

Rewind: Step By Step

Luke 3:10-14

- Earlier this year we did a series together called Step by Step. This series was based out of Galatians chapter 5, when Paul gives us a list that he calls the Fruit of the Spirit.
- And we pointed out that **Fruit**, in this context means, **“A work, act, or deed, that comes from or originates from something else.”**
- And this is what we so desperately need to understand, is that there is no part of the fruit of the Spirit that originates from us.
- And we do not have the ability or capability to manufacture anything genuine on this list in our own power
- The word I want to talk about today is the third Fruit that Paul gives us and that is the word Peace. And in this context the greek word

literally means **PEACE: “Peace between individuals, i.e. harmony, concord”**

- Which means that once we have believed in Jesus, received the forgiveness of the Father, and have been sealed with His Holy Spirit, a primary quality of our new life in Christ is that we are to be peaceful people.
- Sadly, Christians are not always thought to be peaceful people from those outside of our faith. Many see Christians more as judgmental, irritable, and combative people instead.
- And though we cannot speak to every single persons experience, whether their opinions are justified or not, we can keep a watch on ourselves and make sure we are doing everything we can to exude the Peace of God through our lives.
- Because to be fair, no matter how caring and peaceful we are with unbelievers sometimes, some will still abhor our faith and will demonize us, which Jesus told us to expect.

- But Paul also did say in Romans, ***"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."*** -Romans 12:18 (ESV)

- Not just the people that think like you, look like you, believe like you, but do everything you can to live at peace with everyone.

- Now we can hear that, but still ask ourselves from time to time, what does that actually look like?

- What are some practical steps we can take to ensure we are practicing Peace in our lives?

- In Luke Chapter 3, John the Baptist has some people who come to him, asking him some very practical questions.

- They all came out to be baptized, they repented, they had this incredible spiritual experience, and now they want to know what's next

- ***"And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered***

them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."- Luke 3:10-14 (ESV)

- PRAY

- I'm gonna speak to the husbands in the room for a moment. Have you guys ever experienced those times, and some of you may need to think back before you had kids, but have you ever experienced those times when your wife gets bored, blames you for being bored, but then doesn't really want to do anything??

- I can remember numerous occasions, more so before Fletcher was born, when Rachel would

indicate to me that she was bored. I say, “Ok, you wanna watch something?” “No. I wanna go DO something.” “Ok, you want to go out to eat?” “Noooo, I don’t really want to have to get ready,” “Okayyyy, you want to go to a movie?” “Noooo, I don’t really want to spend money.” “You wanna go for a walk?” “You know how cold it is outside??” “Soooo, what do you wanna do??” “I don’t know...” Looking at me like I’m supposed to have some kind of answer!

- Then the times when we would just end up watching something on the tv, the show or movie will end, she’ll pick up her head off of the couch, and then ask “Now what?” “NOW WHAT?!? What do you mean now what?? My hands are kinda tied here!
- But have you ever asked that question about your Christian life? Maybe you heard a convicting sermon, had a great worship experience in Church and then you leave the church building, get home, and ask, “Now What?” Maybe you have just come to Christ,

your faith just really became your own, you just got baptized, and now you’re asking “Now What?”

- This is the question that is being presented to John during the height of his ministry. He has scores of these people who are repenting and coming out to him to be baptized and now they’re asking “Now what?”
- THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST
 - Before we get into the answers that he gives, I think we should have some background on John’s specific ministry.
 - John, by our standards, would have seemed like a whack job. He lived out in the wilderness, he made his own clothes from camel hair, and his diet consisted of bugs and wild honey.
 - But he was a prophet. And throughout the centuries God would speak to his people through prophets to lead the people to repentance. More often than not, the people

would disregard the prophets and ended up killing most of them.

- Now it had been 400 years since the last time a legitimate prophet had risen up among the people of Israel.
- And there was a lot of nostalgia surrounding John that the people were being drawn to. His setting, his message, the way he carried himself, was very reminiscent of the Prophet Elijah who was one of the most famous prophets of all time.
- Also, John seemed to be very counter cultural contrary to the society that they were living in. It was as if John refused to live where everyone else lived, he refused to act like everyone else acted, he refused to dress like everyone else dressed, and he refused to eat like everyone else ate.
- He *seemed* to be very anti-societal, which the people could get behind because they didn't like the society they were living in because it was ruled by the Roman Empire.

