

Introduction

I am excited to talk to you today about three marks of a mature believer. This year, our church is focused on evangelism. We have doing a series on evangelism in our bulletins. I believe that there will be about thirty-four articles. Our message series is the Gospel of Luke. Luke was known as the evangelist, and apparently had much fame as an evangelist.

I am excited to talk to you about this today because there is more to the great commission than evangelism. Jesus said to go and make disciples. He did not say to go and just make converts. Jesus wants you and I to come to maturity as a believer. **The great commission is to make disciples, not just converts.**

I like the way Paul puts it in Colossians 1:28-29. He says we proclaim Him. That is the proclamation of the gospel. That is the first part of the great commission. But, Paul goes on. He says, “admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.” The goal was to make every man complete or to bring people to maturity. The Greek word for complete that is used is *teleios*, which means to reach a goal, accomplish, complete, perfect, or mature. The root word means a point in the distance. The point in the distance for you and I is to be like Christ.

(Col 1:28-29) “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. {29} For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

Paul is so committed to bringing people to maturity that he says, “for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.” The Greek word that Paul uses for striving is *agônizomai*, which is what we get our English word agony. It actually means to compete for a prize, to fight, strive or contend. It was a word that was used in the Greek games – the Olympics. These fighters would fight to death. Paul is saying that he is in a fight unto death to produce mature believers. He is fighting a supernatural battle on behalf of the church. He is fighting according to God’s power, His Holy Spirit supernatural *dunamis* power, for people to come to maturity. We think that the primary struggle is to get people to receive Christ. The struggle is not just for the evangelism portion; it is also to bring people to a place of maturity. I am excited about today’s message because it helps us keep sight of the rest of the great commission.

I got a newsletter from a pastor this week that describes part of this struggle to bring the body to maturity. Here is an excerpt from a ministry trip to Ethiopia.

According to Paul in First Thessalonians 5:12, a characteristic of elders is that they “admonish” those under their care—they warn and correct their church members with God’s word. Even fellow believers are sometimes required to admonish one another (see 1 Thessalonians 5:14). Scripture isn’t always meant to comfort us. Sometimes it addresses us in our pride, or when we are thinking incorrectly, or behaving sinfully.

Toward the end of a ministry trip to Ethiopia, I began to notice an unbiblical pattern in the lives of the believers in one church: each time I arrived at the church building, they didn’t greet me with a holy kiss. This was very surprising because in all other venues, even in secular contexts,

they greet one another with not only a handshake and sometimes a hug, but also touching cheeks, sometimes multiple times. But once within the church building, these typically friendly believers entered into what appeared to be their own private worship experience, to the neglect of the other believers around them.

I decided to admonish this church. When I announced what I intended to do, they sat up even more than usual, eager to receive the correction. I first reminded them about the Apostle Paul's exhortations to greet one another with a holy kiss. I expressed to them how I didn't see that happening when they gathered together. I mentioned the importance of "love" in the church, and how it is expressed through simple actions like greetings. I also reflected on the importance of showing Christ-like love toward one another so that unbelievers will know we are Christians. I even shared that on that particular day, not a single believer had greeted me.

How did they respond? As soon as I was done teaching, the people flooded the aisle to greet me. Two very old ladies must have kissed me 20 times on each cheek! It was a beautiful, perfect response to a fairly hard-hitting admonishment.

As a pastor, my primary job is not to raise money for foreign missions. My primary job is not to build a campus with lovely buildings, or to develop church programs. My primary job as a pastor is to shepherd the flock. It is to pray over, feed, nurture, and equip the flock. My primary job is to teach and admonish the flock, and help the flock become mature. Like Paul, **a pastor's primary job is to present every man complete in Christ.** This is what we strive for according to His power.

On my flight to Houston a couple of weeks ago I sat next to a nun named Helen. She was on her way to have heart surgery in Houston. I felt led to pray Philippians 4:6-8 over her, so I asked her if she was nervous. She said that her knees were shaking. I got out my phone and brought up the verse in my Bible application, showed it to her, and then began to pray over her. She said it was no accident that I sat next to her. She had anxiety and worry, and needed God's peace. We had a good conversation about many things, and I invited her to the Ladies Conference. Hopefully she will come, and bring several of the other nuns at the monastery with her.

