

**Seminarian Garth Englund III**  
**The Third Sunday after Pentecost**  
**June 30, 2019**

*Grace to you and peace from Jesus Christ, the One who was, the One who is, and the One who is to come. Amen.*

I don't know about you, but I have never been able to get enough fruit in my diet. I like to think of myself as a *generally* healthy eater and most days have no problem getting my "recommended daily serving" of vegetables and protein. For some reason, however, I just can't get there when it comes to fruit. It is not for lack of trying; I often buy it at the grocery store, am diligent about eating it as the week begins, but by the time Wednesday rolls around, I'm embarrassed to admit that more often than not it just sits there in the fruit bowl getting mushier and mushier before finally being thrown away. In my quest to be less wasteful, I now often choose not to buy it in the first place, rather than trying harder or being more intentional about eating it throughout the week. Fruit is easily accessible and relatively inexpensive, especially this time of year. I know the health benefits of eating more of it. It should be a no brainer, and yet, for some reason, I just can't bring myself to make it happen. Perhaps, I'm not the only one here with this little "dilemma."

I think the same can be said for the fruits of the Spirit that Paul lifts up in today's reading. The church in Galatia has everything they need to live into the new reality of Holy Spirit inspiration but because in so many ways, nothing seems to have changed, they cannot allow the Spirit to truly bear fruit in their lives. It is easy to understand why they might be discouraged: The Lord has yet to return, people are continuously arguing about what qualifies someone to be considered a "real" Christian and the church is still prosecuted by the authorities. Despite the fact that they are living by the Spirit, *their community is still fractured* and so they cannot allow themselves to be *guided by the Spirit*. It should be a no brainer, and yet, for some reason,

darkness (here, translated as “the flesh”) seems to be winning the battle. Perhaps in their discouragement, many have chosen to give up rather than being more intentional about responding to the Spirit’s call and allowing her to bear fruit in them. Perhaps they are waiting for the Holy Spirit to make herself known, to provide them with the answers that will enable them to defend their faith in a community that has written it off as an idle tale. Perhaps they are desperately hoping that the Holy Spirit will suddenly overcome the world to bring harmony and heal the divisions and discord.

It is, of course, not quite that simple because, as Paul reminds them, this is not how the Holy Spirit works. While God is, of course, always at work in the world with or without us, the work of the Holy Spirit is most effective when ordinary people, like you and me, allow the Spirit to take root in our hearts and inspire our lives. The fruit that develops out of such a relationship allows us to be God’s hands and feet in the world, bringing God’s Kingdom to *our* fractured communities. Through baptism, through bread and wine, through the shared experience of singing hymns of worship alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ, we join the church throughout the world in saying “yes” to the Holy Spirit and “yes” to God’s call to serve in God’s world.

This is, fundamentally, what we do together in this building and others like it throughout the world: we, ordinary people, open our hearts and minds to be touched and moved by an extraordinary God. With God’s Spirit deeply rooted and guiding our lives, we play a direct role in helping God to connect with God’s world. We become living evidence that **joy** is greater than despair, that **peace** can and will prevail among nations that seem to be in a constant state of conflict, that **patience** and **self-control** can still be the defining characteristics of dialogue in the midst of deep disagreement, that **kindness**, **gentleness**, and respect can transcend differences in

political ideologies and beliefs, that we give of ourselves and serve others not for personal gain but because we are **generous** and **faithful** stewards of God's abundant grace. Above all, when we bear the fruit of the Spirit, we bring the healing **love** of the Triune God to our fractured and divided communities, to our world in need. Now we know that human love is powerful but this love is so much more than that. This is the love that created the world and saw that it was good. This love is the love that became one of us in a manger in Bethlehem. This love is the love that was so committed to healing the wounded world that it took on wounds upon himself and died on the cross. And this love is the love that refused to give up even in the darkness of death, overcoming the grave and proving once and for all that God is the God of life.

So, in just a few moments as we join our voices together in song, let the beauty and familiarity of the music open your hearts and minds anew to the Holy Spirit as she moves through this place. Let that Spirit take root in you that you might continue to bear much fruit to the world. Amen.