

More About Jesus, Week 32: Jesus expected results

by Paul Hammons

In modern religious culture, we often see the picture of Jesus as someone who was laid back, focused on peace and love, and simply wanted his disciples to follow him and listen to him and learn about the true nature of God.

The idea that Jesus would call people and then not only put them to work, but also expect that they actually produce something, seems completely foreign to what we hear in the modern gospel.

But it doesn't take long in reading the scriptures to see Jesus as someone who was very focused on not just work, but results. Jesus called people with the expectation that they would then be productive members of the Kingdom of God.

In **John 15**, Jesus describes himself as the vine, and his disciples as branches that are intended to grow out from him and draw nourishment from him, and as a result, bear fruit.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. - John 15:1-2

Jesus adds that abiding in him - keeping his commandments (**v. 10**) - is the key to fruitfulness. If you want to produce the fruit God requires, the requirement is obedience. Because as the "vinedresser," God gets to decide what sort of fruit He wants to produce.

And while we are each capable of producing all sorts of results in our lives, the one that matters is outlined in the example and teaching of Jesus: We are called to become like Christ, and in doing so, call others to be like him as well!

And Jesus adds that the type of fruit we produce will show whether we are truly his disciples: *"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples"* (**John 15:8**).

That's a sharp contrast to how Jesus describes false teachers back in **Matthew 7** during the sermon on the mount, when he tells us to beware of false teachers, who bear BAD fruit in that they lead people away from the truth of the gospel.

You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. - Matthew 7:16-17

Jesus tells us that if we are truly disciples, we will be fruitful. But at the same time, it's not a process that requires no effort or thought - which is why he tells the apostles and us that it is our responsibility to ensure that we are being fruitful, busying ourselves in the work of God.

Jesus regularly compares disciples to servants who are working in the master's house while he is away (**Mat. 24:45**), or laboring in his vineyard (Luke 20:9), or overseeing his estate and investing his funds (**Matt. 25:14**). These are people who work with the understanding that they have purpose and meaning in what they do, and that the outcome of that labor is the point for which they are employed! If they don't produce, they are unfit for the job they were assigned.

A disciple of Christ will naturally produce fruit because a disciple of Christ has an urgent desire to be about the work God has assigned to him. And he works not only willingly, but joyfully, knowing that nothing in the process is out of his control.

If he works hard and seeks God with his whole heart, then he doesn't have to concern himself with the end results - whether it's how many souls he brings to the Lord, how perfectly he is able to withstand every temptation and control every thought, or how often he says and does the exact right thing in trying to do God's will.

Jesus expects results, but he does not expect us to produce what is beyond our abilities or outside our control. But at the same time, he gives gifts, abilities, and opportunities with the intent that we use them.

And as he says to the apostles, *"Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more"* (**Luke 12:48**).

Our challenge in following Christ is knowing that as he has called us and shown us grace, he has also given us work in the kingdom and the ability to do that work - whatever it may be. Are we keeping ourselves busy with the work of the master?

If we do that – abiding in his love, obeying his commandments, then we can be confident that will bear fruit as Jesus commands.