

Message #1036  
Rev. Jack C. Longley

"IF YOU PLANT THEM...THEY WILL GROW!"  
{I Corinthians 3:1-11}

Trinity Presbyterian Church  
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#### INTRODUCTION: BEAR FRUIT

Twice in the Book of Genesis we hear the voice of God saying: "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth!" {Genesis 9:1; 35:11}  
...first to Noah and his sons following the flood  
...secondly to Jacob when promising to make a great nation after his name God was instructing these servants to "be fruitful" and multiply in numbers...populate the land.

Populating the earth continues to this day. Total population on our planet as of 10:40 A.M. yesterday was 6,383,682,200--close to 6.4 billion people with nearly 40% of these living in the two most populous nations of the world: China and India. It could be said that the descendants of Noah and Jacob have been faithful to God's command to populate the land--so much so that we are now facing problems with overpopulation.

#### BELIEVER FRUIT BEARING

In the New Testament Jesus gives a similar admonition to believers concerning our responsibility to bear fruit...in this case, reproducing new believers by demonstrating through our lives the attributes God has given us as believers.  
In John we read...

"You didn't choose Me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using My name." {John 15:16}

Earlier in that same chapter Jesus told His disciples...

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch that doesn't produce fruit, and He prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned for greater fruitfulness by the message I have given you. Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful apart from Me!" {John 1:1-4}

He gave a warning in Matthew 7...

"Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep, but are really wolves that will tear you apart. You can detect them by the way they act, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit. You don't pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles. A healthy tree produces good fruit, and an unhealthy tree produces bad fruit. A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown in the fire. Yes, the way to identify a tree or a person is by the kind of fruit that is produced!" {Matthew 7:15-22}

These texts are challenging to every believer.

...just as God called those in the Old Testament to be "fruitful and multiply"

...God has called us to do likewise...spiritually!

...Jesus says that is the reason that He chose us as disciples--to "bear fruit"

...He also says a believer can be identified by their fruit

...and to "bear fruit" one must be grafted into Christ  
His great commission is centered around "bearing fruit" ...  
"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." {Matthew 28: 19-20a}  
..."be fruitful"  
..."produce fruit that will last"  
So, how fruitful are you this morning?  
Can you think of people who might possibly be in heaven because you introduced them to Jesus?

#### HOW DOES ONE BEAR FRUIT?

The formula is very simple: ONE SEED AT A TIME!

...God hasn't laid upon us the responsibility for the harvest

...all He asks of us is to plant a seed

...one seed here

...one seed there

...the person who plants seeds expects a harvest

...and a seed takes time to produce

...a seed also needs nourishment

So, along the way He sends another to fertilize and nurture that seedling. Paul put this so well in our text of the morning...

"Through us God caused you to believe. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. My job was to plant the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God, not we, who made it grow! The ones who do the planting or watering aren't important, but God is important because He is the one who makes the seed grow. The one who plants and the one who waters work as a team with the same purpose. Yet they will be rewarded individually, according to their own hard work. We work together as partners who belong to God." {1 Corinthians 3:5b-9a}  
What an incredible challenge to be a seed planter...and to watch God work.

#### EXAMPLES OF SEEDS PLANTED

##### TONY LEUNG

Today is a very, VERY, special day to me...so much so it's almost hard to contain myself. At 3:00 P.M. this afternoon {11:00 P.M. last night our time} my dear friend Tony Leung was married to Angela Choi in the Grace Hong Kong Evangelical Church in Kowloon, Hong Kong.

I met Tony, as many of you know, on a United Airlines flight to Honolulu in January, 1999.

...we talked over half the way to Hawaii

...before we departed he asked for my email address

When we returned home I had three emails awaiting me from this young man...an environmental engineer.

...he asked my profession--thought I was a CEO with some large corporation

...he shared that he had no religion--involved in traditional Chinese ancestral worship

...he had visited several cathedrals while studying in England {said he felt "warm" inside}

As time went on we began to exchange emails regularly--several week.

...he longed for a girlfriend--asked me to pray to "my God"

...I responded that I would and that I would ask God to give him a Christian girlfriend

...about six months later he saw Angela in a metro station and recalled meeting her before but couldn't even remember her name...the only part he could recall was

"La!"

