

**Fruits of the Spirit**  
**Hillsboro Ward, Dec 17, 2000**  
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Last time I spoke here was June of 1988

Thankful for Christmas Season

- Brings our focus on Christ and others
  - Helps us to lift our focus from ourselves
- Shellie talked about focus on others
- I'll talk about focus on Christ

Like to pose the question: How can we tell if we are living a life that is focused on Christ?

Imagine you could view yourself as others do.

- What would you see?
- What are you looking to see?
- OK Mike, what criteria should I apply here to see if I'm focused on Christ?
- 3 Nephi 14:16-20
  - 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?
  - 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.
  - 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.
  - 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.
  - 20 Wherefore, **by their fruits ye shall know them.**

OK once again imagine you could view yourself as others do.

- Only this time you're a tree
- What kind of fruit is hanging from your tree?
- If you're like most of us you're probably thinking
  - Mixed fruit tree?
  - 3 Nephi 14:18
    - 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

What are fruits then?

- In looking at my tree what should I look for?
- Paul tells us which are the fruits of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit
- Galatians 5:19-23
  - 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are [these]; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
  - 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
  - 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told [you] in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.
  - 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
  - 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

How do we get these fruits then?

Do the fruits of the Spirit just “magically” appear in us?

Of course not.

- I like to garden.
- I can relate to that more than I can trees so let’s use my garden in relating the fruits of the Spirit to us.
- My favorite fruits are Tomatoes
  - Show picture
  - Nothing quite like a vine-ripened tomato
- Shellie loves me I know, but like other teenagers often thinks her Dad is nuts
  - Imagine what she would think if I were to do nothing to grow my garden and then went out and wondered where my Tomatoes were.
  - “Okayyyy” (He’s really lost it now).
  - If I blamed her for my lack of effort and foresight.
    - Not only would that be not funny, it would be tragic in a sense.
      - Because who really is to blame?
      - In my garden I am responsible for what grows there.
- So what do I do if I want tomatoes, potatoes, cucumbers, peas and such in my garden?
  - Lets think about this and apply it to ourselves
    - Prepare soil
      - Begin in the fall
      - Till it again in the spring
        - Mix in compost and “garden supplement”
      - What can we liken this too?
        - Applying faith and repentance
        - Prepares us to receive the Spirit
    - Plant the seed or seedling as the case may be

- Each in its own time
  - First peas then others, tomatoes last
  - Same in our life, we grow line upon line
- Water it
  - Constantly
    - Works best if little bit every day (except Sunday!)
      - Absolute best is constant drip
    - Big deluge once per week or month
      - May work occasionally
      - Doesn't work when the sun is hot
  - Prayer & Scripture study are examples of the daily nourishment we need
  - There is no time off
    - No bye Sundays
- Fertilize it
  - Periodically
    - Imagine what your yard would look like if you were to fertilize it only once per year?
      - Some of you may already know
    - Attend church meetings
    - Attend Temple
    - Fast
- Weed round about it
  - Weeds can choke out needed nourishment
    - Weeds need no encouragement
    - Best uprooted when small
  - Constantly needed
  - Repentance
    - If you have something choking out the nourishment you need in your life, Weed it out!
      - If need be see your Bishop
        - He loves you and cares
        - Cast your burden on Christ – He cares
- Needs sunlight
  - All the things I've mentioned wouldn't get me any Tomatoes without sunlight in my garden.
    - We have a fern in our bedroom
  - We need to bask in our Heavenly Father's light if we are to grow

Does my garden grow over night?

- No magical tomato bean
  - I can get one from the store, but its not the same
- Some fruits grow faster than others in my garden
  - Tomatoes of different growth periods
  - Biggest and best take the longest and most work
- Some things like trees take even longer
  - Yellowstone Park
    - Fires and trees

Does my garden grow oranges if I plant tomatoes?

- Of course not
- The same with us
  - 1:1 correspondence with our life's choices
  - "Reap what we sow"

Why Care about these fruits?