When I told her that I was a pastor at the East Mountain Vineyard Church, she asked me if I knew John Wimber. I told her that I did not personally know him. She said that she went to a couple of conferences that he spoke at. At one Signs and Wonders conference, John had shared about a plane flight. There was a man and wife sitting next to John, and the Holy Spirit told John that the man had been having an affair. The Holy Spirit even told John the name of the woman he had been having an affair with. The Lord told John to tell the man to go to the back of the plane so that he could talk to him for a minute. They went to the back of the plane and John told him what the Lord had said. He said that the Lord wanted him to confess his sin to his wife before the plane landed, or that there would be serious repercussions. John went back to his seat and began praying. The man's wife was sleeping, but he woke her up and confessed his adultery to her. She became outraged, but as John continued praying, her anger subsided and they worked things out.

It is not just sharing the gospel that requires the power of God working in our lives. Confronting people requires wisdom, boldness, courage, and the sign gifts. John had admonished the man to confess his sin to his wife. That required the power of God working in and through John Wimber. Our work is not just to win people to Christ; it is to present them complete, without spot or wrinkle.

How do you know what that point in the distance looks like? How do you know if you are making progress? Our passage today gives three different marks of a mature believer. These are not the only marks of a mature believer, but they are the ones covered in our passage today. Luke gives three signs of a mature believer. First, a mature believer bears much fruit. Second, a mature believer bears light to those around. Third, a mature believer bears the family name. Let's read our passage.

Three Marks of a Mature Believer

1. He bears much fruit.
2. He bears light to those around.
3. He bears the family name.

(Luke 8:4-21) "When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: {5} "The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. {6} "Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. {7} "Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. {8} "Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great." As He said these things, He would call out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." {9} His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant. {10} And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND. {11} "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. {12} "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. {13} "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. {14} "The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. {15} "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance. {16} "Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. {17} "For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light. {18} "So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him." {19} And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. {20} And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You." {21} But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

1. He bears much fruit.

Our passage begins with a very familiar parable about the various soils. Before we get into the parable, I want to make a point about parables. They are given to illustrate one main point or truth. It is dangerous to try and make doctrines about every single part of the parable. In this particular parable, the main point is that God wants us to bear much fruit, and in order to bear much fruit, we need to have good soil. The parable is not trying to make distinctions about who will be saved and who will not be saved. The only soil that the word says will not be saved is the hard ground, and

these have never believed and are not saved. We get in trouble when we use parables to create doctrines or support a doctrine that is unrelated to the main point. We get in trouble when we start trying to determine if the ones who had rocky soil or thorny soil get saved. The point of the parable is not salvation. The point of the passage is we need good soil so that we can bear much fruit. We should use parables the way that they were intended, to teach and illustrate a Biblical principle.

The account today begins by saying that when a big crowd was coming together, He spoke by way of a parable. His disciples did not understand the parable, so they began questioning Him. We can learn a lot just from this. When we do not understand something, we need to ask questions. Don't be afraid to ask a dumb question. Ask questions. Seek understanding and knowledge. Don't let pride or embarrassment or anything else keep you from asking questions. There is a time and place to ask questions. Make a point to ask questions the next time that you do not understand something. Be childlike in your faith and ask the question.

(Luke 8:4, 9-21) "When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable.... {9} His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable meant. {10} And He said, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND."

I like what Jesus says to His disciples, "to you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God." **God wants to reveal the deeper things to you and I.** He wants to reveal mysteries to us. That is what Daniel wanted. He wanted more understanding about some of the end time prophecies, so he asked God some questions. He also fasted and sought the Lord. Daniel was serious about understanding these end time prophecies.

(Dan 10:12) "Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words."

Notice that to others, it was not granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. The starting place of knowing the mysteries is to receive Christ. It is to become a follower of Christ. When we follow Christ, His Spirit begins to reveal things to us. The world sees, but does not see. The world hears, but does not understand. The word of God appears as foolishness to them.

In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul writes that the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. God wants to reveal His wisdom to us, but it requires us to trust in Him, and follow Him. That is the starting place of maturity.

