

Opening : The power of words

Read [Romans 8:38, 39](#) foundation for John 15

Read [John 15:1-8](#)

What if you knew you were about to die that you had only hours or minutes left – how would use those final moments? Would you sit down and weep – would you try to send a message, gather loved ones around you, surround yourself with your most valued possessions, try to clear your conscience, or write your last will and testament?

Would your last moments be focused on yourself or others?

Interesting thought isn't it? What will your last words or actions be, before you enter eternity?

We will all face that moment - but not all of us will be granted the time to think things over.

A week ago a van carrying a family of seven careened off a concrete barrier hit the curb and flew right over the guard rail on the Bronx River Parkway, plunging them 50 feet to sudden death of all. No time for reflection

Not everyone gets that chance.

But Jesus knew his last hours were upon him and he chose to use that time to give final instructions and encouragement to his disciples. There were only eleven now – they were more than his students or disciples - they were beloved friends.

Quote by Lance Secretan

“Leadership is not so much about technique and methods as it is about opening the heart. Leadership is about inspiration—of oneself and of others. Great leadership is about human experiences, not processes. Leadership is not a formula or a program; it is a human activity that comes from the heart and considers the hearts of others. It is an attitude, not a routine.”

The Setting:

- The last supper has been shared the - disciples feet washed.
- His horrific death by crucifixion only hours away.
- Jesus leads the eleven disciples, probably walking single file as they pass through a vineyard on the way to a Garden at Gethsemane.
- Judas is already taking the final steps to lead a mob of executioners to the place he knew Jesus would go to pray.

I can imagine Jesus is somewhat emotional, knowing that this will be the last time they'll be together in the present situation. It was time to say goodbye.

Many years ago Jen and I pioneered and pastored a church called Maranatha Chapel.

We served the Lord as ministers there for more than 8 years after which time, due to illness, I had to step down. I remember my final message to the church and how emotional and difficult that parting goodbye was.

I ended that morning with words from Robert Fulghum's book, All I Really Need to Know I learned in Kindergarten

- ☆ What would Jesus choose to say - knowing - that after investing three years of His life into these men, all of them, except John, would desert and betray him?

Who's who in this illustration?

Jesus is not trying to be cryptic

The Vine – Vine Dresser – the branches

Jesus states clearly - Its God's will and desire that you produce fruit

Every branch **in me** that does not bear fruit He *aero* (lifts up) and every branch that is already bearing fruit he prunes so that it may bear more fruit.

It's God's desire to bless you – to make you fruitful and enrich your life.

- Now the terms: Remain in me and I will remain in you –
Do you see the order of events here?

I Am the Vine you are the branches.

If you remain in me (your choice)

I will remain in you and together we will bring forth great fruit ... but without me you can do nothing

Jesus makes it crystal clear ... I - not you- are the vine

If you don't remain attached to me you will wither and die and no matter how great your personal accomplishments—the end result - withered, worthless branches

II. There are two kinds of fruit: internal and external

Fruit in practical terms represents good works – a thought, an attitude or action of ours that God values

The inner fruit

Galatians 5:22 *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”*

These are the qualities people strive for but struggle to identify – they're searching for the ingredients to a happy self-fulfilling life.

I believe Thomas Jefferson expresses these sentiments in the opening lines of *The Declaration of Independence*

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their

just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

The outer fruit:

Sharing your faith – not just with your mouth but by your deeds

You see a need and address it:

- You Pitch in to help a neighbor or a even total stranger (the good Samaritan)
- You Give up time to help others – becoming a mentor – working in a soup kitchen – cleaning a house for someone who is aged or sick – visiting or calling someone who is lonely or despondent
- You Care for the widow and the fatherless giving your time, money to help
- You fight for justice , defending those who can't defend themselves
- You do the right thing even when its not popular or appreciated

God is glorified by the fruits of your life!

You want to know how to please God – what makes Him smile?

Allow God to live through you – this is true worship!

This is what Jesus meant when he said “... *the Father is seeking those who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth.*”

You become the bridge God uses to connect to people that are desperately in need of Him but don't even know it

Have you been there? Have sensed the delight in your Spirit when you know you have done something that pleases God? It is the most fulfilling experience possible.

Devotional reading Ashes to Fire – by Kevin Dunlop, pastor, Quincy, Massachusetts

A woman in our town recently opened a small restaurant, which in itself is not newsworthy. The story behind her new venture deserves attention. Prior to opening her restaurant, she operated a bar and liquor store in town. She earned a comfortable income from them. She couldn't put her finger on it, but the pieces of the puzzle of her life weren't fitting together as she wanted. She experienced an increasing level of discontent with both her life and way of making a living. This discontent led her into a deep soul search. She slowly came to recognize God's hand reaching out to her. In her words, “I was not searching for him; he came searching for me and found me.” She began reading the Bible and soon confessed Jesus as Savior and Lord of her life.

With Jesus as her Lord, she knew she had to close the bar and liquor store. But, what would she do to make a living? She was a single mother with a child to feed and care for. She had always wanted to operate a restaurant, so she stepped out on faith and focused all of her energy on bringing this dream to reality. The restaurant quickly became one of the most popular places in town. She serves delicious food. If you want to have one of her meals, you'd better come early. Lines form quickly. And, you'd better be prepared to hear how Jesus sought and found her. She loves to tell everyone of his seeking love.

*“But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, **you may ask anything you want and it will be granted!** When you produce much fruit you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.”*

Don't miss that part – Under those conditions and in that close relationship – You wanting and letting God be Lord of your life – living within you – nothing you ask for from God will be impossible.

“Ask anything you want and it will be granted.”

But that degree of relationship is sacrificial – its life altering – its life emptying

To get more of God there must be less of you.

But the fruit that grows from your life will reach beyond who you are it will reach beyond your lifetime.

1 Corinthians 2:9,10 “But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But he has revealed them to us by His Spirit.”