

Change in Measure

Faith has a purpose. There is a reason for its existence and its call to accept a life that proceeds from faith. It does not have a static destination. It does not have as its objective a resting place for life, a heavenly mansion, or a state of blessing before God. Rather it has as objective a change for life.

Jesus spoke of fruit. In a context of day laborers consumed in agricultural work, it was a logical example to use in his doctrinal and theological teaching. He spoke of the fact that God has a purpose for plants to produce fruit. This was God's design from the very first of creation.

The general purpose in life and in the creative work of God was to sustain and support life. This purpose extends also to our own lives. We are called to be agents of change, agents of transformation and productivity. The question is, what kind of productivity is found in our lives?

The religious leaders before Jesus criticized him for not following life according to their rules and patterns. He said there was a higher rule that placed their definitions under judgment. They allowed their way of life to cultivate death and injury where it should be producing life, help, and blessing. They trusted too much in their culture, heritage, and tradition without giving enough time and effort to critique what was beneficial and what was harmful.

They were missing a change according to the measure of life. They needed a change that would return the greater values of living. They needed to see how they ignored God's values by following the routines of their supposed faith. They needed to measure the results of their living and make changes according to that judgment. Have we made appropriate changes in our lives according to the measure of God's justice? It is time to live with an eye toward the fruit we are producing.

—Christopher B. Harbin

Matthew 12:33-42

³³ “To have good fruit you must have a healthy tree; if you have a poor tree, you will have bad fruit. A tree is known by the kind of fruit it bears. ³⁴ You snakes—how can you say good things when you are evil? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ³⁵ A good person brings good things out of a treasure of good things; a bad person brings bad things out of a treasure of bad things.

³⁶ “You can be sure that on Judgment Day everyone will have to give account of every useless word he has ever spoken. ³⁷ Your words will be used to judge you—to declare you either innocent or guilty.”

³⁸ Then some teachers of the Law and some Pharisees spoke up. “Teacher,” they said, “we want to see you perform a miracle.”

³⁹ “How evil and godless are the people of this day!” Jesus exclaimed. “You ask me for a miracle? No! The only miracle you will be given is the miracle of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ In the same way that Jonah spent three days and nights in the big fish, so will the Son of Man spend three days and nights in the depths of the earth. ⁴¹ On Judgment Day the people of Nineveh will stand up and accuse you, because they turned from their sins when they heard Jonah preach; and I tell you that there is something here greater than Jonah! ⁴² On Judgment Day the Queen of Sheba will stand up and accuse you, because she travelled all the way from her country to listen to King Solomon's wise teaching; and I assure you that there is something here greater than Solomon! (GNT)