26-1108a Transcript

26-1108a - *Still Bearing Fruit, Tom Freed*

Bible Readers: Mike Mathis and John Nousek

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Still Bearing Fruit

Scripture Readings

1st Reading (0:04 - 1:18): Mike Mathis **Psalm 92:12-15**: (0:04) The first scripture reading for this morning is taken from Psalm 92 verses 12 through 15, (0:18) which reads, and I'm reading from the New King James Version, (0:26) The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree. He shall grow like a [cedar] in Lebanon. (0:37) Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. (0:49) They shall still bear fruit in old age. They shall be fresh and flourish[ing] to declare (1:01) that the Lord is upright. He is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in him. (1:14) That completes the reading of	***Continued*** God's word. (1:18) **2nd Reading** (1:23 - 1:59): John Nousek **Isaiah 40:31**: (1:23) Good morning. So this morning's second scripture (1:27) reading is found in the book of Isaiah. It's chapter 40 and it's verse 31. (1:38) And God says to us, yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength. (1:46) They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not get tired. (1:54) They will walk and not become weary. Amen. (1:59)

Transcript (0:04 - 18:17), Preacher: Tom Freed

(2:04) Morning. My turn to preach again. We got, what, six guys to preach? Pretty impressive for such a small group.

(2:16) My sermon is called Still Bearing Fruit. Many of you are further along in life. (2:25) Some of you are in your 60s, others in your 70s, 80s, or even 90s.

(2:33) And I want you to ask yourself something this morning. Have you ever thought to yourself your (2:39) best days are behind you? Have you ever looked back and felt like life has passed you by? (2:49) Maybe there are things you wish you had done and now you tell yourself you're too old to do them. (2:57) A lot of us have had thoughts like that.

The world is quick to reinforce these thoughts. (3:05) It tells us that life is pretty much downhill after 40. It feels that way.

(3:13) I know I'm over 40 and, you know, it's a lot worse. It doesn't feel like I'm going to get any (3:19) improvement, but your best years are behind you. You can't do what you used to do when you were (3:26) younger.

The world would tell you to slow down, stop working so hard, and just take it easy. (3:37) You work hard, you raise your family, you retire, (3:40) and then the culture pretty much decides it doesn't have much of a use for you anymore. (3:48) In a purely physical sense, some of that is true.

Our bodies slow down and we don't have the energy (3:56) we once had. But luckily that is not the

whole story, and it's certainly not the spiritual story. (4:08) That may be how the world sees it, but that is not how it is for the Christian.

(4:15) You can still bear fruit for the Lord at any age. You can still do meaningful and even amazing (4:22) things for Him in your later years. We see that in Scripture, and we can see it right here among us, (4:31) with so many people doing great things still as they age.

(4:36) Listen to what the psalmist says in Psalm 92. (4:44) The righteous flourish like a palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. (4:51) They are planted in the house of the Lord.

They flourish in the courts of God. (4:58) They still bear fruit in old age. They are ever full of sap and [green.]

(5:05) To declare that the Lord is upright, He is my rock. There is no unrighteousness in Him. (5:13) The righteous just don't hang on in old age.

They flourish, they still bear fruit, (5:21) and they stay full of life. That is God's picture of aging for His people. (5:29) Let's look together what God has in store for us in our later years.

(5:36) The world measures life by energy, productivity, and relevance according to its own standards. (5:46) God measures it by faithfulness and fruitfulness in His house. (5:51) He is not looking for the strongest body or the most impressive resume.

(5:57) He is looking for people who remain planted in Him and continue to bear fruit. (6:05) Psalm 10:35 says that the Lord satisfies you with good so that your youth is restored like an eagle's. (6:16) Isaiah 40:31 says, but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

(6:23) They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint.

(6:33) This isn't a promise that your knees will stop hurting or you'll suddenly have the energy of a (6:38) 25-year-old. It's a promise that God can keep giving you spiritual vitality, purpose, and (6:47) strength for the work He still has for you even when your body is slowing down. So obviously, (6:57) you know, it's not going to turn back time.

You're not going to feel amazing all the time, but (7:02) you can still be strong and growing spiritually at any age. (7:09) Look at the Bible. Some of the most important work God has ever done (7:14) was done by people the world would have written off.

Moses is the clearest example. (7:24) He was 80 years old when God called him at the burning bush (7:29) and sent him to Pharaoh, Exodus 7:7. For the next 40 years, he let Israel receive the law, (7:39) interceded for his people, and saw God work in ways that still shape us today.

(7:47) Deuteronomy 34:7 tells us that when Moses died at 120, (7:54) his eyes were undimmed and his vigor unabated. His best and most lasting work came after 80. (8:04) Could you imagine after 80, the Lord calling on you to work until you're 120? At 80, most people, (8:15) you know, they've slowed down or they're almost, you know, ready to call it quits.

(8:22) But Moses started at 80. Abraham was 75 when God called him to leave everything (8:28) and go to a land he had never seen. He was 100 when Isaac was born.

Sarah was 90. (8:38) The greatest acts of faith in the beginning of God's covenant people came in what the world (8:45) would have called their later years. Caleb stood before Joshua at 85 years old and said, in essence, (8:56) give me that mountain.

I'm still as strong as I was the day Moses sent me out to spy out the land. (9:05) I'm ready to drive out [the] Anakim, Joshua 14:10-12. He wasn't looking for a rocking chair.

