come unto me, you who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. ***What yoke have you been carrying? His or yours?***

Bill warns, "When God starts working on your tree, it's painful, and it's ugly and it can smell bad." ***Do you have a testimony? Bill says, "You can say, when someone starts to question why you look so bad, 'Hey! Check back with me in a year, when it's time to bear fruit.'" What's the promise in that reply? Why is fruit unlike a digital print, click and it's out in full color?*** Bill says, "And don't be ashamed. Don't be ashamed." ***Why is that so important?***

Bill's conclusion: "How do you bear fruit? Here's the important principle. If you can heal yourself by yourself, you would have done it already. You need the Lord, and you need the Lord's people. We have Celebrate Recovery. We have other life groups where you can be plugged in. You need to be plugged in. Others need what you have to bring. This is what helps us bear fruit. You cannot do it without other members of the body. You cannot do it without Jesus. Jesus said, 'If you abide in my ***you will bear much fruit.***' ***How do you "abide?" Answer the question according to what Bill just said.*** "You are praying, fellowshiping, and worshiping with such intimacy that He is not way out there. He is right where you are." ***How does that work?***

Read Romans 5: ⁶For at just the right time, while we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God proves His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Therefore, since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from wrath through Him! ¹⁰For if, when we were enemies of God, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! ***How do we prove our love toward our neighbors if we are to imitate God? Answer Paul's question: How much more shall we be saved through His life?***

Scribal musings:

Think of this: If the sower sows seed, will he bear fruit? If he's not looking back but continues to sow, why will he not see that fruit? Who does see the fruit? And what happens to the seed from THAT fruit? What is the inevitable result of bearing fruit? Paul tells the Corinthian church, "I planted. Apollos watered. God brought the increase." Talk about the process of fruit bearing described here. Who is involved? How dependent was the Corinthian church on the efforts of both Paul and Apollos...and each other? And God?

Is it possible to bear the real, lasting fruit Jesus describes above independent of the church?