(1 Cor 1:18) "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

A. The Hard Soil

Jesus began explaining the parable to His disciples. The word disciple means learner. The teacher is teaching those who are learners. They are following Him to learn. He tells them that the seed that is sown is the word of God. He tells them that the hard soil represents those who are beside the road,

and have been trampled down. The seed cannot penetrate into the soil. It cannot put down roots. It lays on top of the soil, and the devil comes and takes away the seed so that it cannot bear fruit.

(Luke 8:11-12) “Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. {12} "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.”

In professional golf there are two main categories of professionals, and each professional has a different type of certification. I had both certifications. I was a Class A-3 professional, which means that I had earned my PGA Tour card, and successfully gone through the classes required for that certification. These included public relations, rules of golf, sponsor relationships, golf club design, golf course design, etc. I also had a Class A-1 certification, which is the certification that club professionals carry. The required classes included merchandising, clothing, shoes, golf club design and repair, golf cart maintenance, fleet maintenance, golf instruction, and agronomy.

One of the things that we learned in agronomy is the importance of aerating the fairways and greens. As people walk on the greens, the ground becomes compacted. When this happens, the soil gets hard and water cannot penetrate it. Instead, it sits on the surface or runs off. Additionally, the roots cannot get the oxygen they need. Therefore, golf courses aerate the greens several times a year. They have a machine with tines that poke holes in the greens. Afterwards, the greens are top dressed with sand, or a sand/peat mixture. This allows the roots to breathe, and to be properly hydrated.

That is what this parable is saying. The ground by the road has been compacted by the traffic on it. Plants cannot grow in this compacted soil. A hardened heart does not receive the word of God and be saved. It needs to be properly broken up so that it can receive the word of God. One of the amazing things about jail ministry is how many people were being saved. There were thousands of men whose hearts had been broken up and they were ready to receive the gospel. **Without receiving the word and being saved, there is no fruit.** The starting point for bearing fruit is salvation.

B. The rocky soil

The second soil is the rocky soil. These people hear the word and receive it with joy. However, because of the rocky soil, they have no firm root. In the time of temptation, they fall away.

(Luke 8:13) “Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.”

In order for these people to bear fruit, the rocks have to be removed, so that their roots can grow and spread. I mentioned to you that Paul agonized and strived to bring people to maturity. Pulling up rocks from people’s hearts is not easy.

I do not currently garden, but I like to garden. I have a plow, and I like to prepare my soil with my plow before planting. It breaks up the hard ground. I also add manure and other organic matter and plow that into the soil. When my plow hits rocks, I stop the plow, pick up the rock, and put it off to the side of my garden area. It takes a while to get all the rocks out of the soil, but unless I do this, the vegetables cannot get properly rooted, and we will not have good production.

How do we get firmly rooted? First, **we get firmly rooted examining our lives through the word of God.** We have to be willing to look intently at the word and deal with the things that the Lord shows us. We have to be willing to repent and pull up the rocks and toss them aside. Notice that James tells us to put aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted.” Repentance is what plows and breaks up the hard soil. Repentance brings humility and softness. Repentance allows us to receive the word of God. James goes on to say that we are to look intently at the word and become a doer of the word. That is one way that we get firmly rooted.

(James 1:21-25) “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. {22} But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. {23} For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; {24} for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. {25} But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.”

Second, **we get firmly rooted by being planted in a church body.** We get rooted in God’s word with good teaching. We get rooted by attending the ladies studies and the men’s Bible studies. We get rooted by applying the lessons that we are learning, and not just being hearers who delude themselves. And, in a church, there should be regular encouragement. Encouragement is the water that our roots need to grow. The Scriptures teach us to consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, and not to forsake the assembling of ourselves, but to encourage one another. Encouragement is the root stimulant that we need to get firmly rooted.

(Heb 10:24-25) “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, {25} not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

Jesus also said that those without a firm root fall away in temptation. We have to teach people how to deal with temptation. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that no temptation has overtaken us but such is common to man, and with the temptation He will provide a way of escape. This tells us several things. First, **any temptation before us is not unique; it is common to man.** There is nothing especially difficult in it. Second, **we can overcome this temptation; it is not beyond what we can handle.** If God has allowed it in our lives, we can beat it. We can overcome it. We need to have a triumphant and positive attitude. Third, **God is ready to come to our rescue.** He is faithful and is with us to help us. Fourth, **we need to look for the way of escape.** God will provide a way of escape so that we can endure it. If you do not see the way of escape, ask God to make it clear to you.