- The Jewish people hated that they were being ruled by foreign people because in their minds, they were God's chosen people, they were the superior race, and they should be the leading world power.
 - So they could get behind what John was doing.
- However, John was not taking a political stance or making a political statement. He was not taking a stand against the Roman Empire, he was preparing the people for something much more important.
 - His job was to stir up a very complacent people of God, in order to prepare their hearts for when their Savior would publicly arrive on the scene.
- Also, the setting that John was ministering in was very significant because whenever the people of Israel had the great Exodus from Egypt, they wandered in the wilderness, before they crossed the Jordan River to enter into the promised land.

- Now John, was in the wilderness, baptizing people in the same Jordan River, preparing them for the Promised Messiah.
 - John was letting the people know that it was time for a New Exodus. A Greater Exodus that all of the Old Testament and Prophets were pointing toward and waiting for, for generations
- Now, one of the reasons I know that John was not a crazy cult leader at this time, is because he wasn't calling people to leave society, their families, and their homes, to come out there and live in the wilderness with him and start a commune.
 - He wasn't calling people to come and follow him, but he was actually sending people back into society, back into their jobs, back into their lives.
 - He's saying, take this repentance and allow it to transform the way you live right where you are.
- So whenever people come up to him asking, "Now what??" It's very likely they were expecting to be told to drop everything, leave everything, and go become monks in a monastery or something. They're probably thinking, "Ok now what? Do we come out here and live with you, are you going to train us, to be teachers and preachers like you, are we all going to band together and attack the Romans??"
 - And to their surprise, he says "No...go back home." But he does instruct them to live lives that will be ready and prepared for when Jesus moves among them.
- And I believe that his instructions to these repentant people, are clear instructions for us as well. And these are three practical ways that we can live in a way that is constantly ready and prepared to be used by God, and will enable us to live peaceful lives.

- Now to be clear, what we are about to talk about is not legalism. This is not about us being good little boys and girls.
- These are merely practical ways that we can begin posture our hearts to be prepared for God to use us, *in whatever way He wants*, in order to further His Kingdom.
- So first, John addresses the crowds in general that were asking him, Now What? In verse 10, it says...
 - ***“And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?” And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.”- Luke 3:10-11 (ESV)***
 - **BE GENEROUS**
- The crowds that John was addressing faced the same problem that we face today
- And that problem is that we are all too easily prone to make life about what WE can get.
- If getting the most for ourselves is our primary objective, its going to be pretty much impossible to live peaceful lives, because we’ll see other people as merely obstacles that are just in the way of us getting what we want or what we think we deserves.
 - And this is a common occurrence because, we are prone to be selfish individuals.
 - If you don’t believe me, I have a go-to illustration for this that many of you have heard me say multiple times.
- *But if you don’t believe me, that we as human beings are inherently selfish individuals...tell me when have you ever heard a toddler, who is first learning to speak, on their own volition say.... “Yours...”*
- And we never naturally out grow that. It’s is only through a repentant mind that God can begin to teach us to take the focus off of ourselves and onto Him, all that He is, and begin to serve the people around us.

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- God is intentional about wanting us to be generous, because He doesn't want us to be possessed by our possessions
 - He doesn't want us to be bound by our bank accounts
 - He doesn't want cash to be our king
- He wants us to really enjoy life, He wants us to live free and lightly, He wants us to have life and have it abundantly
 - That's why He wants us to be generous
- Because Generosity is the ANTIDOTE to greed and He does not want greed to suffocate our lives
 - The only reason we are ever NOT generous is because we think we deserve something
 - We think we earned something
 - We think we are OWED something
 - God does not owe us anything
- There is nothing that is ours
- ***Psalm 24:1 The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein,***
 - There is not a single thing that we have that God hasn't either given us Himself, or allowed us to have
- However, whenever I think everything I have is mine because I earned it, I deserved it, I become entitled and, in turn, everything I have is never enough
 - I'll never be satisfied, *we always want what we don't have so therefore we try and get everything we can*
 - For some reason, we think that if we get more, the happier we will be, but that never actually works!
- Why? Because in reality we're not really looking for happiness we're looking for *purpose* and for *meaning*

