

On Your Own

Object: A coin

Theme: Prayer - Asking God to help us.

Scriptures: “All things you ask in prayer, **believing**, you will receive.” (Matthew 21:22 NASB)

“If you ask the Father for anything **in My name**, He will give it to you.” (John 16:23 NASB)

Last time I was in overseas I brought back some coins. They are interesting because they are different from the coins we use. I brought back this coin and I want to give it to one of you this morning. Who would like to have this coin? If you want it, all you have to do is pick it up out of my hand, but there is a condition. You have to pick it up using only one finger! That makes it pretty difficult, doesn't it? To pick something up, your finger really needs the help of the thumb. With the help of the thumb, it is easy to pick up the coin. There is one other way you may get this coin. You may ask me, and I will give it to you.

A lot of people go through life trying to do everything on their own. They refuse to accept help from anyone and they certainly would never ask for help. Do you ever act that way? Do you ever refuse to ask for help even when you need it? That is like picking up the coin with one finger – it makes what you need hard to do, if not impossible.

We all need help at times. We need help from other people and we need help especially from God. We can always count on God to help us if we will just ask. The Bible says, “All things you ask in prayer, **believing**, you will receive.” “If you ask the Father for anything **in My name**, He will give it to you.”

Do you need something in your life today? Will you be willing to pray and ask God for His help, or will you insist on doing it on your own?

Let me pray for us. Jesus, you told us that when we ask the Father for something in Your name, believing in Your will, God You will give it to us. God please help us to be willing to ask instead of trying to do everything on our own. Help us try to understand what You, Lord, want for our lives and then let us ask You, God, for Your desires for our lives. Amen.

Ordination of Rick Mitchell

DISCIPLE – SERVANT – ELDER - PASTOR

This morning we come together as a community of Christ to recognize and give thanks for what Christ has done for centuries and is doing in this very community we call Canyon Bible Church. It is Christ that calls men to help in spiritually guiding and leading His church. We but recognize those God has already called and is working through. As I speak this morning directly to Rick, know that my words, the words that echo the very words of our Lord Jesus applies to all of you as well. In the Gospel according to John, Jesus spoke to his disciples saying, **Slide** “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that your fruit would remain ...*” (John 15:16 NASB) Jesus spoke these words to His disciples, but they are written for all of us. On the day after the night in which Jesus spoke these words to the eleven and He also spoke to you, Rick, knowing this very day would come, He laid Himself down on the cross and bought you with His blood. You are not only His fruit, but you are His fruit-bearer. The only fruit that will ever endure to eternal life is fruit that grows out of the cross. As Jesus explained to his disciples and to all that followed, **Slide** “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:23-24 NASB) We are Christ's fruit because He died for us. We are His fruit-bearers if we are willing to take up our cross and die with Jesus. Never forget the setting of this text, Rick. It is no accident that when Jesus had commanded his disciples and you and me and all of us, to go and bear fruit,

He went and died. Your call and your ministry must always stand in the shadow of the cross of Christ. The only fruit that will last is the fruit that grows out of the Cross of Christ.

Slide "You did not choose me, but I chose you," Jesus said this to the eleven apostles, and surely to everyone whom He calls to ministry. Why did He say, "You did not choose me"? It's not literally true. The disciples had chosen to leave their jobs and followed Jesus. He did not drag them into His service kicking and screaming. He does not control them with bit and bridle as a master does his horse. They were not looking for ways to escape from His ministry. As we recently saw in John chapter 1 Andrew follows Jesus without even being asked, and he goes to get Simon Peter and brings him to Jesus. Jesus did not make the first contact with them as He did with Nathanael.

We could turn this saying of Christ around. What if Jesus had said, "I did not choose you, but you chose me?" What would be the point of saying that? Wouldn't this mean, "Jesus is not bound to you. You chose to come along. If the going gets rough, don't come whimpering to Jesus. Remember, Jesus would say, "It was your choice to follow me. I didn't stake anything on your success." But Jesus said the opposite, "You did not choose me, but I chose you." I believe what He meant was this, Jesus was saying, "Your presence here is My doing and I therefore, take full responsibility. I know you agreed to join Me in this work, but deep in your heart you know it was I who laid claim on you. So, it is My honor, not yours, is at stake in this work." If that is what Jesus means, then the reason He said, "You did not choose me, but I chose you", was to encourage us that He would help us. If His honor is at stake in our success because He chose us for the work, then we can be sure He will exert all His power to make us fruitful. Jesus

will not lightly let His wisdom be scorned. Therefore, Jesus will **not** look lightly on our cry for help, when we say, "Lord you chose me! You are not fickle like men, but You are God. You are not shortsighted. You are not impulsive. Your choices have the weight of eternity in them. You will not let your chosen one be ruined. Help me, Lord." Such a plea—if it comes from the heart—Jesus cannot and will not ignore. His wisdom and constancy and reliability and reputation are at stake.