...and, ANGELA WAS A CHRISTIAN!

Tony began to ask questions about Christianity?

...I'd send him some thoughts...he'd respond with questions and comments ...this went on for several months

...the seed was beginning to grow

...I sent him a New Testament which he began to read

...at my suggestion--and against tradition--Angela invited him to the Mei Foo CMA Church in Kowloon

...he soaked up everything that went on.

...he'd write and tell me about the sermon, the scripture, the hymns

On Saturday, August 26, 2000--one year and seven months after that meeting on United Airlines and planting the seed I received this email from Tony...

"Today is a big day to me. I decided to become a Christian after sermon which talked about "CONFIDENCE." Jack, as you know, I lost that in the past; however, starting from this moment, I got to change completely and have to become a good Christian...thanks for praying me...blessing you...Tony"

...I planted

...Angela watered

...Pastor Luke Lau watered

...and God made that seed grow into a beautiful new believer!

Tony has grown so much in the Lord--taken several mission trips, including one to Thailand.

...his sister has become a Christian

...his entire family attended his Christian wedding today

He sang the song, "Footsteps" as part of the ceremony and their invitation included the verse from I John 4:19--"We are love because He first loved us."

I received a birthday gift with a card with these words written on the envelope: "To: Jack Longley {My Best Friend}"

I must add that I telephoned him at 6:45 A.M. this morning {Hong Kong time} to assure him of my love and prayers. He asked me, "Jack would you pray for me right now?" and I prayed for my son in the faith who was nearly 7,000 miles away. I cannot tell you the incredible emotion that I felt at that moment!

...all because of a seed on an airplane

...nurtured...and fed by others

...a treasure to God!

## MARK KANGAS

Nearly two years ago I received an email from a man whom I'd never met.

He said he found Trinity Presbyterian Church's web page and wanted to know who we were, what we believed, and how one went about receiving more information.

...I invited him to worship {the seed was planted}

...he came {the seed was watered}

...he wrote me more questions {the seed began to develop}

...I invited him to visit me

...he came to my study a number of times

...declared his faith in Jesus Christ

...became a member

...now calls me his spiritual dad"

## CONCLUSION

Today is commitment Sunday.

Today is also the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

Our hearts should be filled with thanksgiving because someone along with way planted a seed in our lives.

Our hearts should also be challenged to make a commitment to be an aggressive seed planter--to make it a matter of earnest prayer. How?

Someone wrote to me just last week and said, "How do you do it, Jack?"

...I was blessed with incredible parents

...but I inherited my seed planting from my dad

...he knew no strangers

...he took no enemies.

...he made friends with everyone

...waiters/waitresses

...neighbors

...flight attendants/porters

...many times we would get to the car after having a meal only to discover dad was still inside talking to the owner, manager...someone whom he met

...I learned by observing him in action!

How can you become a seed planter?

...be a friend!

...pray about it diligently--dare to ask God to allow someone to cross your path where you can plant a seed

...invite someone to attend the ALPHA Celebration Dinner on January 20th

...no strings attached

...it's a great way to open a door for conversation

Remember, you're not being asked to be an evangelist...or even evangelistic...you're being asked to plant seeds...

...God will send others to water

...He may even use you to water others seeds

...and He will make it grow!

You do your part...God will do His.

Why?

God has called us to do it!

...He's placed His light of life within you

...Let that light shine.

God wants us to grow...!

...God wants us to "be fruitful and multiply!"

#### Suggestions On How to Get Started

1. Invite someone to the ALPHA Celebration--promise them a good meal...this is one of the greatest outreach programs for reaching non-churched people.

2. Invite someone to join you for worship some Sunday and take them to brunch somewhere nearby.

3. Invite someone to the Carol Sing on December 7th--everyone enjoys Christmas music

4. Invite someone to the drama on December 14th--tell them how great the Easter Drama was

5. Invite someone to the Christmas Eve Service--great time for people to come to worship.

6. Follow-up with invitation to your home for a social gathering...maybe invite someone else from the church...but with NO agenda {don't have "Four Spiritual Laws" sitting on the coffee table}.

Play a game...converse...talk about their interests.

7. Finally--PRAY...and don't stop praying!

Will you make this commitment on this Sunday before Thanksgiving?