

## The Fruits of the Spirit

What is your favorite fruit? In what season is it most plentiful?

Why is it your favorite? You may have more than one! Take ten seconds to think about your answer. Now, if you feel comfortable, find someone with whom you can share your favorite fruit and let them share with you as well. You have two minutes to do this. Is there anyone who is feeling brave this morning and would like to share with the congregation?

I have a few favorite fruits. In the fall, I love apples and in the summer, I love watermelon. Apples were plentiful in the Berkshires and we seemingly had them year-round. I went to a lot of football and soccer games in the fall while growing up through my time as a high school teacher and administrator. I would often bring an apple or two as a great snack for the game. Watermelon seemed to be special because we only had it in the summer. It is much better to eat watermelon outdoors than in, and, as children, we certainly made a mess as we devoured it.

Invariably, it would be a bath or shower night whenever we had watermelon. As we grew older, we were exposed to different kinds of fruit and I learned that I really did like strawberries, blueberries, and

raspberries, even though I couldn't quite figure out why raspberries were often portrayed as blue.

Sometimes, fruit doesn't always seem to be as it should. It may look really good, but it will then be too ripe or even fermented. But Paul, in his letter to the church community in the region of Galatia, tells about the fruits of the Spirit, namely love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Some people probably confused the fruit with what they had considered to be good in the region of Galatia: "sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like."

Have you ever seen those old movies or clips from heavyweight boxing matches? Usually there was a male announcer with some sort of nasal twang who also announced the champion as "champine." I can almost hear him now, "In this corner, we have the champine of the world, all the bad fruits we used to live by" and the crowd would go wild as he mentioned all the sins. "And in this corner, the challenger, the fruit of

the Spirit.” There may have been some booing for the fruits of the Spirit in the beginning, but those were cheered and “championed” as people realized that they truly needed to live a good life.

Each and every one of can also be caught up in this inner-struggle. How many of us have displayed some of those traits or “bad fruits” at some point of our lives? However, as we grow in our faith, we rely on the fruits of the Holy Spirit to get us through the bad times when we are tempted to fall back on to bad or rotten fruit.

Jesus promised to send his first followers and Advocate in the Holy Spirit. If we, as later followers of Jesus, accept the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can be the beneficiaries of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. How many of us need love, joy, peace, the ability to bear some suffering or forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? As a side-note, the fruit of forbearance was important to the early Christian community as they were persecuted for about 200-250 years in the Roman Empire.

I am going to invite everyone here today to take home a copy of the bulletin as the readings are printed out on it. In our daily prayers or

reflection, pull out the bulletin and ask yourself how you have been able to use any of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the last twenty-four hours or however long it has been since you last checked the list. You may not hear the roar of the crowd and the announcer may not call you the “champine of the world” but your relationship with God will be your reward.

Oh, and treat yourself to some watermelon or your favorite fruit!