

"Fruit of the Spirit" - June 7, 2015

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June 7, 2015; Confirmation Sunday

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Youth read the Scriptures in this sermon

Galatians 5: 22-23a, 25. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control... If we live by the Spirit, let us be guided by the Spirit.*

Colossians 3: 12-15. *As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as God has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.*

Isn't a bowl of fruit a wonder to behold? All the different colors, shapes and sizes—just like all of us! How can anyone see these fruits and not be grateful--- not to mention touching the various textures, tasting, smelling, and yes, hearing the crunch or the smush when we bite into a piece of good fruit. Hallelujah! We experience even more wonder and gratitude when we meet and get to know people who possess what the apostle Paul called "the fruit of the Spirit," qualities that we embody and express whenever our hearts are open to the Spirit of God within us and flowing through us.

The image of fruit is familiar in the Bible. FRUIT

"No good tree bears bad **fruit**, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush." (*Gospel of Luke*)

"Happy are those who do not follow bad advice or take the path of wrongdoing. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which bear their **fruit** in season, and their leaves do not wilt." (*Psalms 1*)

So let's have a little fun as we consider the nine qualities called the "fruit of the Spirit!"

How about linking **love** with a **lemon**? I won't stretch the metaphors too far, but like a lemon, love gives zest to our lives, in fact, love is the central zest of our lives! Of course, love can become tart or sour. But when we add a little sweetness such as patience and forgiveness, we can make delicious lemonade out of lemons!

"I give you a new commandment, that you **love** one another. By this everyone

will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another... No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." (*Gospel of John*)

"**Love** is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth." (*First Corinthians*)

How about **joy and an orange**? What a beautiful, vibrant color! When you open an orange, the abundant, sticky juice flows out, just as joy pours out of our being in celebration and thanksgiving for the gift of life, family and friends.

"You who are righteous, rejoice in the LORD and be glad! All you whose hearts are right, sing out in **joy**!" (*Psalms 32*)

"Ask and you will receive, so that your **joy** may be complete." (*Gospel of John*)

Patience—and a pineapple. Boy, does it take patience to get through this prickly exterior to the sweet, soft fruit inside. But it's worth it, isn't it? We never stop working at being patient with ourselves and with others, but patience brings its own reward, again and again.

"Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but one who has a quick temper is foolish." (*Proverbs*)

"Rejoice in hope, be **patient** in suffering, persist in prayer." (*Letter to the Romans*)

Pick up a piece of fruit to spark the Spirit of love, joy and patience!

The **kiwi** looks plain and unappealing on the outside, but what glory there is inside: bright green contrasting with black seeds so too can **kind** words delight us when we least expect them, and kind gestures touch our hearts in extraordinary ways.

"The Lord says: 'I am God, who exercises **kindness**, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight.'" (*The prophet Jeremiah*)

"Put away from you all bitterness and rage, anger, bickering and slander, together with all cruelty; be **kind** to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you." (*Letter to the Ephesians*)

Figs make me think of the Holy Land, growing along with dates and olives in fertile oases in the desert. Hand in hand with love, **faithfulness** describes the heart of God and lies at the heart of the Christian way of life: faithfulness to God, to

others and to our true selves.

“Don’t let **loyalty and faithfulness** leave you.
Bind them on your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.” (*Proverbs*)

“For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in **faithfulness** to you.”
(Psalm 26)

Ah **strawberries!** Maybe I should say strawberry rhubarb, adding some tartness because **self-control** may be the hardest of the nine fruits to embody. Every human being needs to practice self-control, that is, self-discipline and self-restraint, especially when we are dealing with emotions and behavior that can harm others as well as ourselves.

“A person who lacks **self-control** is like a city whose walls are broken through.” (*Proverbs*)

Pick up a piece of fruit to spark the Spirit of kindness, faithfulness and self-control!

I could use the pineapple again for the quality of peace, because the way of **peace** is a lifestyle filled with obstacles. But I chose a **pear** because of its silky texture inside and its gentle taste.

“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the **peace** of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ.” (*Letter to the Philippians*)

The abundance of **grapes** lead me of course to **generosity**, which in some Bibles is translated instead as goodness. This morning, as we share the Communion meal, let us remember how the grapes reflects the goodness and generosity of God revealed through Jesus Christ.

“Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am **generous?**” (*Gospel of Matthew*)

“Some people borrow, and do not pay back, but the righteous are **generous** and keep giving;” (*Psalm 37*)

I picked a **golden apple** for **gentleness**, because we don’t often lift up this quality as a virtue, especially when describing men. I think that this word should come back into our everyday speech. What a gentle person he is! Her gentleness is such a gift to our community!

A **gentle** answer turns away rage, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (*Proverbs*)

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your **gentleness** be known to everyone. The Lord is near. (*Philippians*)

Pick up a piece of fruit to spark the Spirit of peace, generosity and gentleness!

Imagine a world where everyone embodies these nine fruits of the Spirit. WOW!

Which of these is your best quality? Which of these may you need to practice more often?

God isn't finished with us yet! Let us rejoice, for the Holy Spirit never ceases to flow and grow within us, thanks be to God!

Amen.