

"For Freedom Christ Has Set Us Free." – June 4, 2017  
by Wayne J. Schneider – Laudamus te.

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Galatians 5:1, 13-18; Jeremiah 17:5-10

When we live "The Fruit of the Spirit," our vision calls us to be agents of transformation in whatever way we can. Jesus Christ came to this world to offer redemption and to re-dream a new world. His life, death, and resurrection is God's dream for an altered world.

As I said in the two previous sermons on "*The Fruit of the Spirit*," if our world is to be different our focus must be to God and not ourselves. This is Jeremiah's point. When we trust in ourselves, we open ourselves up to danger. Trusting ourselves limits out freedom. But, when we place our confidence in God, when we permit God to be the center of our being, Jeremiah says we are like trees growing on the banks of a river. We flourish and discover the joy we seek, the joy of the "Fruit of the Spirit." When this happens, the Spirit empowers us to change the world.

Patterning our life by the "Fruit of the Spirit" enables us to BE the change in the world, that brings transformation. We create a new society by creating a new self. We become God's eyes, ears, hands, and feet where we live.

This is OUR calling: to alter life's scenery. Someone has said, "The early church turned the world upside down to make it right side up." Women and men throughout the years have died standing up to evil, proclaiming Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Common people are made uncommon by Jesus. Energized by the Spirit, they become extraordinary when they join the crusade against injustice, caring for the marginalized, helping the helpless, and being the voice against prejudice. Again, creating a new world by becoming a new person.

It is to our benefit to remember that *'those who do not know history are condemned to repeat it.'* Take Methodism: it did not begin as a church. Its beginning was a movement of risk. They did more than worship. They founded hospitals, schools, orphanages and universities. Members cared for the sick and the poor. They were the first to attack slavery and poverty; the first to speak out for civil liberty and human justice. In a word, they were dissenting protestors, reformers who believed in, and worked for, the transformation of the world.

Being a "Follower of the Way" means allowing yourself to be claimed by God, shaped by Jesus into his image, becoming a new person, and living differently than you ever have. "The Fruit of the Spirit" is the proof of a life transformed. Life changed not just to make a difference in our world but to be the change our world. Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Amen.