

“BE HEALTHY AND FRUITFUL”

Psalm 1:1-6

By Pastor YAU

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INTRODUCTION:

1) Trees in the spring: Different people have their reasons to love a particular season of the year, but to me, spring is the best. Spring doesn't just drive away the gloomy looks of the sky, the chilling temperature and the sense of “death” in many things that come with winter, it brings back the sense of life when you see the sprouting of trees, the fresh pale green color of the new leaves, the new leaves of grass that cover our yards and everywhere else that make us feel alive again after seeing those dead-looking limbs all winter months. The streets between my home and my church which I have been driving in the past 18 years, always influence my feeling and mood, mostly in the morning. I always take a deep breath and uplift my spirit when I see the budding on trees in early spring. I know they are alive again and soon they will overshadow the streets with beautiful arches of green. What a beautiful world God has created for us.

2) Trees in the Bible: The Bible portrays children of God as trees more than once, such as in Luke 13:6-9 and John 5:1-5, and each of them has its own meaning and application. Today, let's focus on one of them written by a beloved king of Israel and a dear child of God, King David, in the beginning chapter of the most beloved book in the Bible, the Psalms. In this starting chapter of Psalms, King David scripted down the life of God's children like trees planted alongside the streams of living water, never run out of God's supplies, and their healthy growth and rich fruit bearing in season. He starts with

the nature of the trees and the soil where they ground their roots that guarantee their further growth and fruitful life. He concluded the chapter with a comparison on the destiny of the good trees and the bad ones, an encouragement to the righteous and a warning to the wicked.

THEME OF THE CHAPTER: The theme of this chapter is the purpose of God in the life of his children: Be healthy and fruitful. God has a plan for all his children to be healthy and fruitful all their life. He has scripted a list of simple steps he wants us to follow to achieve his purpose on us. It is not optional, but mandatory for us to be healthy and fruitful in our life if we just follow God's plan. God has mapped out each step, provided all the necessary elements from which we are destined to be healthy and fruitful.

ELEMENTS FOR HEALTHY AND FRUITFUL TREES: Most of us are not botanical experts who know what it takes to have healthy and fruitful trees. But the Bible has clear description on planting trees that will become healthy and fruitful. Here let me list three of them:

1) We need a good planter: “I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener (planter).” (John 15:1) In this parable, Jesus listed the first important element to have a healthy and fruitful tree: A good planter who knows what to plant and how to make the tree growing healthy and fruitful. Jesus said God is the planter. From day one of our salvation to become children of God, He is our Father, our planter, gardener and supplier to make sure we become healthy and fruitful trees. In our practical life, we know how important it is to have someone

who knows trees, knows how to grow and keep trees, what to do if trees have disease and problems that may hinder the growth and fruit bearing. If we want to be healthy and fruitful Christians, we have to have God as our everyday gardener, to allow God to do what is needed in our life so we can be fruitful. Some of us want to run away from God, to live on our own way and reject God's leadership and authority over our life. We need to stop all these.

2) We need some good ground: “Still other seeds fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.” (Matt 13:8) This is in the parable of The Sower in Matthew 13. Jesus said in order to have the best growth and fruit bearing, the seed or the tree must be planted in good soil or ground. We are talking about the best environment a tree should be planted: Good soil. There is no other place in the world for Christians to grow than in the House of the Lord, the church. In God's church, there are plenty supplies of spiritual food, spiritual and personal relationship with God's people, a place all can learn to love, to support, to serve each other and reaching out to the world to bring others into the fellowship of believers. The church is also the best place to teach our children the right morality, principles of life, grow them to be the best citizens no other place can do. Jesus declared that He will build his church on the rock of faith in God that the power of evil cannot overcome it.” (Matt 16:18) If you want to grow your life, the life of your children and family, to be healthy and fruitful, there is no better place than in the church.

3) We need plenty of clean water: In Psalm 1:3, the Bible says, “He is like a tree planted by streams of water.” Before

any thing else, clean water is the first thing a tree or all trees need to live, to grow and to bear fruit. The Bible has much to say about water, streams of water or living water that will meet the needs of all men. Studies tell us man may live without food up to twenty some days, but no man may live without water in more than two days. Water is the life line to all living things, man, tree and anything else. In the story of living water in John 4, in his dialog with the Samaritan woman on eternal life, Jesus declared He is the living water that will supply all the needs of man: “Everyone who drinks this water (from the well) will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become a spring water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:13-14) Jesus was talking about the supply of a lifeline from him we all need to quench our thirst, to meet all of our needs, to grow us to be healthy and fruitful. In John 15:5, Jesus said, “If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit, apart from me, you can do nothing.”

