

Text: John 15:5

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

Theme: "Without Christ, We Can do Nothing"

July 20, 1969 is a day that anyone, who was living at that time, will never forget. 500 million people from throughout the world watched as Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed and then walked on the moon. It was the greatest feat of courage and human ingenuity that we have every witnessed. The astronauts were able to withstand the incredible G-forces at lift off and then had the skill to land their spacecraft on the moon. Thousands of people at mission control and throughout NASA were instrumental in bringing about this monumental occasion. 400,000 people in all kinds of industries throughout our nation were involved in the endeavor. In the last year I met a couple of people who worked on the guidance system at the former AC spark plug plant in Oak Creek. What I find most interesting in reading about several people, especially the astronauts, in the program, was that this did not cause them to pat themselves on the back or glory in this great human achievement. It brought them to praise God for His goodness for us. They came to see that without Christ, we can do nothing.

I. That was shown by several of the acts of the astronauts.

On Christmas Eve 1968 Astronauts Frank Borman, Jim Lovell and Bill Anders were the first people to ever orbit another planet. They were told that they should say something appropriate for the occasion. It was anticipated that this would be the largest television audience ever. They chose to take turns reading the first 10 verses of the book of Genesis. The beautiful sight of the earth as it rose over the moon was awe-inspiring and caused them to praise the goodness and power of God.

When Apollo 11 landed, we know the famous words of Neil Armstrong, "The Eagle has landed." Then as he stepped on the moon he said, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Between those iconic phrases was something that Buzz Aldrin did. He was an elder at his church in Houston. His pastor gave him a small chalice and consecrated bread and wine. The first thing that he did on the moon was to receive the Lord's Supper. He said, "**This is the LM pilot. I'd like to take this opportunity to ask every person listening in, whoever and wherever they may be, to pause for a moment and contemplate the events of the past few hours and to give thanks in his or her own way.**" Then he received the Lord's Supper and read John 15:5, our text. He had wanted to read it over the air, but the reading of Genesis by Apollo 8 had caused a stir and brought a lawsuit by Madaline Murrey O'Hare, so NASA would not allow him to publicly read from the Bible. He later said, "**I gave thanks for the intelligence and spirit that had brought two young pilots to the Sea of Tranquility. It was interesting for me to think: the very first liquid ever poured on the moon, and the very first food eaten there, were the communion elements.**" Since that day his church in Houston celebrates a special communion service every July 20. The same scrap of paper that contained John 15:5, also had Psalm 8:3,4, "*When I consider your heaven, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man, that you care for him?*" Aldrin read that verse on the way home.

My favorite quote is from Apollo 15 Astronaut James Irwin who said, **“The earth reminded us of a Christmas tree ornament hanging in the blackness of space, As we got farther and farther away it diminished in size. Finally, it shrank to the size of a marble, the most beautiful marble you can imagine. That beautiful, warm, living object looked so fragile, so delicate that if you touched it with a finger it would crumble and fall apart. Seeing this has to change a man, has to make a man appreciate the creation of God and the love of God.”**

After his 1998 Space Shuttle mission John Glenn told reporters, **“To look out at this kind of creation and not believe in God is to me impossible... It just strengthens my faith.”**

These men all expressed the truth of Psalm 19:1, *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”* Without the blessing of God, none of the people who worked on the Apollo mission could have done anything.

II. It is He who continues to bless the work of our hands today.

He does this first by giving us new life. We think of the fact that God invites us to come to Him in prayer, calling Him, “Our Father.” We marvel at the eternal inheritance that He has store for us in Heaven, which will never perish, spoil or fade. We have the peace and confidence that all things work for the good of those who love God. The amazing thing is that God’s gives us all of these gifts by grace, His undeserved love. It is as Jesus says, *“Without Him, we can do nothing.”* We do not deserve the love of God, no can we do anything good. But Christ has found us. He loved us even though we were dead in sin. He grafted us into Himself through faith in Him, and He has given us new life. He is the vine. All the blessings that we have been given are gifts of His grace and mercy. It is He who gives us life, blesses us with good things, forgives our sins, defends us from all evil, and gives us the gift of eternal life.

By the power of God, we are able to bear fruit in our lives. There are people who try to make a name for themselves. That is what the people tried to do who built the tower of Babel. In the end their work came to a screeching halt, and they have been a target of ridicule ever since that day. We have all known people who want the glory. They want people to look up to them and praise them. A lot of people even do good things so that other people will see them. Politicians will show up to serve at a homeless shelter as long as the cameras are rolling. People will serve on Boards of organizations or have their name connected to organizations in the hope that it will be a stepping stone to greater things, but it is all show. History is full of people who desired to be great, but God humbled them in the end.

As Christians we want everything that we do to be to the praise and glory of God. Paul writes of that in 1 Corinthians 10:31, *“So whether you eat or drink of whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”* I think of the Psalm of Moses, Psalm 90, which ends, *“May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us – yes establish the work of our hands.”* (Ps 90:31) The hymn “With the Lord begin Thy Task” ends with these words:

**Thus, Lord Jesus, every task Be to You Commended;
May Your will be done I ask, Until life is ended.
Jesus, in Your name begun Be the day’s endeavor;
Grant that it may well be done To Your praise forever. (LSB 869)**

As Christians we commend every task to our Lord Jesus Christ. It's doesn't matter if we are flying people to the moon or maybe one day to Mars. It is the most mundane things, such as changing a baby's diaper. It is preaching a sermon to thousands of people or comforting a friend who has just lost a loved one. When we commend our tasks to Jesus, we will bear fruit. We will be amazed at God's goodness, mercy, and grace for us, that He could even work through us. Just like so many of the Apollo astronauts we will be driven to praise God for His goodness and mercy. Our boasting will be in what He has accomplished through us, not in what we have done.

Let that sink in for a moment. A man lands on the moon, and he wants to be reminded us Jesus' words, "*You can do nothing without me.*" Buzz Aldrin belonged to an exclusive club of 12 men who walked the surface of the moon. So many of them gave glory to God for that experience. May it be a reminder to us of humility when we accomplish something that seems great to the world and of thankfulness for what God can even do through our weak, trembling hands.

Amen.

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July 21, 2019***