

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 18TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

THE TRUE VINE (JOHN 15:1-8) TWO IMPORTANT TRUTHS

This section of Jesus' teaching takes place on the night He was betrayed and arrested, following a celebration of the Passover meal.

- In His teaching, Jesus will emphasize **two important truths**. The first is **the necessity of a personal and intimate relationship with Him**. The second is **the calling of all followers to go and bear fruit**.

THE VINEYARD

Jesus uses a very familiar example to the Jews of a vineyard. Giving the seventh and final "I am" statement, Jesus says, **"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener."**

- As branches or offshoots of the vine, **our purpose is to bear fruit, and the gardener's purpose is to maximize fruit production**.

MAXIMIZING FRUIT PRODUCTION

Jesus says, **"Every branch in me that does not produce fruit, he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit..."**

- A good gardener will **cut off unfruitful branches that rob the fruitful branches of their productivity, and fruitful branches are pruned so that they can produce more fruit**.

FRUITLESS BRANCHES

This is a metaphor for the fact that those who are not truly in Christ will not produce fruit for Christ, and will ultimately be "gathered up, thrown into the fire, and burned."

- The "burned branches" are professing Christians, who, like Judas Iscariot, were never true disciples and will be judged (Matthew 7:22-23).

FRUITFUL BRANCHES

Even those who are true disciples that produce fruit will be pruned by the gardener so that they can produce more fruit.

- We cannot pray that God would make us more fruitful while thinking we get to avoid the painful process (**sanctification**) of pruning. **We either hinder this process or surrender to it knowing that discomfort gives way to life**.

DO WE UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE?

Forty times in the Gospel of John, Jesus tells us to abide in Him. The word "abide" or "remain" suggests an **effortless resting in the Lord**.

- **Jesus' teaching about bearing fruit is not telling us to try harder or do more**. Instead, what He is saying is that **we need to be united to Him. It's not about doing more for Him but drawing closer to Him**.

LOVED BY JESUS (JOHN 15:9-17)

ARE WE PERSUADED OF THE LOVE OF GOD FOR US?

The Israelites, because of their lack of abiding in God and their disobedience to God, were disciplined and thought God hated them (Deuteronomy 1:27).

- **Is it our half-hearted approach to God that has distorted our view of the love He has for us? The Father disciplines those that He loves (Hebrews 12:6)**

A ROMANS 5:8 KIND OF LOVE

Jesus encourages His disciples by telling them that the love the Father has for Him (John 3:35) is available to them if they keep His commands and remain in Him.

- **There is a link between love and obedience, and our relationship with Jesus and our ability to bear fruit through Jesus is synonymous**.

"YOUR JOY MAY BE COMPLETE"

He has told us these things so that "His joy" may be in us, but when we do not abide in His love and keep His commands, then we do not have the fullest joy He has promised.

- The joy of Jesus is not the same as the joy of the world. The joy of Jesus is not reduced to an emotional experience. It is an **abiding presence that comes from obedience**.

"YOU ARE MY FRIENDS..."

Jesus lets us in so that we can know Him and His plans, and as **"friends,"** we abide in Him and obey Him. In Greek, this word means **"a friend at court,"** the inner circle around a king or emperor.

- **"Friends of the king"** would know him intimately but would also be subject to him and obey him. **The friend of God is also the servant of God without conflict**.

"NO ONE HAS GREATER LOVE THAN THIS..."

The command to love one another exemplified by Jesus is more than a feeling; it is an act of the will.

- The proof of our love is in action and not our feelings. Just as Christ laid down His life for us, we are to lay down our lives for others (1 John 3:16). **We are to treat others as God treats us**.

THE FIRST FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: LOVE (GALATIANS 5:22-23)

Christ chose us for good works (Ephesians 2:10), to go and produce fruit that will remain. So, to avoid confusion, Jesus said it again: **Love one another**.

- Six times in 11 verses, we see the imperative to love one another. Not only is loving one another central to bearing fruit but **it is a significant defense in a world that hates us and is full of evil**.

HATED BY THE WORLD (JOHN 15:18-27)

WHO'S THE GREATEST AMONG THEM (LUKE 22:24)?

The disciples could no longer argue about who was more important in the Kingdom when Jesus said plainly, **"I have chosen you out of the world."** He was the one who pulled them out of the world and empowered them to be a witness.

- **We cannot bring ourselves out of the world, and we should not forget that we were once a part of the world** (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

WE ARE NOT LEFT ALONE IN OPPOSITION

We live in a fallen world, and until we die or Jesus returns, we must live in a fallen world and face opposition.

- Jesus did not tell His disciples about the opposition of the world so they would **isolate themselves** for protection. Instead, He told them to **insulate themselves** with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

WE ARE BROUGHT OUT OF THE WORLD

When the Bible mentions **"the world,"** it can mean one of three things: the **created world**, the **world of humanity**, or **society and views of society that are apart from and opposed to God**.

- Here, John is talking about opposition from the latter, and as Christians, **we are not to love the world** (1 John 2:15-17) or **to be conformed to the world** (Romans 12:1-2).

HATED BY THE WORLD

The world hates us because we are identified with Christ, and we do not belong to it.

- Jesus says that opposition will come to us just by us being identified with Him, and we should not be surprised by this (1 Peter 4:12). In a culture that functions on conformity, **we are not to buy into the world's values. Our refusal to conform will bring opposition**.
- The world is spiritually ignorant and blind and is **unwilling to be honest about its own sin**.
- Our culture embraces the victim mentality where none of us are responsible for our own behavior. Instead of facing our sins, we find someone to blame. **Though the truth of the gospel convicts, we must trust that what God reveals, He heals**.

"YOU WILL ALSO TESTIFY..."

We are not sent out to simply endure hatred; we are to be united with the Holy Spirit and go be a witness in the midst of the hatred.

- **We are empowered by the Spirit to serve God in an evil world, but we must walk in the Spirit** (Galatians 5:16), **worship in the Spirit** (Philippians 3:3), and **witness in the Spirit** (Acts 1:8).

BRANCHES AND FRIENDS

- **When we remain in Him and do what He has commanded**, Jesus calls His true disciples **branches and friends**.
- As **branches**, we have the **privilege of receiving life** from the true vine and the **responsibility to abide in Him**.
- As **friends**, we have the **privilege of knowing Him intimately** and the **responsibility of obeying**.
- As a branch, we are dependent on the vine for life-giving support.
- **Where do we draw from? Are we drawing from the "true vine" or a "vine of the earth"?**
- **Drawing from a "vine of the earth" means we depend on the world for sustenance and satisfaction which leads to being cut down and burned when Christ returns (Revelation 14:14-20)**.

BENEFITS OF ABIDING

- Only by abiding in the Father are we able to produce fruit. We can do nothing apart from Him.
- When we allow the Father to prune us, we are able to produce more fruit.
- Abiding in the Father leads to answered prayers, deepens our love for Christ and for others, and produces joy.

HOW DO WE ABIDE IN HIM?

- We abide in God's love through obedience and not by emotional experiences.
- We cannot separate our relationship with Jesus from our obedience to Jesus.
- Removing obedience from our relationship with Jesus creates moral relativism.
- Removing the relationship from our obedience to Jesus makes our works about us.