VISIBLE SIGNS OF HEALTHY TREES:

1) Their roots grow deep: We bought a new home in 1995 close to church with a small maple tree planted in the front yard. Before we know it, that little maple grew so fast to over shadow almost the whole yard. Branches spread to cover the front part of the house with roots grew farther and larger than the top of the tree. Anytime we tried to dig a hole to plant something like azalea, we see tree roots everywhere of the flower bed. Even we are not knowledgeable on trees, we know the tree is healthy, strong and big. It is so because the roots grew deep and wide to draw nutrition and water to

sustain its growth. We Christians are the same: If we want to be healthy and strong, we must grow our roots deep and wide:
Two ways

a) Grow our roots in the truth of God's word. This is the foundation of all Christian growth. God's word is the living water that support our life in all circumstances.

b) Grow our roots in fellowship with believers. Christian community life is like a lifeline that we draw support, love and strength from each other. All Christians much join their lives with other believers in the church in worship, Bible study, fellowship and service. No lone Christian has every become very strong or productive. Even Jesus called 12 disciples.

2) Their leaves grow thick: All healthy trees have one common sign: they have thick, dense deep color leaves. By looking at the leaves of a tree, we can see the level of its health. When a tree is in trouble or dying, the first sign is its leaves are falling, withering. This symbolizing the dynamics of life in us by our outward expression of joy, hope, love, service and giving. In 1:3 of the text today, it says: "Its leaf does not wither." This is a symbol of power and persistence God intends us to live.

3) Their fruit is plentiful: "Which yields its fruit in season." (1:3) "In season" means "as it should." All fruit trees have their season to bear fruits as they should because it comes in their nature. Farmers choose fruit trees with intent of harvesting fruits in their season. All farmers want to see their fruit trees bear much fruit and so is our Heavenly Father. In John 15, Jesus said, "He cuts off every branch that bear no fruit, while every branch that bear fruit, he prunes so that it

will be even more fruitful.” (15:2) I am sure all of us want to be healthy and fruitful trees. God wants to prune us, clean us, so we may be even more fruitful that will bring him more glory. (15:8)

CHOOSE TO BE HEALTHY AND FRUITFUL: (1:1-2)

1) Stay away from the wrongs: Look at your yards front and back. You don't have to do anything but weeds of all kinds will grow on them thick and wild everywhere. This is so because the environment is filled with seeds of weed, that you don't need to find them but they will find you. Same happens in our Christian life: We live in this wicked world and we need to take protective steps to keep us healthy. A godly man need to take these steps:

a) He doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked: (1:1a) Wicked is about the heart. God's people don't get close to or gang up with people of wicked hearts and won't listen to their counsel otherwise you will be affected by the wickedness in their heart and become wicked like them.

b) He doesn't stand in the way of sinners: (1:1b) “Stand in the way” here means follow the way. Anyone who desires to be spiritually healthy can not follow the way of sinners or he may become a sinner. “Sinner” here means people who continuously living in sin.

c) He doesn't sit in the seat of mockers: (1:1c) Mockers are people who don't respect God, despise God and care nothing about God and what God says. Here we see the atheists and lawless people who don't care about God or respect God's commands. Sitting in their seat means to rank with them, to agree with them and follow their attitude and

way of life.

2) Stay close to the rights: Anyone who desires to be healthy and fruitful must also make efforts to stay on the right track. Here God says what to do:

a) He delights in the law of the Lord: Delight means love, enjoy, feeling good. Anyone who desires to be spiritually healthy must love God and his law; enjoy close relationship with God, study his word and feel happy to be with God. This includes but not exclude Bible study class, personal devotion and participate in worship to hear teaching of God's word. We all need to live by law, especially the law of God.

b) He meditates the law of the Lord: To delight is to have sweet attitude on something. To meditate is to keep that something in your heart and mind non-stop, a step further than delight: You just can't let it go. Many people can not let go of their iPhone, iPad or other gadgets. God wants to see us not to let go of His law and teaching in the Bible.

c) He continues and never stop: “Day and night” means 24/7 or all the time. This is something many of us fail to do. We love God, love his word and live by it for some time, but not all the time. We start going to Sunday School for a while then quit. We start devotional for some time and quit. We go to worship for sometime, then quit. We live out our life according to the law of God for some time then we quit. We become fervent to serve God for a while, then stop doing that. Continuity and persistent is a real problem for many of us in our pursuit of Christian growth. That's why we are not healthy.

IT PAYS TO BE HEALTHY AND FRUITFUL: Some might

think that to be spiritually healthy and fruitful bears too much burden to achieve. They don't know the rewards God has promised them. If you know how God will bless you because you seek to be spiritually healthy, I am sure you will be happy to pursue this.

1) God promised his blessings: God promised in 1:3 to bless those who separated themselves from the wicked but stand to do right: “Whatever he does prospers.” (1:3d) “Prosper” here means more than just material blessing which is the center of God's reward in the OT, it also means “smooth ride” in all things he does. (Chinese Bible puts it that way) God promised to make all things he does easy, successful and prosperous for him. Anything else you want more than that?

2) God promised his protection: Dangers in this world isn't a new thing of the 21st century. Since this world is full of evil things and evil people. Anything could happen to anyone of us. But God promised us his protection in 1:6, “For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous.” No secret servicemen or armed body guards may protect anyone from harm 100%. But God has his eyes on the righteous every hour of the day, everyday. Again in Psalm 121:4-8, the Bible promised God's protection in a complete way no one else may imagine or provide.