(1 Cor 10:13) “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

C. The thorny soil

The third soil is the thorny soil. These people hear the word and receive it. They begin to grow up, but they are choked out by weeds. Weeds rob the plants of the nutrients in the soil, and the moisture that they need. Many times they also rob the plants of the sunlight they need. Pulling up weeds was one of my least favorite jobs as a gardener, but in order for me to have productive gardens, I needed to weed my garden. I tried to space my rows out wide enough for me to run my plow through them. The plow pulled up all my weeds and made my job much easier.

(Luke 8:14) “The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.”

Jesus said **the thorns that choked out the plants are worries, riches and the pleasures of this life**. If you recall the rich young ruler, Jesus told him to go and sell all his possessions and then follow Jesus. The man went away very sorrowful, because he owned much. I can't tell you whether there was a rock that needed to be pulled or just thorny riches, but Jesus was trying to help this young man get his heart right so that he could bear fruit. It is not easy to do this.

(Matt 19:21-22) “Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." {22} But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.”

It is not just the wealthy that have a difficult time. Many times it is those who do not have much that worry about their finances. And, it is not just the wealthy that struggle with the pleasures of life. Drug addiction, alcohol addiction, sex addiction, gambling, etc. are pleasures of life that people of all social strata struggle with. These things, these thorns, choke out a person's ability to bear fruit. They stunt the spiritual growth. And, it takes a lot of wisdom, grace, courage, firmness, etc. to speak the truth in love to people that are struggling with the pursuit of riches, worries, and the pleasures of life. And the truth is that when everyone of us was saved, we had some stones in our soil. We had some weeds and thorns in our lives that we have had to deal with. I am glad that the Lord is persistent and committed to me, and to all of us. I want to bear much fruit, so I want these things out of my life. I want to be the next soil, the good soil, that bears much fruit.

How do we get some of these weeds removed from our lives? **One way to get rid of the thorns is to allow our brothers and sisters to speak into our lives**. I am constantly amazed at how few people will receive and walk in the counsel of others. God uses those around us to weed our gardens. He uses our friends. He uses our employers. He uses the authorities, both spiritual and governmental, to weed our garden.

A few weeks ago a young man that I know told his father that he wants to marry his girlfriend. The young man is 18, and does not have a full-time job with benefits. He does not have a car. He does not have an education. He does not have a trade or job skill. His father wisely counseled him that he was not ready and began to address some of these issues. He told him to wait. The young man said that he still wanted to get married. His father told him to speak with their pastor about it. The pastor told him to wait, and that he was not ready for that commitment and responsibility. So, the next day

the young man asked his girlfriend to marry him. He rejected the counsel of his father and his pastor. The weeds will grow rampantly and will choke out his ability to be fruitful unless he begins to receive and walk in the wise counsel of others.

D. The good soil

The fourth soil is the good soil. Jesus said that they have an honest and good heart. I like that. I like people who are honest. I do not trust those who are dishonest. Trust comes out of honest relationships. **A good heart holds fast to the word and bears fruit with perseverance.**

(Luke 8:15) “But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.”

A few weeks ago I greeted Arlene at the door. She had come hobbling through the parking lot. I asked her if she was okay, and at first she said she was fine. Then, she stopped and said, “no, I am not fine. I have some arthritis in my feet and it is painful to walk.” She was being honest with me, and I greatly appreciate that. We need to be honest and authentic with one another. That shows an honest and good heart. God will use people like Arlene to bear much fruit.

Jesus said that those with a good heart hold fast to the word and bear fruit with perseverance. When we are tested, we have to hold fast to the promises in God’s word. We have to hold fast to our faith. We have to persevere through some rough spots. All of us have some rough stretches and we must persevere.

How do you persevere so that you can bear much fruit. Here are several things that we can do to help one another persevere. First, **we persevere by fellowshipping with other believers**. The scriptures tell us to encourage one another daily, lest we fall away. When we are going through a rough time, it is not time to separate ourselves from the flock; it is a time to fellowship even more.