But in what sense did Jesus choose you differently from your choice of him? I believe in at least two ways. First, Jesus said, **Slide** "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." (Matthew 11:27 NASB) Rick, you nor I would have ever chosen Jesus, had He not revealed to us the glory of the Father. Had Jesus not enabled us to see in Him, the very image of the invisible God, we would never have come. Dead in trespasses and sins, blinded by the god of this world, we were hopelessly hell-bent until Jesus called us by name and raised us from the dead.

Slide "The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name..." It is Christ that chooses each and calls them. John continues with an important point. **Slide** "The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out." (John 10:3 NASB) It is Christ that leads each person out of this world into a life of worshiping God. Your choice of Christ was very different than His choice of you. Jesus' choice of you was a recreating, resurrecting, life-giving choice when He called you by name and you were born again and made a child of God. Your choice of Him was all in response and in trust of His commitment to you. **Blank**

The other sense in which Christ chose you differently than you chose Him is in the

call to ministry. Now all believers are chosen in that first sense, and can have the assurance that Christ's honor is at stake in their perseverance. Indeed all believers are chosen for ministry. But among the saints, whose responsibility is the work of the ministry to the saints and to Christ's church? Christ sets some people apart as pastors and teachers to devote their full-time labor to the ministry of the Word and prayer, in order to equip the saints. Paul explains this in Ephesians chapter 4. We read in chapter 4 that those who serve do so willingly. In a sense we have chosen the ministry. But if we are where we belong, there has been a call from the Lord preceding, equipping, inspiring, and finally enabling our choice of the ministry. If this were not so, ordination would be a sham. For what we will do here in the next few minutes in the laying on of hands is to confirm not Rick's choice of the ministry, but God's choice of Rick. Jesus said, **Slide** "You did not choose me, but I chose you." Therefore, be encouraged Rick, be very bold in your work, for Christ is for you, and His very honor is at stake in your success. Your willingness to serve others and your love of Christ has been evident for many years now.

Jesus spoke not only to His disciples but to you when He said I, **Slide** "appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that your fruit would remain ...*" If the origin and assurance of your ministry is election, then Rick the immediate aim and purpose of your life is fruit-bearing. **Slide** My dearly beloved please turn in your Bibles to John chapter 15 and follow as I work through my thoughts. In the context of John 15 beginning in verse 1 we find answers to three questions about this task of fruit-bearing. First, what is it? Second, how shall we accomplish it? And, third, to what end should it be pursued? **Blank**

First, we should answer the question, "what is fruit-bearing?" What is the fruit

we are called to bear—indeed we must bear? I think fruit in this chapter is a broad term and embraces two things: love for people and the conversion of sinners. If you bear fruit, you love people and win people to Christ. Let's take love first. The picture in verses 1 and 2 is that Christ is like a vine, and you Rick, His minister, are like a branch shooting off this vine. God the Father is like the vinedresser who prunes back the branches so they bear the most fruit. Since the fruit is simply fed by the vine, the fruit is the substance of what has passed through the branch from the vine and we should ask, "What is it that we receive from the vine?" Jesus' answer is love. Abiding in Jesus means abiding in His love according to verse 9— **"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love."**

"Abide in me" of verse 4 is replaced by **Slide** "Abide in my love," here in verse 9 and this shows more specifically what we receive when we are united to the vine. Just as a grape receives its flavor and goodness from the vine, so too we receive divine love from Christ. It stands to reason, then, that what we receive from the vine flows through the branch and produces the fruit of love, for the nourishment and refreshment of other people.

There is another way we may see the same thing. In verse 2 Jesus says, that if you don't bear fruit, you don't abide in the vine. If you don't abide in the vine you get snapped off and thrown in the fire, as seen in verse 6. So in order to abide in the vine or to abide in Christ's love, we must bear fruit. There is a parallel to that thought found in verse 10, **"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."** Then if you "keep His commandments" and "if you bear fruit" both of these mean the same thing. Or at least we can say that fruit-bearing includes keeping the

commandments of Jesus. If we ask what is it in this context that Jesus means by "commandments," the answer again is love. We know this by verse 12, **"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you."** This commandment of Jesus is followed up by verse 17, **"This I command you, that you love one another."** Therefore, love is fulfilling the commands of Jesus and fulfilling the commands of Jesus is at least in part means to bear fruit. Bearing fruit means loving other people. It means letting the love, which we constantly receive from Christ as we abide in Him flow through us and out to others for their benefit.

I think the term "fruit" in this gospel passage is very broad and also includes the making of new disciples. In John chapter 4 Jesus says, **Slide** **"Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest?' Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Slide** **Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together."** (John 4:35-36 NASB)

"Fruit for life eternal" in verse 36 probably corresponds to fruit that abides in Christ found in John 15:16, in which Jesus says, **Slide** **"I appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain ..."** This would refer then, to the fruitfulness of winning others to Christ, who have been called by God's power for salvation.