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- *This is why Jesus says it is more blessed to give than to receive*
- Because the more I give the happier I will be because I'll begin to take part in something bigger than myself and in turn find purpose
- This happens whenever I can recognize, that I would have absolutely NOTHING with out Him
 - *Then I can be willing to give anything, because I know, Jesus has given me everything*
- This doesn't mean if you don't sell absolutely everything you have and give it to the poor then you don't love God.
 - He wants you to steward what you have well
 - He wants you to enjoy the blessings that He gives you
- But above all He wants your heart
 - A generous heart is a result of a grateful heart
- He wants us at the point where we would say, "God you have blessed me, but I recognize that you have blessed me to be a blessing, so You tell me what to do with it."
 - You tell me what to do with my finances
 - You tell me what to do with my family
 - You tell me what to do with my free time
 - You tell me what to do with my future
- I believe John's first instruction to the "Now What?" question was very intentional about telling the people to live open handed.
 - Because if we constantly are closed handed clinging to the things that don't last, then we will not be in a place where God can effectively give to us so that He can give through us.
 - Remember, we talked about this a couple of weeks ago when we talked about Abraham's

story: We are blessed SO THAT we will be a blessing to others

- And a Generous life is a direct response to the generosity of Christ.
 - We want to be a generous people because we serve a generous God! He is the first and greatest giver of all time. It's right there in John 3:16..."For God so loved the World that He GAVE..."
- How are we reflecting that heart?
- How are we practicing generosity in our lives? This goes way beyond money!
 - *Who around us at work or at school is constantly being overlooked that we need to be intentional in giving the time of day to?*
 - *How many times do we you pray and ask God to give us an opportunity to bless someone else with generosity?*

- *How many times are we intentionally looking for someone to bless so that they can be more open to the generosity of Christ?*
- We have to learn to be, and practice being, generous people BECAUSE the generous person is readily prepared to be used by God.
 - And He wants to use us to be positive spiritual influences in the lives of others.
 - And in order to do that, people have to want to be around you.
 - And people enjoy being around a generous person. It doesn't take a social study to know that's true.
- When have you ever heard someone say, "Oh, I can't stand that person, they're just wayyy to generous, it's so annoying!"
 - No one says that! Because a generous person is a peaceful person. And that is because if you are known to be a generous person, people won't feel like they need to

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have a guard up around you or wonder if you're just using them to get something else.

- So find ways to practice generosity in your life.
- Next John addresses the Tax Collectors that come up to him asking "Now What?"
- Now, just the fact that tax collectors were also coming out to be baptized was already in itself a radical thing.
 - Because tax collectors were hated in the Jewish society. They were not known to be peaceful people at all.
 - These tax collectors were Jewish people that were employed by the Roman government to collect the taxes from their friends and neighbors and local community.
- But one of the things that made this job so appealing was the fact that they were allowed to up-charge the people whatever they wanted in order to pocket extra cash for themselves.

- Everyone knew that they were doing that, but they couldn't do anything about it because they had the protection of the Rome.
- These were hated individuals that were profiting off of a corrupt system at the expense of their own people.
 - But it's so interesting that John doesn't even tell them to leave that corrupt system, he tells them to go back to it, but verse 13 says,
 - ***And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do."- Luke 3:13 (ESV)***
 - He's telling them and all of us that we need to practice being and learn how to
- **BE HONEST**
 - This might be a no brainer, but this was going to be much easier said than done in the environment that they worked in

- The honest tax collector was going to face a lot of problems by living honestly in a corrupt system
- But just like with generosity, John was wanting these individuals to become peaceful people by shifting their focus from personal greed, to other people's needs.
- And the system that they were in didn't necessarily need to change in order for them to change
- You know, we have a tendency to get caught up on how the rest of the world needs to change and overlook how we on an individual level need to change
 - We have a tendency to point out all of the flaws of a corrupt system and neglect how we need to deal with our own corrupt hearts.
- We don't have to allow other dishonest people to dictate whether or not we are going to live honestly.
- David, in Psalm 37, is writing from the perspective of now being an old man, looking back on his life and imparting wisdom. He talks about how frustrating it can be for us when dishonest, evil people seem to do all of the wrong things but still profit off of it. And he instructs us...
- ***“Be still in the presence of the Lord, and wait patiently for Him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes. Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper—it only leads to harm...The wicked plot against the godly; they snarl at them in defiance. But the Lord just laughs, for He sees their day of judgment coming.” -Psalm 37:7-8, 13 (NLT)***
- He's saying you don't have to get caught up in how everyone else is living, and how bad they are...you don't have to let that consume you

