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# Sermon Notes

July 21, 2019

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

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## Taking Your Spiritual Pulse John 15:8-17

### Ways and Means

- ❖ God uses whatever means He deems necessary to accomplish His work in and through your life
  - pruning
  - “no pain, no gain”
- ❖ Pruning is a good thing, only fruitful branches get pruned
  - true believers produce fruit
  - false believers will be permanently separated from the vine, gathered up and burned
- ❖ Jesus keeps fruitful branches connected to Himself
  - abiding, intimate connection, inseparable
  - one of the key ways Jesus’ followers stay connected with Jesus is through His Word
    - reshapes us from within
    - reorients our hearts
    - gives us a whole new set of attitudes and affections
    - the branches are **COMPLETELY** dependent on the vine

### Check Your Spiritual Pulse

- ❖ Jesus provides His followers with motivation and instruction about how to be people who bear much fruit
  - bearing fruit brings glory to God and demonstrates that Jesus’ power is working in us
  - bearing fruit gives confirmation to ourselves and to others that we are true branches
- ❖ Jesus speaks to those who abide in Him, remain in Him... those who are in a permanent, unchanging, fixed relationship with Him
- ❖ Staying in the Word, having the Word stay in us, and prayer are good diagnostics to assess the quality of our connection with Jesus (John 15:7)
- ❖ Jesus goes on to provide a few more self-diagnostic checks for us to use in taking our spiritual pulse
  - **love (v. 9)**
    - stay connected with Jesus’ love
    - extend Jesus’ love to others (vv. 12-13, *cf.* John 13:34-34)
      - ◆ sacrificial love
      - ◆ life-giving, self-denying love
  - **obedience (vv. 9-10)**
    - Jesus assures His faithful followers that they **WILL** persevere in the faith, stay close to Him, be fruitful and obedient

- obedience springs from our love for Jesus (*cf.* John 14:15)
- Jesus points to His own model of keeping His Father's commandments as an illustration (*Nevertheless not my will but yours be done*)
- **joy (v. 11)**
  - Jesus says there is a “fullness of joy” for those who abide in Him as the true vine
  - Jesus is *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief* (Isaiah 53:3), yet Jesus’ life is marked by joy (Hebrews 12:2-3)
    - ◆ Jesus looks beyond the immediate and sees the eternal
    - ◆ though we endure pain, are crushed by unbearable pressures and afflictions, Jesus makes His spirit of joy available to us
  - nothing makes Jesus' followers stand out in the world more than the joy we are enabled to manifest in the midst of our very worst circumstances

### Friends Forever

- ❖ Jesus brings this part of His conversation to a resting place with a strong note of confidence and encouragement in vv. 14-16
- ❖ Jesus welcomes His friends (those who abide in Him) to share inter-Trinitarian communication
  - what Jesus hears from His Father, He makes known to us
  - friends let each other in on what is going on

- ❖ Those whom Jesus calls friend do what Jesus commands, love as Jesus loves, hear and understand what the Father graciously reveals to Jesus
- ❖ Jesus' friends bear fruit, fruit that lasts
  - if you are abiding in Christ, you know Christ chose you and **APPOINTED** you to bear fruit
  - if you are appointed to something, you have no part in the appointment process other than to say “yes”
- ❖ Do you accept and take up the appointment Jesus gives you with your whole heart?
  - Jesus outfits and equips you to do what He calls you to
  - Jesus says we can come to the Father in Jesus' name and confidently ask the Father for anything that increases and enhances our fruit-bearing capacity

### Personal Reflection

1. Use the diagnostic tests Jesus gives and take whatever time is necessary to check in on your “spiritual pulse”, Are you staying in the Word? Is the Word staying in you? What is your prayer life like? How are you doing in the areas of love, obedience and joy? Where do you need to take some “supplements”?
2. How does knowing that Jesus has APPOINTED you to bear fruit, more fruit, much fruit, lasting fruit change your understanding and attitude about fruit-bearing? What will you do differently as a result of knowing this?
3. Jesus outfits and equips you to do what He calls you to. Has Jesus given you any “equipment” which you have tucked away on a shelf or hidden in a closet and which you are not utilizing as Jesus would want?