I think in the mind of Christ these two meanings of the fruit-bearing merged into one. If the fruit is the out-cropping of the love of Christ in our lives for the nourishment and refreshment of others, then surely among the benefits received from that fruit would be the conversion of souls. John chapter 13 gives one

example of how this happens, **Slide** “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this **all** men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35 NASB) The most winning and powerful witness we can give is the reality of Christ’s love in our lives. The fruitfulness of obedient love and the fruitfulness of winning people to Christ are really **not** two different things - they are in reality one. The aim of all ministry is sharing Christ’s love. Rick, this is what God has called you to – a ministry of love.

The second question that Jesus answers here about fruit-bearing is how it can be accomplished. The answer Jesus gives is found in verse 4, **Slide** “Abide in me and I in you”. The word “abide” in the Greek means to continue to exist in Christ. To be separated from Christ means to die spiritually. This concept is so important Jesus uses the word “abide” 8 times in this passage. Jesus is saying keep yourself attached, closely attached, to the vine for **Slide** “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, **for apart from Me you can do nothing.**” (John 15:5 NASB)

Everything that you try to do, Rick, will come to nothing unless you do it through a conscious, abiding dependence on the enablement of Christ. The most important thing I want to say this morning is this - Rick make it your aim, your ambition for the rest of your life to discover in ever-deeper experience what it means to abide in Christ. It is the secret of all fruitfulness.

There are several pointers in the text that help us discover what this means in practice to abide in Christ. One is found in verse 7, **Slide** “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

Abiding in Christ involves letting His words abide in us. Notice how these two things come together - the Word of God abiding in you and effectual prayer. Rick, here is the first and decisive line of battle in your ministry. You must, you must resist everything that would pull you away from rigorous study of God's Word and daily hours of prayerful meditation to let that Word sink in and abide in your mind and soul. The inwardly abiding Word is a truth of Scripture believed, cherished, and rolled back and forth in your mind until its implications spill over into daily life as love and joy and peace and righteousness. The Word will not abide within us if we are in a hurry. One thing I have learned from you Rick is that you are man who holds the Word of God in high esteem and spends much time mediating on it. Spending snatches of time with God does not make holy, powerful, life-changing spiritual men of God. Because there are so few people who believe that Rick, the expectations people lay on you in the service of people will probably be a constant threat to your spiritual power and fruitfulness. But Christ has appointed you to go and bear fruit. So resist those expectations of doing many good things that will take you away from spending time with Christ - resist with boldness of prayer and meditation.

One other pointer toward the practical meaning of abiding in Christ is the parallel phrase in verse 9, **Slide** “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.” Christ's love for you is His commitment to give you, right now and forever, everything that is good for you. Therefore, abiding in His love means constantly receiving as from His loving hand all things - all that is good for you. It means never doubting that He is doing you good, but always resting in His kindness. There is a great freedom in the ministry, Rick, when you are confident that every hospital room you enter, every counseling session you conduct and every pulpit you enter to teach from is a place where the Lord of all loves you,

that is, He will do what is good for you. Believing that and acting on it is what it means to abide in the love of Christ. All who do this will bear much fruit. **Blank**

Finally, the end for which you seek to bear fruit is not just for your own joy or even the benefit of the people God has entrusted to you. Jesus makes this clear in verse 11, **Slide** “These things I have spoken to you so that **My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.**” Life’s purpose is that God the Father might be glorified and this bring great joy. In verse 8 Jesus says, **Slide** “**My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.**”

The Westminster Shorter Catechism brings this into focus by teaching us the chief end of man and the chief end of ministry is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. God is committed by the very nature of His divine righteousness to always act on behalf of His glory. He wills to display it and magnify it and that brings us back to where we began. **Slide** “**You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.**” The honor of Christ is at stake in whether you, whom He chose, bears fruit. But not only that, His Father is glorified when you bear much fruit. Therefore Jesus’ glory and the glory of the Father are at stake in the fruitfulness of your ministry. **Blank**

Rick and Rhonda will you now please come forward. I have asked Rhonda to come forward with Rick. Rhonda has agreed to give up some of her rightful demands on Rick in order that he may serve God and His church. Being the wife of a pastor is a most difficult job. Rick and Rhonda, every day of your life and throughout all your ministry you can pray with tremendous confidence and we, your brothers and sisters, can pray together with you in confidence as a community of Christ – my dearly beloved, my brothers and sisters, let us raise and come forward as a community and lay hands upon Rick and Rhonda as I pray

Psalm 67 with confidence, knowing God hears and is fulfilling this prayer through Rick. Brothers if you lay hands on Rick and sisters if you will lay hands on Rhonda I will pray. God we lift Rick up to You and Rhonda his faithful and true wife, the wife of his youth. We pray as a community, as a family that loves You Lord. We pray as King David prayed, ¹ “God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us. ²That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. ³Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You. ⁴ Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; For You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. ⁵Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You. ⁶The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. ⁷God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear (You almighty God).” May Rick be fruitful in his ministry of service and bring You, our God glory. Amen.

As the women return to their seats – the men will take time to sign the certificate of Ordination before returning to their seats.

My beloved, I present to you, your pastor, and Rick I present to you, your beloved co-heirs of Christ and our family.