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- You can still live honestly in the midst of a dishonest world, because at the end of the Day the Lord is in control and if He just laughs at their efforts, you don't have to get all up in arms about it.
- And If we're going to live honest lives we first have to be honest with ourselves.
 - The first step in the Christian life is being able to get to the point where we can be brutally honest with ourselves and realize, I'm not in control, I need help, I'm in over my head in this life. I have a tendency to be selfish, to be dishonest, to take advantage of other people That's why I need a God, I need a Savior, I need grace and mercies that are new every morning because I can't live the life I need to live without His help and intervention on my behalf.
- An honest life can be so liberating because an Honest Life Makes Much of Christ and makes little of ourselves.
- John the Baptist said it best in John 3:30, "He must increase, I must decrease."
- Whenever I am making much of Christ, I take the pressure off of myself, put it on Him where it belongs, and I can be that much more readily prepared for when He wants to move in a new way in my life.
 - My dad was talking to me about this passage one time, which is what actually inspired me to study this passage more, and he said that it was very likely that one of those tax collectors that came to John asking, "Now What?" was a young Tax Collector named Matthew.
- Matthew is instructed to go back into his job within a corrupt system, begin to live honestly, and all of that was preparing his heart to be in the place it needed to be whenever Jesus passed his collection booth one day and looked at him and said, "Come, follow Me."

- Which led him on a journey of following Jesus that he never saw coming which led to him writing His Gospel that we still read thousands of years later.
- We don't live honest lives merely for our own reputation so that people would look at us and think how pure and great we are...
- No, we live honestly in the midst of a difficult and dishonest world, out of obedience to Christ first and foremost.
- So that when He walks by and wants to use us in a new way, we will have already been intentionally keeping ourselves in step with His Spirit, and be much more readily prepared to follow.
- Finally, John addresses the soldiers.
- These were most likely not Roman soldiers. They most likely were a mix of temple guards, or Jewish mercenaries, that would have been

assigned as a sort of protective detail for the Tax Collectors.

- And they too, came out to be baptized and are asking, "Now What?"
- In verse 14 says, ***“And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.” -Luke 3:14 (ESV)***
 - He too is telling them to be honest, but he is also telling them to
- **BE CONTENT**
- Contentment is something that is very difficult for us in our day and age
- Because we always want what we don't have, and the grass always seems to be greener on the other side.
 - And living in a generation of so many options...How often do we think that as soon as things get difficult, as soon as things get

hard, or the moment we begin to face some adversity, “it’s time for a change!”??

- But what if God is still everything that you need Him to be in your present circumstances?
- You know, many times you can better learn contentment by learning to live well in your circumstances rather than trying to change them all of the time.
- Again, John kept sending these people right back into the corrupt and difficult circumstances that they were living in. But he wanted to send them back with a new perspective.
 - *They could have been thinking: “No, we want to live for God now! We can’t do that back there!” ...John says, yes you can*
 - *They could have been thinking, “It’s a tough economy, we don’t get paid enough to live the way we need to live!”...John says, yes you do...*
- John wanted them to live a life that was dependent upon God. He wanted them to learn how to live by faith. John wanted them to know that God will provide everything they need right where they are.
- I heard a great quote one time that said, “Where I am now, that’s the big time.”
 - What if we could learn to be confident that wherever God has me right now, He has me there for a reason and what if we could be content that He really does work ALL THINGS out for the Good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose?
- But this hard for us, because we have this tendency to always have to try and get ahead
 - and It’s as if have this perpetual need of making sure people know that their not better than us
 - And this leads to us losing our testimony of peace because it’s all born out of insecurity.

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- We try so hard to make people think that we're better than we are because we're insecure thinking that they're gonna think we're not good enough, they're gonna think we don't know enough, we're not skilled or talented enough... and you know what...WE'RE NOT!
 - I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH! ...I'M NOT A GOOD ENOUGH PASTOR, I'M NOT A GOOD ENOUGH HUSBAND, I'M NOT A GOOD ENOUGH CHRISTIAN, I'M NOT A GOOD ENOUGH FRIEND, I'M NOT A GOOD ENOUGH DAD, I'M NOT EVEN A GOOD ENOUGH DOG OWNER...(sorry JoJo)
- But you know what, I never will be! Why do we have such a hard time admitting that??
- I would never have experienced salvation in Christ if I couldn't admit that I wasn't good enough...so why do I keep trying so hard to prove that I am now??
- How much more content would we be if we could just admit we're not good enough...and it doesn't matter, because He is!
- But we claw, scrape, and fight so hard to try and find contentment in this life, at the expense of anyone who would get in our way...
- However, the reality is: Contentment is not found in what I have, or where I am. Contentment is found in who GOD is.
 - And whenever I become Content in how great God is, then I can begin to be honest, then I can begin to practice being generous.
- Because I can finally realize this isn't about trying to be a better me...I'm trying to be more like Christ.
- ***“Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children.”- Ephesians 5:1 (ESV)***
 - Think about how a small boy acts around his dad. He wants to talk like his dad, act like his dad, imitate his actions and mannerisms...he

wants to follow his dad around while he mows the lawn with his own little toy lawn mower.