(Heb 3:12-13) “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. {13} But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”

Second, **we persevere by strengthening ourselves in the Lord**. Press in to the Lord. Spend time in worship and prayer. Spend time in the Word of God. Spend time meditating on God’s promises. Memorize some of the promises that pertain to your situation.

Third, **we persevere by praying in the Spirit**. The Scriptures teach us that when we pray in the spirit, we are edified. In a corporate meeting, we want the body to be edified, but it is a good thing to build yourself up. Because of that, Paul said he wished that everyone spoke in tongues.

(1 Cor 14:4-5a) “One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. {5} Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues...”

Again, the point of this parable is that we need good soil if we want to bear much fruit. **God wants us to bear much fruit**. In John 15:16, He tells us that He chose us to go and bear fruit, and that our fruit would remain.

(John 15:16) “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.”

Jesus also said in that same passage, “by this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit.” God wants us to bear much fruit. He is glorified when we bear much fruit. It is those who have good soil that bear much fruit. They have received the word of God. They have had the rocks removed from their soil, and they have put down good roots. They have weeded their hearts of the worries, pursuit of riches, and the pleasures of life. They have good and honest hearts that persevere. These are mature believers, and they bear much fruit.

(John 15:8) “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”

2. He bears light to those around. (Luke 8:16-18)

The second mark of a mature believer is that he bears light to those around. Jesus said that “no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light.” **God wants you and I to be a light to the world.** We are not the light; we are to bear witness to the light, and that is Jesus.

(Luke 8:16-18) “Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light.”

Once we have come into a relationship with Christ, who is the Light, we are to bear witness of the Light. Notice what John wrote about John the Baptist. He says that he is not the light, but he was to testify of the Light. That is what all of us have been called to do. Once our lamp is lit, we are to be a light to all those around us.

(John 1:6-8) “There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. {7} He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. {8} He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.”

I am more of a light today than when I was first saved. Unfortunately, I remember doing some bad things as a believer. I have thrown a few clubs. It is hard to imagine, but I got pretty angry at times. In my latter years, I did not act that way, but when I was a younger Christian, my light was not quite as bright. I like what Solomon wrote in Proverbs. “The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.” Praise God that my life is brighter today than yesterday. Praise God that tomorrow will be brighter than today. God wants us to grow and mature, and become brighter and brighter. **Our lives are to get brighter and brighter each day.**

(Pro 4:18) “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.”

Paul makes this very clear in the book of Ephesians. He exhorts the church to put off the old self and put on the new self. Then, he tells them not to be partakers with the world. He tells them not to participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness. He says that they were formerly darkness, but now

they are Light in the Lord, and are to walk as children of Light. Then, he tells them what walking in the light is. It is walking in goodness, righteousness, and truth.

(Eph 5:7-13) “Therefore do not be partakers with them; {8} for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light {9} (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), {10} trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. {11} Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; {12} for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. {13} But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light.

John gives us a practical example. He says that the one who says he is in the light yet hates his brother is in the darkness. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light. **One way that we are to give light to those around us is to love our brother.**

(1 John 2:9-11) “The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. {10} The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. {11} But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”

That is why John wrote that when people see our love they will know that we are Christians. He said, “by this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

(John 13:35) “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Jesus ends this section by saying that nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light. Paul quoted this in the passage in Ephesians. As bearers of light, our lives expose darkness and the deeds of darkness. We are at a critical time in our culture where we need to expose darkness. **We are called to expose the darkness.** Christians have been afraid to do what Paul said to do, to expose the darkness. Donald mentioned this in a sermon a few weeks ago. It is time for Christians to stand up for righteousness. If we do not stand up for righteousness, if we do not bear light, what light we think we have will be taken away from us.

(Luke 8:17-18) “For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light. {18} “So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.”

3. He bears the family name. (Luke 8:19-21)

God wants us to bear much fruit. It is a process. We have to remove the rocks and weeds and prepare the soil of our hearts so that we can bear much fruit. God wants us to bear light. We are to put off the deeds of darkness that we once walked in, and be bearers of light. We are to be lights on a lampstand that give light to those around. Third, we are to bear the family name. We are to bear the name of Christ.