- Shift focus from what to why

Elder Oaks talk last conference

- I was there
- Most powerful effect – Struck by it
- relate some thoughts and ideas from his talk

Nephi spoke of the judgement not only in terms of what we do but what we are

- 1 Nephi 15:33-34
  - 33 ...they must be brought to stand before God, to be judged of their works; and if their works have been filthiness they must needs be filthy; and if they be filthy it must needs be that they cannot dwell in the kingdom of God; if so, the kingdom of God must be filthy also.
  - 34 But behold, I say unto you, the kingdom of God is not filthy, and there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God; wherefore there must needs be a place of filthiness prepared for that which is filthy.

Moroni states

"He that *is* filthy shall be filthy still; and he that *is* righteous shall be righteous still" (Morm. 9:14)

Elder Oaks:

"From such teachings we conclude that the Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts--what we have *done*. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts--what we have *become*. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of

deposits required to be made in some heavenly account.” (October 2000 Conference. “The Challenge to become”, Sat afternoon session)

#### Analogy of my business and Heavenly Father’s kingdom

- Run a successful high tech business
  - President
  - Develop software and do training,
  - I am presenting tutorials at conferences etc.
  - It provides me with necessities of life
- If I want Shellie to inherit what I have
  - I could just give her the title President and my stock
    - I could give her all that I have
    - Chances are the business would fail and she would loose all that I have
  - Or I could have her do the things I did
    - Go to school
    - Work and gain the experience
      - Successes and failures
  - “That which I *have* I can easily give Shellie, but that which I *am*, she must obtain for himself.”
  
- We cannot do for others
  - Relate Boy Scout experiences
  - Scout Master for 6.5 years
  - Took me a while to learn completely the show and let do.
  - Some are helpless on a campout to start
    - Dad inclined to do it for scout
      - No let him do for himself
  
- Same with our Heavenly Father
  - He promised us all that he has if we become like him.
  - We need to experience and do to become

#### The act of becoming is often called conversion

“The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become”

- ◆ On one occasion Jesus asked:
  - ◆ "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"
  - ◆ After he had received the various answers, it was Peter who answered the query:
    - ◆ "But whom say ye that I am?" with the declaration, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus then said: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 16:13, 15-17.)

- ◆ Peter had a testimony of Christ.
  - ◆ He had received revelation from the Holy Ghost
- ◆ Yet, just before he was crucified Christ told Simon Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren." (Luke 22:32)
- ◆ To testify is to *know* and to *declare*.
  - ◆ A testimony is not enough
- ◆ But we must be converted
  - ◆ Which requires us to *do* and to *become*.

If we are to become, then *what* is it we are to become?

- ◆ In teaching the Nephites, the Savior referred to what they must become.
    - ◆ He challenged them to repent and be baptized and be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, "that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day" (3 Ne. 27:20). He concluded: "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Ne. 27:27).
  - ◆ WE can liken this to ourselves
  - ◆ We must become as Christ is – Spotless before God
    - ◆ Remember “and there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God”
- How do we do that? How do we become spotless?
    - He not only said be like me, he said “do as ye have seen me do”
    - Important that we be not overwhelmed by this.
    - We can be like him
      - President Joseph F. Smith:  
Christ is the great example for all mankind, and I believe that mankind were as much foreordained to become like him, as that he was foreordained to be the Redeemer of man. ... We are ... in the form of God, physically, and may become like him spiritually, and like him in the possession of knowledge, intelligence, wisdom and power.  
The grand object of our coming to this earth is that we may become like Christ, for if we are not like him, we cannot become the sons of God, and be joint heirs with Christ. (*Gospel Doctrine*, pg 18.)  
Let us follow the Son of God. Make him our exemplar, and our guide. Imitate him. Do his work. Become like unto him, as far as it lies within our powers to become like him that was perfect and without sin. (*Gospel Doctrine*, pg 180.)
  - ◆ How did Christ become Spotless?
    - ◆ President Joseph F. Smith:  
Even Christ himself was not perfect at first; he received not a fulness at first, but he received grace for grace, and he continued to receive more and more until he received a fulness [see D&C 93:11-13].  
Is not this to be so with the children of men? Is any man perfect? Has any man received a fulness at once? Have we reached a point wherein we may receive the fulness of God, of his glory, and his intelligence? No; and yet, if Jesus, the Son of God, and the Father of the heavens and the earth in which we dwell, received not a

fulness at the first, but increased in faith, knowledge, understanding and grace until he received a fulness, is it not possible for all men who are born of women to receive little by little, line upon line, precept upon precept, until they shall receive a fulness, as he has received a fulness, and be exalted with him in the presence of the Father?  
(*Gospel Doctrine*, pg 68)

