

A NEW CHURCH FOR A NEW DAY, John 15:15-17

I. The Church in our day is changing! Culture watchers and theologians alike are watching a new church emerge in our generation. The emphasis for churches today is changing from what we can **BE** to what we can **DO**; and changing from what we **HAVE** to what we **GIVE**. This is what some are calling RADICAL, while others are calling it REFRESHING, even REALITY CHURCH!

2 Chapters in John are among my favorites and can take us to see what Jesus would say today. These 2 chapters 14 and 15, are shared at moments when Jesus had gathered the disciples at times of great uncertainty and great challenge. I believe this congregation has both of those elements hovering in our midst today, **challenge and uncertainty**.

In these 2 chapters Jesus spoke to the disciples about **who they are**, His chosen friends, and He spoke about **what they can do**, how He has empowered them. In **Chapter 14** Jesus begins by addressing their fears, saying, *"Let not your hearts be troubled!"* Jesus calls on his disciples to TRUST GOD, and he introduces the strong gift of the Holy Spirit of truth given to every believer!

In **Chapter 15**, he speaks of the branches and the vine, a lovely picture of the kind of relationship he has with His Heavenly Father, and we have with Him. He speaks of our being pruned and about staying on the vine to be fruitful, to bear fruit for God's Glory! Jesus made it clear that the purpose of His Church is to BEAR FRUIT. His gathered fellowship of believers has purpose and power to accomplish God's desires. Their joy depends on it!

II. We are about to **wrap-up our transitioning** self-study time and set forth the Pastoral Search Committee. This will happen next Sunday in an atmosphere of Church-wide Prayer. As we

launch this next and final stage of search, we are turning now to a summary time of the transition. We will consider several results of our last 9 months of prayerful refocusing. I know this causes some to be excited, yet some are uncertain, even disturbed. The heart of these reports is simply a reflection of what the active congregation has been saying to us, and a reflection of what we hear God is saying to this church. **It will be an important time of starting to look toward the future together.**

We have looked backward and felt pride. We have reminisced about some of the good old days, and also remembered some times of real sacrifice and accomplishment. The biggest question that looms is this, ***“Can Tryon First Baptist do it again?”*** And I am asking myself, Why shouldn't the young, new generation of our church have a chance to do the same that has been done by “The Greatest Generation?” Why shouldn't they be trusted to look and listen to God and accomplish great things for God here at First Baptist Church as has been done in the past?

In the text for the day, Jesus says 2 things make up the DNA of His church..... FIRST, He said, ***“I have CHOSEN you!”***....
. SECOND, ***“I have EMPOWERED you!”***

How has Christ Jesus empowered us? First, To know **the Will of God**; Second, To be fruitful, or **be productive for God!**

How does He say this is to come about? 2 ways: First to be **OBEDIENT** to all He has taught. Second, to (and we have heard it before), to **LOVE ONE ANOTHER.**

Isn't it possible that all that has been done through the years has been pointing toward this moment, a time for the YOUNGER group to come take the reins and for the older group *to enjoy* the fruit of their labors, *to speak* reassuringly to the young about how we have seen God consistently working through us to fulfill his

promises, and *to support* them while they reach their generation and use their resources to serve Christ. They cannot do it on their own; we must help. But isn't it their time to serve? And how will they learn if the reins aren't finally placed in their hands?

IV. The NEW CHURCH for a NEW DAY is now being focused in a different way.....

It will focus not on what we can **BE**, but what we can **DO**; not so much on what we **HAVE**, as what we will **GIVE**.

The new day calls for a giving church that is MISSION oriented, or missional, PURPOSE DRIVEN, one that can tell you what their purpose is, what they are currently about, and how they made the decision to do what they have decided to do.....

OUR MISSION IS TO BEAR FRUIT !

This is what Jesus said brought glory to God and joy to the church. This is the sole purpose of the church, to bear fruit for Christ. That means we know what we are about and are intentional about doing it the very best way we can. Bearing fruit means we are all on board with this purpose, because this is the purpose of the church. Some do the work, some give the resources, some come and enjoy it with an eye for support as God leads, but everybody is doing it together as Christ has laid out for us in his word.....

We are BRANCHES of the VINE!

Discussions and votes in a NEW CHURCH are about deciding how to do it all in the very best, most effective and God honoring ways possible, how to do it all clearly and properly, but to get on with it without delay.

When Jesus said, "I call you my friends," He was saying, "I have chosen you to reveal to you God's will!" "You are no longer just Servants, but friends. Servants only follow orders handed down

to them, but friends share in the discovery and design of what to do!"

Finally, the purpose of THIS church is written in verse 16. It is a word of Jesus stated 3 times in these 2 favorite chapters of mine. It is this.....

"Then my Father will give you...**WHATEVER YOU ASK!**"

The future is bright with promise....if we will just face it with obedience and love!

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