Date: July 5. 2020

Text: Galatians 5. 22-23

Title: “Each Day I Commit…”

**Intro -**

 the fruit of the spirit…

 - is this singular…

 or - are they plural… a collection of individual items?

 - can I pick and choose…

 or - is this one, indivisible basket…?

 have we been looking at different fruits…

 or - one “fruit”?

 well…

 the Greek makes it pretty plain that we should view

 this as the singular… fruit… of the Spirit

 that we can’t come at it and think to ourselves:

 (“hmmm… 9 fruits… I like bananas, blueberries…

 good foundation of apples, pears, and oranges…

 add a peach for variety’s sake, but -

 not a big fan of blackberries, etc…”)

 so - I like six of them - way more than half…

 that should be good…

 no need to concern myself about the ones

 that might stress me out…

 rather: this is a “fruit basket” - if you will…

 and - it comes to us as a collection -

 carefully curated by God himself -

 and is made up of: love… joy… peace… patience…

 kindness… goodness… faithfulness…

 gentleness… and self-control

 and - these nine = one

 and - these nine / this one

 is what we commit to… each day…

 to these nine / this one… we offer up each day

 cf. - what does that mean… in practice…?

 relate re: in the movie Evan Almighty, God calls newly elected congressman Evan Baxter (played by Steve Carell) to build an ark

 in his suburban neighborhood.

 (note - I haven’t seen the movie, but find it interesting that these types of

 silly comedies, sometimes offer the most profound of

 insights into the human condition…)

 so…

 When Evan's wife Joan becomes understandably confused

 by the odd behavior of her husband,

 she decides to take some time away to sort it out.

 On her way out of town, she and their children stop at a restaurant where God (Morgan Freeman) serves as their waiter. His name tag reads "Al Mighty."

 When the children are away from the table, the waiter/God

 engages Joan in conversation. He has noticed that she is troubled

 and asks if she is okay. She tells him about her husband and his ark, and asks for advice.

 - What should she do with the challenge she has received of a husband

 who seems at least slightly crazy?

 The waiter/God offers this thought. "If someone prays for patience,

 do you think God gives them patience?

 Or does he give them the *opportunity* to be patient?"

 He continues, "If someone asked for their family to be closer,"

 (which is Joan's prayer throughout the movie…)

 "do you think God zaps them with warm, fuzzy feelings?

 Or does he give them *opportunities* to love each other?"

 i.e. - while we would like the fruit of the Spirit to suddenly and miraculously appear in our lives, it doesn't work that way.

 To borrow the phrasing of the movie, these fruits aren't zapped into our lives. Rather, we are *given the opportunity* to allow them to grow within us…
 … when we commit to them - each day…

 consider - when you go to the grocery store…

 - Where are you going to find fruit and vegetables…?

 - In the "Produce" section….

 which serves as a great reminder that we do not manufacture fruit,

 but instead receive it.

 The role of the farmer is to participate in a natural process…

 to make the conditions right to give the fruit the opportunity to grow.

 relate - neither can we force any fruit of the Spirit to grow in us -

 *but* - we can make the conditions right

 that allow them to be found in our lives….

 - we can make room for God to do wonderful work within us.

 cf. - Lucado offers a simple framework for this commitment…

 for what we might do - each day -

 to make room for God to be at work…

1. **Commit**

 “If I succeed, I will give thanks…”

 … if I succeed in making room for the fruit to grow…

 I will acknowledge - with gratitude -

 that God is doing something wonderful in me

 if…

 it’s not a forgone conclusion…

 this “room for growth” can easily be filled

 with other stuff

 or - ignored altogether

 relate re: a late spring ritual at our house - possibly - at yours…

 go to the nursery / home center… buy plants…

 place them around the house and yard (add a little color…)

 and hope for the best

 sometimes - we even get the best

 usually, when I remember to water them each day…

 when I remember to put a little Miracle Gro in there…

 i.e. - when I commit to doing what I can to create an environment

 where things can grow…

 but when I forget… or neglect… or plant them just before we

 go away for a week…

 well…

 that’s when I pray for rain…

 (and give thanks when we come home

 to a surprise)

 - we are given the opportunity to allow this fruit to grow within us…
 … when we commit to them - each day…

 - be thankful…

 for how God is at work in you

**II) Commit**

 and then…

 “If I fail, I will seek his grace…”

 because we know this will be a struggle…

 we may commit, but…

 we will be challenged to live lives that consistently reflect

 the fruit of God’s character

 relate - what exactly are we talking about when we talk here about failure…?

 i.e. - fail at what…?

 - fail at growing fruit (on my own)…?

 - fail at *making room* for the fruit to thrive…?

 - fail at “watering the garden…” - and then being surprised

 when the flowers die…

 it’s not so much failing at something we do…

 so much as a failure to allow something to occur…

 which typically comes about because we have filled that space

 where the fruit would otherwise grow

 with something else…

 we have crowded out the possibility of God *at work* in us…

 *producing* in us…

 because we’ve chosen corn chips

 instead of love…

 tacos… instead of joy

 an insistence on “my way…”

 instead of peace

 but failure does not have to be…

 is not…

 the last word -

 because God offers grace

 - the grace to try again…

 - the grace to commit again

 which is…

 what’s so amazing about grace…

 cf. - the hymn "Amazing Grace" has long been a universal favorite among all people - whether they are “churchy” or not…

 In September 1990 Bill Moyers' looked into this in a PBS broadcast

 focusing on the "amazing" qualities of these words

 for a startlingly broad range of Americans.

 amazingly (or - not…?) - it drew from two to five times the

 number of viewers that a PBS special typically attracts.

 In the program - soprano Jessye Norman speculates on whether the

 special power of this hymn might not be its marriage of words written by a repentant slave-trader

 to a melody that may have arisen from the slave community itself.

 (perhaps a confluence that could bring healing

 in our day… which is what grace is all about…)

 An important point brought up in Moyers' interviews is that

 grace does not always come yoked to good times or

 happy circumstances.

 As well as being "amazing," grace can also come as

 suffering grace… difficult grace… painful grace…

 costly grace… illogical grace.

 Yet despite its various guises -

 grace is always “sufficient grace.”

 sufficient grace, such that -

 per Lucado -

 “…when this day is done,

 I will place my head on my pillow

 and rest.”

 i.e. - when confronted by the stresses and trials of each day…

 of *these* days (in particular…)

 it is the fruit of the spirit…

 and our commitment to create space for it each day…

 that enable us to find peace… to offer peace…

 and - to rest