- Many of us walk a rough path in becoming
  - We each have our own struggles, maybe its -
    - Loss of a loved one
    - Postponement of a righteous goal like marriage or childbearing
    - Financial hardship
    - Feelings of rejection, inadequacy, or depression
  - Lehi taught us that there must be opposition in all things (1 Nephi 2:11)
  - Elder Oaks:  
“Through the justice and mercy of a loving Father in Heaven, the refinement and sanctification possible through such experiences can help us achieve what God desires us to **become**.” (October 2000 Conference. “The Challenge to become”, Sat afternoon session)
  - Adversity is for our good
    - We become by being refined and tempered in the furnace
    - Not some thing we look forward to necessarily
- ◆ On our path to becoming we must focus on doing the right things
  - We must *do* for the right reasons
  - For the pure love of Christ
  - The Apostle Paul illustrated this in his famous teaching about the importance of charity (1 Cor. 13).
    - 1 Cor 13:1-3  
Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become [as] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.  
And though I have [the gift of] prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.  
And though I bestow all my goods to feed [the poor], and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.
  - Stress acts are nothing without charity
    - Why
  - The reason charity never fails and the reason charity is greater than even the most significant acts of goodness he cited is that charity, "the pure love of Christ" (Moro. 7:47), is not an *act* but a *condition* or state of being.
    - That is why
  - Goes back to what we are not what we do is what is important.
  - We do to become and we must do for the right reason

- Charity is attained through a succession of acts that result in our *conversion*.
  - Charity then, is something one becomes.
  - Thus Moroni declares: "except men shall *have* charity they cannot inherit the place prepared for them in the mansions of the Father" (Ether 12:34)
- Parable of the laborers
    - Matthew 20:1-13
 

FOR the **kingdom of heaven is like** unto a man [that is] an **householder**, which went out early in the morning to **hire labourers into his vineyard**.

2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a **penny a day**, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the **third hour**, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and **whatsoever is right** I will give you. And they went their way.

5 Again he went out about the **sixth** and **ninth** hour, and **did likewise**.

6 And about the **eleventh** hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and **whatsoever is right**, [that] shall ye receive.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them [their] hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

9 And when they came that [were hired] about the **eleventh hour**, **they received every man a penny**.

10 But when the **first came**, they **supposed** that they should have **received more**; and they **likewise received every man a penny**.

11 And when they had received [it], they **murmured** against the goodman of the house,

12 Saying, These last have wrought [but] one hour, and thou **hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day**.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: **didst not thou agree with me for a penny?**

14 Take [that] thine [is], and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.
  - If you are like me your first reaction is "that's right, it wasn't fair"
    - But that is not the point of the parable
    - The kingdom of Heaven is not like the world
    - Final judgement will not be based on how long we have labored in the vineyard
      - Elder Oaks: "We do not obtain our heavenly reward by punching a time clock. What is essential is that our labors in the workplace of the Lord have caused us to *become* something." (October 2000 Conference. "The Challenge to become", Sat afternoon session)
      - This takes longer for some of us
      - Some of us require harder work be accomplished to "polish off the rough spots"
      - Some have been prepared in other ways and other means
      - No. To complain as the laborer did who had worked all day is short sighted and to not understand.



- What is important in the end is what we have become by our labors.
- How do we know we are worthy of our hire?
- How do we know we are making progress?
  - Brings me back to where I started this talk:
    - How do we know we are living a life centered on Christ?
- Let's go back to where I started in this talk
  - Imagine how your tree or garden looks and how can you tell?
    - 3 Nephi 14:20  
Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.
- I love the Christmas season because of the focus on Christ
  - Christ
    - He showed us the fruits of the Spirit
    - He showed us what we are to become (like him)
    - He showed what to do so that we may become (do as he did)
    - His atonement makes us able to become
    - His Resurrection enables us to live again that we might receive what our Heavenly Father would give us
- Yes our focus needs to be on Christ
  - Show our love by doing that we might become
  - Then our fruits will be as described
    - Galatians 5:22-23  
22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,  
23 Meekness, temperance...

Close - Testimony