(9:15) He was looking for the next assignment. The same pattern continues in the New Testament. (9:23) John the Apostle was one of the youngest when Jesus called him, yet he outlived all the others.

(9:30) In his later years, most place him in his 80s and 90s. (9:35) He was exiled to the island of Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, (9:43) Revelation 1:9. From that barren island, he received and wrote the book of Revelation.

(9:52) He also wrote the gospel of John and three letters that bear his name. Some of the deepest teaching (10:00) in the New Testament came from a man the world would have considered long past his prime. (10:09) Paul continued his most influential work in his later years as well.

Many of his letters, (10:16) including Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and especially 2 Timothy, (10:22) were written while he was older and in prison. In 2 Timothy, written near the end of his life, (10:31) he says, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race.

I have kept the faith. (10:41) Even then, he was still writing, still encouraging younger men like Timothy, (10:47) and still directing the churches. His body was worn out, but his usefulness to the Lord was not.

(10:58) Then there's Anna, the prophetess, who had been a widow for decades. (11:06) She was advanced in years, yet Luke 2:36-38 says she never left the temple, (11:14) worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. When she saw the infant Jesus, (11:21) she began giving thanks and speaking about him to everyone who was waiting for the (11:26) redemption of Jerusalem.

Her later years were her most fruitful years of ministry. (11:37) Simeon was also advanced in years. The Holy Spirit had told him he would not die until he saw the (11:42) Lord Jesus Christ.

When he held Jesus, he said, Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in (11:52) peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation. His whole life of faithful waiting reaches peak and (12:01) old age.

These are not exceptions God made for a few special people. They are examples of how God (12:13) works. He is not finished with people just because the calendar says they are old.

(12:22) It's definitely how he still works today. He still uses us at any age. The good thing is we don't (12:32) have to look only at the Bible.

We see the same thing here among us. (12:40) Most of the men who take turns preaching and leading Bible study (12:44) are retired from their secular jobs, yet they are still working for the Lord, (12:52) and many of them are growing more than ever. They are studying, teaching, encouraging, (12:58) and serving with a depth that only comes with years of walking with God.

(13:04) Steve is a clear example of that. He is still preaching with clarity and power, (13:11) and he is still teaching a Bible class. He is doing a good job, as good as he has ever done.

(13:21) The last Sunday sermon was one of the best I have heard from him. He is not just filling a spot, (13:29) he is bearing fruit, full of sap and green, just like Psalm 92 describes. He is not alone.

(13:39) There are others among us who continue to teach, encourage, pray, visit, (13:44) and lead in quiet but real ways. This congregation is not a place where people (13:52) are simply waiting out their final years. It is a place where people are still being planted in (13:59) the house of the Lord and still bearing fruit.

We have plenty of examples here, plenty of people (14:07) doing work, preaching, teaching, and behind the scenes. So what does this mean for us (14:16) practically? First, refuse the world's narrative. Don't accept the idea that your usefulness to God (14:25) has an expiration date.

You may not be able to do everything you once did, and that's okay, (14:33) but you can still do what God is giving you to do right now. Sometimes that means preaching or (14:41) teaching. Sometimes it means praying faithfully for others.

Sometimes it means encouraging a (14:48) younger person, writing a note, making a phone call, or simply showing up with a steady faithful (14:54) presence. Fruit looks different in different seasons, but it is still fruit. Second, keep (15:03) hoping in the Lord.

Isaiah 40-31 does not say those who have a lot of energy will renew their (15:10) strength. He says those who hope in the Lord will. Keep looking to him.

Keep opening the word. Keep (15:19) praying. The renewal he gives is real, even when the body is weak.

Third, stay planted. Psalm 92 (15:29) says the righteous are planted in the house of the Lord. They flourish in his courts.

Stay (15:37) connected to the people of God. Stay in the word. Stay in worship and fellowship.

(15:44) The sap that keeps us green comes from remaining rooted in Christ and his body. (15:52) Some of you may feel that your best years are behind you. You looked at what you used to be (15:59) able to do and wonder what's left.

As long as you're still drawing breath and trusting in the (16:05) Lord, God is not finished with you. He may have significant work still ahead of you, (16:14) work that only someone with your years of experience, your tested faith, (16:21) your quiet wisdom can do. Moses was 80 when his greatest work began.

(16:30) Caleb was 85 and still ready for battle. Anna and Simeon were advanced in years when they saw (16:37) the Messiah and spoke to him. John wrote Revelation as an old man.

Paul was still writing and encouraging (16:46) the churches near the end of his life. And right here among us, people who are retired from work (16:55) are still working for the Lord and bearing fruit. The world may not have much use for you, but God (17:03) does.

And he is still able to satisfy you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagles. (17:13) As long as you're planted in his house, you can still bear fruit. (17:18) The best is not behind you.

It's still being produced even now by his grace. (17:27) As you go from here to there, you'll be like

the person Psalm 1 describes: (17:33) But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

(17:42) He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields fruit. It's fruit in its seasons (17:49) and its leaf does not wither. In all he does, he prospers.

Psalm 1, 2 through 3. (17:58) So we can all be like that at any age, especially when you meditate on God's Word (18:04) and are filled with the Spirit. So if any of you need to be a Christian this morning, (18:10) or if you're already a Christian and need the prayers of the congregation, (18:14) now is the time to come forward as we stand and sing. (18:17)