- He just wants to be like his dad the best that he can.
- That's what the Christian life is...we read our bibles, we worship, we come to church, we listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, we do everything we can to just keep our focus and attention on Him and imitate what we see from Him the best we can
- And because God is not the reflection of our earthly fathers, He's the PERFECTION of our earthly fathers
 - And we don't imitate Him to try and gain His approval, we've already been given His approval through Jesus
 - So we don't become honest, generous, and content SO THAT He'll love us, but we can do those things BECAUSE He loves us.

- It's a natural response to being content in who He is
- I think a perfect example of this is when Jesus meets Zacchaeus
 - Zacchaeus wasn't just a tax collector, he was a CHIEF tax collector
 - He had ripped off and extorted so many people in his time.
- He also had little mans syndrome, because if you know the song, Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and wee little man was he.
 - So he probably loved being able to make people pay him money and the fact that they couldn't do anything about it.
 - In Luke 19, we see that Zacchaeus had heard about Jesus, and all he was causing all kinds of commotion around town, and he wanted to see what the fuss was all about.

- And Jesus was passing through one day, and the crowds were following Him, and Zacchaeus wanted to get a glimpse of Him, but the crowds weren't parting for Zacchaeus and he was a little guy so he decided to climb a tree to get a better look.
 - But Jesus stops, looks up at Zacchaeus in the tree, and says, "Zacchaeus, hurry up, come down! For today, I must stay at your house."
 - Now at first this had to be a little embarrassing because now everyone knows that he had to climb a tree..
 - But he climbs down, brushes himself off, and then he starts to feel himself a little bit.
 - He's like, "Yea, yea, that's right. Jesus' HAS to come to my house. Not yours, not yours. He knows where the real people are at. Yea, come on Jesus!"
- Then they get to Zacchaeus' house, and we don't know what they talked about or how long they were there...but we do know at some point Zacchaeus gets so overwhelmed with the Goodness of Jesus that he stands up, and he declares, "You know what! I'm gonna give half of my goods to the poor! And you know what! I'm done defrauding people, and anyone I've ripped off, I'm gonna pay them back! With interest! Anything I've took from people I'm going to pay it back 4 times over!"
- And Jesus is sitting back, loving the entire scene and says, "Today, salvation has come to this house!"
 - Salvation didn't come because he decided to do all of these things, salvation came because He met Jesus, and something stirred up within him that transformed everything about him.
 - Now he wanted to become generous, and he wanted to be honest, he wanted to make

peace with all those he had wronged in the past, BECAUSE he had found contentment for his soul.

- He was saying, "I WAS this way....BUT NOW I met Jesus!"

- He realized everything in this life was nothing compared to how great Jesus is, and he just wanted to be a little more like Him.
- That's what John wanted for everyone that was asking him "Now what?"
 - He knew that Jesus was coming, and that He was going to change everything.
- And he wanted all of the crowds, the tax collectors and the soldiers to be able to say:
 - *"I WAS a person of Pride....BUT NOW I want to be a person of peace.*
 - *"I WAS greedy....BUT NOW I want to be generous"*

- *"I WAS someone who took advantage of other people...BUT NOW I want to be honest."*
- *"I WAS someone who thought I had to make something of myself...BUT NOW I just want to be used by God."*
- So let me ask you, fellow Christian.
 - Are you living in such a way where you would be prepared for God to use you to do what you never thought He would ask you to do? Or to be where you never thought He would ask you to be?
- Are you living in an expectation of God to use you to further His Kingdom.
- Because I don't know about you, but that's what I want to be a part of!
 - I don't want to be so bogged down by my need to achieve or to get

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- I want to be so open handed and content in who my God is that I can really be a part of something as Big as the Kingdom of God.
- So what now?? Where do we start??
- By imitating Him.
 - We were dead in our sin. We had absolutely nothing to offer Him that would make Him and more Holy, Perfect, and Complete than He already is.
 - And even though He had nothing to gain, He was still so generous Gave us everything.
 - He was so honest and just that He didn't just overlook sin, or just wipe us all off of the earth, but He took the punishment for our sin upon Himself so that we could live freely as God's Children with eternal Hope
 - And He is SO Content and Confident in who He is, that He allows broken people like us to represent Him.
- This is where real peace is found, the general definition of the greek word for peace is, ***PEACE: (eirēnē) of Christianity, the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is***
- When we are content with the peace God has given our soul, assured of our salvation, we will in turn naturally produce the fruit of Peace in our lives and live in peaceful harmony in the midst of this chaotic world
- Because there is no form of worldly trouble that can take away the assurance of Christ's work on the cross for us.