

(John 15:8-13, NIV84)

"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Jesus says, "I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love." It is unthinkable that Jesus would have disobeyed His Father and failed to remain in the Father's love. Had that happened, all hope of being saved for us would be lost. We are the disobedient children that need saving. We are the ones who continually fail to obey God's commands. We are the ones in need of a Redeemer.

Thankfully, our great, loving Savior came and laid down His life for us. He redeemed us from all our sins and has cleansed us and made us righteous and holy in God's sight. More than that, He is even happy to call us His friends.

Now, as friends and disciples of Jesus, we show our love for Him by our willing obedience to His commands. Yes, we still sin, but we don't willfully and stubbornly remain in our sin. We recognize that every sin is disobedience and contrary to the will of our loving God. So, we constantly turn away from sin in repentance and faith, trusting that our merciful God forgives us for Jesus' sake, and we strive to remain in His love and to show it by loving. Love on, my friends!

With you in Christ's love,
Pastor Golm

May 24

Love

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness.
Galatians 5:22

Jesus told his disciples: By their fruits ye shall know them." In that instance, he was speaking of false prophets, whose daily lives would expose the falseness of their teaching. But it is also true of Christians that "by their fruits ye shall know them". The genuineness of our faith will be

revealed by the kind of lives we lead; by our fruits our fellowmen will know us.

In the passage quoted above, Paul is encouraging his converts in Galatia to demonstrate their faith by "showing forth" the fruits of the Spirit. In this and the following devotions we will meditate on a few of the "fruits" that Paul mentions. The first in his list is love. Once a person has truly grasped the miracle of God's love in Christ, he is bound to reflect that love in his attitude toward others. Of the early Christians it was said: "Behold how they love one another!"

Can the same be said of us? In many cases (praise God!) the answer is yes. Yet when one looks at the church today, one is often saddened by the evident absence of brotherly and sisterly love. The petty faultfinding, the bickering, the peevishness, the back-biting, the open feuding that have frequently soured the lives of Christian families, Christian congregations (sometimes, even Christian church-bodies)-surely, these are not a "fruit of the Spirit". They are rather "the works of the flesh", against which the Scriptures warn us.

Love, true Christian love, cannot be added to our lives as an ornament is added to a Christmas tree. Genuine Christian love must be a fruit. It must be a part of the tree. It must be a natural outgrowth of something that is alive within us. It must be an inevitable fruit of the Spirit-the Spirit implanted into our heart at Holy Baptism and nourished daily by the Gospel. That Spirit must find utterance not only through our lips but also through our lives. What is our record in this respect? Do we love as much as we say we do?

Lord, grant us a greater measure of Your Spirit, so that we may love even as You have loved us. Amen.