

To all the glorious wonderful Saints at Manatee Life,

SCRIPTURE:

Galatians 5:22-23 (MSG) – Larger reading: Galatians 5:13-26

But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard - things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way.

STORY:

Phillip Keller in his book: “*Gardener Looks at the Fruits of the Spirit,*” has a beautiful way of describing what can happen in the life of a Christian. The Christian who makes himself available to God’s work can grow from unresponsive, even resistant rocky soil to become a beautiful garden.

He describes how his father acquired 110 acres of desolate stony land on a high ridge in the heart of Africa. His earliest childhood impressions of his father were of a tough, demanding man who was hard on himself and others and difficult for God to handle just like the barren land littered with stones and boulders weighing hundreds of pounds. Frequently the soil around these rocks was very fertile. He watched as his father using teams of oxen virtually tore thousands of stones from the ground. Where the stones had lain he planted thousands of trees – fruit trees, coffee trees, firewood trees, and ornamental shrubs. Gorgeous gardens and luxuriant pastures replaced what had previously been desolate land.

OBSERVATION:

It would seem to this old preacher that the 21st Century church has decided that we do not need the Holy Spirit and his gifts ... or at least it seems that we go out of our way to ignore his presence and the tremendous gifts that he is so ready to bestow upon us.

Maybe it is our need to be in control? Maybe it is our desire to make our own way? Maybe it is fear that we will end up loving people that we would rather not love, forgiving people that we wish the worst for, and doing “stuff” that we would much rather just leave up to others to do?

And yet, as the story illustrates, it is right there under the “rocks” of our “maybes” lies the richer soil. Our lives could be an eye catching, head turning, people talking kind of beautiful garden, instead of a “field” filled with ugly “rocks” ...

It is our choice!

QUOTE:

“Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They push the human race forward. And while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.” – Rob Siltanen

PRAYER:

Help us to change, oh Holy One, help us to change! Amen

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim

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Sharing today's worship service (Manatee United Methodist Church) on Facebook.

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