In our passage, Jesus' mother and brothers came to Him, and were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. That is a good problem. I pray that the life and ministry of Jesus is so prevalent in our body that people have a hard time getting in because of the crowds.

When it was reported to Jesus that His family was outside and wanted to see Him, He answered, "My brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it." **Family members are those who hear the word of God and do it.**

(Luke 8:19-21) "And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd. {20} And it was reported to Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You." {21} But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

In Matthew's account we find that when it was reported to Him that His family was outside, Jesus actually asked a question. He said, "who is My mother and who are My brothers?" He then goes on to tell them that His **family members are those who do the will of the Father.**

(Matt 12:48-50) "But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" {49} And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! {50} "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

If we are going to bear the family name, we must be those who do the will of the Father. Where do we find the will of God? We find it in the passage in Luke. We must be those who hear the word of God and do it. We must have good soil and receive the word of God in our lives, and apply the word in our lives.

Conclusion

As we come to a close this morning, we want to welcome some new family members to our church body. Roland and Gayle De Rose have been coming for a number of months and have indicated a desire to become a part of our body. We have the same expectations as Jesus of family members. We want to see Roland and Gayle, and every other member in this body, be doers of the word. We want to see them doing the will of God in their lives. We want to help them find their place of service in the body. That is why we ask everyone to fill out the interview form. We want to know what their gifts and abilities are. We want to know what their passions are. We want to help them accomplish the will of God in their lives. God has a plan for each one of us, and we want to help each of you accomplish that will.

When people join our body, they make a commitment to us to support the body through their service, spiritual gifts, abilities, and tithes and offerings. Each of us have made a commitment to bear fruit and to walk in the light. We have made a commitment to love one another, and to forgive one another. We have made a commitment to walk in relational harmony.

When people join our body, we also make a commitment to them. We commit ourselves to love them, and to serve them. The pastoral team makes a commitment to pray for them, to nurture them, to feed them, and to protect them. As we saw in Colossians earlier, the pastors strive to present every

member complete or mature in Christ. That is what we have been called to do.

If we can have Roland and Gayle come up, and also our pastoral team, we will now receive them in to our body.

Introduction (Col 1:28-29, 1 Thess 5:12, Luke 8:4-21)

- The great commission is to make _____, not just converts.
- A pastor's primary job is to present every man _____ in Christ.

1. He bears much fruit. (Luke 8:4, 9-21)

- God wants to _____ the deeper things to you and I. (Dan 10:12, 1 Cor 1:18)

A. The Hard Soil (Luke 8:11-12)

- Without receiving the word and being saved, there is _____.

B. The rocky soil (Luke 8:13)

- We get firmly rooted by _____ our lives through the word of God. (James 1:21-25)
 - We get firmly rooted by being planted in a _____ body. (Heb 10:24-25)
1. Any temptation before us is not unique; it is _____ to man. (1 Cor 10:13)
 2. We can _____ this temptation; it is not beyond what we can handle. (1 Cor 10:13)
 3. God is ready to come to our _____. (1 Cor 10:13)
 4. We need to look for the way of _____. (1 Cor 10:13)

C. The thorny soil (Luke 8:14)

- The thorns that choked out the plants are _____, _____, and the pleasures of this life. (Matt 19:21-22)
- One way to get rid of the thorns is to _____ our brothers and sisters to speak into our lives.

D. The good soil (Luke 8:15)

- A good heart holds fast to the word and bears _____ with perseverance.
1. We persevere by _____ with other believers. (Heb 3:12-13)
 2. We persevere by _____ ourselves in the Lord.
 3. We persevere by _____ in the Spirit. (1 Cor 14:4-5a)
- God wants us to _____ much fruit. (John 15:16, 15:8)

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2. He bears light to those around. (Luke 8:16-18)

- God wants you and I to be a _____ to the world. (John 1:6-8)
- Our lives are to get _____ and _____ each day. (Pr 4:18, Eph 5:7-13)
- One way that we give light to those around us is to _____ our brother. (1 John 2:9-11, John 13:35)
- We are called to _____ the darkness. (Eph 5:7-13, Luke 8:17-18)

3. He bears the family name. (Luke 8:19-21)

- Family members are those who _____ the word of God and _____ it.
- Family members are those who do the _____ of the Father. (Matt 12:48-50)

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