

## **Go and Bear Fruit**

May 7, 2021   Scott Gunn

*You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.”*  
— *John 15:16a*

It's remarkable, isn't it? Jesus is telling his disciples that they belong to him because he has chosen them first. It is the very definition of grace. That same grace applies to you and me. We belong to Christ because he chose us. Amazing grace, indeed.

Grace isn't the end of the story but rather the beginning. Too often we focus on God's great love for us and end the story there. We write the sentence, "God loves us." Period, full stop. Really, we ought to write the sentence, "God loves us, and so..."

As one clichéd saying has it, "God loves us too much to leave us where we are." Sometimes clichés get it right, though perhaps this is a bit over simplified. I think it goes something like this: God loves us. To enjoy that love, we have to use our God-given free will to accept the gift. Our good deeds are not performed to earn God's love because we already have it. Rather, our good deeds are performed out of gratitude for God's love.

It's like that with any gift, isn't it? If I am truly grateful for a gift, I will want to freely and joyfully show forth my gratitude. Perhaps that means writing a thank-you card. Maybe that means giving a gift to the gift-giver or even to a total stranger. But something will change in me once gratitude takes hold.

This is the point of Jesus's teaching here. He reminds his followers he has chosen them. Jesus then says he expects to see them bearing fruit. What does that fruit look like? If we read the whole of John's Gospel, we see that fruit expressed in healing, in release from the burden of sin, in truth-telling, and in people whose lives are transformed.

Jesus chose you, and Jesus chose me. He expects us to bear fruit, too.

In today's church, we too often normalize the decline of the church, as if that future were determined. We accept that astounding vitality isn't something we can experience or see. We believe that it is enough to have been chosen. We forget that we are to bear fruit.

What if we got serious about bearing fruit? What if our churches became places where people are healed and where release from the burden of sin is celebrated? What if we fearlessly told the truth? What if we kept a razor-sharp focus on transforming lives? I'll tell you what: our churches wouldn't be declining. The Gospel and its fruit are irresistible.