

CHRIST ... and three out-of-season fruits
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(JOHN 14: 27; 15: 11)

Out-of-season fruit is always a rare commodity. Strawberries in winter, or blackberries in the spring, will always excite comment ; and if prices are not prohibitive, these rarities will always sell. Among the many fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, and peace ; but sometimes these have been produced in the most unlikely places at the most unexpected time. Their appearance promotes wonder ; their existence under certain conditions creates amazement. It was this fact which astonished the early Church ; they had seen luscious summer fruit in winter. When icy winds had blown upon their Lord ; when pre-calvary conditions had overwhelmed all else with dreariness and woe, the very choicest of heaven's fruit had been found in the words and actions of the Savior.

My Peace

" Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14: 27). It seemed incongruous for Christ to speak about His peace when men were planning to murder Him. Treachery of the worst type was about to be exhibited, and even the disciples were soon to demonstrate their unfaithfulness. Alone, and in pain, the Lord had every reason to feel bitterness of soul rather than to speak serenely of His undisturbed tranquillity. " My peace I give unto you." Anxiety was firmly banished from His mind ; hatred did not exist in His heart. Assured that all was well, He calmly walked with God. His soul was an ocean of divine compassion, unruffled by malice ; a place of abiding restfulness.

My Love

" As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love " (John 15: 9). Constantly the Lord had been challenged by frustration and disappointment. The Pharisees hated Him ; the self-confident disciples were about to forsake Him; and Judas would soon sell his loyalty for pieces of silver. Could any tree produce the fruit of love in face of such biting winds of evil? Could Christ endure such detestable conditions, and at the same time preserve the sweet purity of His spirit? Could love overcome hatred even as peace overcame anxiety? Where sin abounded, grace much more abounded. Christ loved them all-even Judas ; and the words spoken on that occasion seem now to be rays of brilliance shining from an ancient lighthouse. From the blackness of the past, the light shines forth to guide us safely into the harbor of the divine will. Christ said, " If I have loved you, ye ought also to love one another." A Christian whose love exists only in his theology is a tinkling cymbal a sound without music ; a desert without life.

My Joy

" These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full " (John 15: 11). "The fruit of the spirit is . . . joy." Calvary's horizon had already appeared dark and ominous ; the spikes destined to draw blood from the Master's body had already been forged. The gibbet was already lying in some timber yard awaiting the command which would take it forth to carry its precious burden. Apparently everything had gone wrong with God's world, and the road to the green hill was ready for the blood

CHRIST ... and three out-of-season fruits which would stain its dust. Christ knew that His hour had come, and calmly welcomed the end. Did I say " the end "? I was wrong. Let the readers accept my apologies. Christ went forth to meet His death knowing it would be a tunnel leading to a new era. At the end of the last supper he had announced a hymn, and probably pitched the tune. Emotion almost prevented the disciples from singing their parts, but His resonant, wonderful voice re-echoed the music of His soul. They wondered how He could be so buoyant and serene when everything had gone against Him. Whence came the charm of His manner, the rich cadence of His tone, the supreme confidence of His bearing? Was He not to be crucified? Alas, the disciples were short-sighted. They saw the cross ; He saw the throne. " . . . Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus . . . who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God " (Heb. 12: 2). His joy overcame sadness, pain, and death, and secured a deep content which defied the terrors of crucifixion. This joy He desired to share with His followers. He said, ". . . that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Love, joy, peace! These were summer fruits produced in winter. They were rare, and very costly.

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