

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 18TH, 2023 // GOSPEL OF JOHN

THE VINE (JOHN 15:1-8)

"I AM"

Jesus has been proclaiming who He is throughout the Gospel of John. He's done plenty of "signs" to reveal His deity. This is the last of His "I am" statements. He has established over and over that He is the Messiah.

- Jesus wants them to settle in their hearts and minds who they believe Christ to be.

"I AM THE TRUE VINE..."

The OT used the vine as a symbol for Israel, God's covenant people.

- The word for "true" here in Greek means genuine. Israel isn't the true vine. Their nation or Jewish religion isn't the true vine.
- **A relationship begins by trusting in Jesus, not our "acts of righteousness."**

THERE IS JUST ONE VINE

There were those who came earlier and claimed to be the Messiah. But Jesus asserts, **He is the only way** (John 14:6). Not just the only way to Heaven, but the only way to produce fruit.

- **There is only one way to become a Christ follower. We put our faith in Jesus as our Savior** (Ephesians 2:8-9).

"IN ME"

This is what it means to be saved. There are only two groups of people: those who are in Christ and those who are not in Christ. How do we get "in Christ"? By trusting Christ.

- **To remain in Christ is to live by His Word, pray, obey His commands, and walk in the Spirit.**

REMAIN IN ME

Vines are created to produce fruit. If His disciples were going to do a greater work (John 14:12), the only way to do that is to remain in Him. He desires they produce "much fruit" and so He explains the process of pruning. **Two kinds of pruning: separating and cutting back.**

PRODUCING FRUIT

Jesus tells His disciples that branches that don't produce fruit God removes from the vine, they "wither," and are "throw[n]...into the fire." Is this referring to salvation or just living productive Christian lives? One could say it touches both. **True salvation will result in producing fruit.**

A TRUE DISCIPLE

Jesus came to bring life, and all disciples produce fruit (Ephesians 2). If we don't bear fruit, then we're not connected to Jesus. If there is no evidence of Jesus, then we don't belong to Him. True followers of Christ bear fruit not because they're working hard, but because they have a genuine relationship with Jesus.

"YOU CAN DO NOTHING WITHOUT ME"

They were to live and grow in Christ. He was to be their sustenance. Fruitfulness and effectiveness were to be the results of remaining in Christ. Too often we try and do things on our own. We try harder instead of walking closely with our Savior.

- **Our "work" is to stay close to Jesus.**

"ASK WHATEVER YOU WANT..."

Jesus isn't talking about all things here. He's referring to how His Father is glorified when we bear fruit.

- Asking for what God wants expresses the alignment of our desires and purposes with God. **This is counter-cultural.** Praying in the Spirit is knowing the heart of God.

FRIENDS (JOHN 15:9-17)

KEEP MY COMMANDS

A relationship with Christ centers on obedience. God's commands are not limiting. The blessings that result as we remain in Christ are love and friendship with God.

- **Saying we love Jesus and living in disobedience is incompatible with true Christianity.**

JOY SEEKERS

The world teaches we're empowered to live how we want, and joy is found in things. **Apart from Christ, we can't have joy.** Joy isn't the same as happiness. Joy isn't found in prestige, power, or money.

- **Joy comes in knowing Christ and remaining in His love** (Galatians 5).

THE "ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT"

This isn't a new command. Love for others should be a mark of a Christ follower. Not love the way the world views love. The world has reduced love to an emotion. **Love is sacrificial.**

Christ displayed love in action by going to the cross.

- **"Love one another as I have loved you."**

FRIENDS INSTEAD OF SERVANTS

The obedience that Christ asks of us is not that of a slave, but of a friend. Here is Jesus, their Lord and Master, calling them friends who remain in Him and keep His commands.

- **As friends of God, we have joy, we know His will, He hears our prayers, and we get to participate in His mission.**

"I CHOSE YOU..."

Jesus reminds them they did not choose Him. We don't find God; God is always in pursuit of us (John 9; Romans 5). He chose us to be in relationship with Him and produce fruit that will last.

- **The only way to have lasting fruit is to love Jesus and love others.**

PERSECUTION (JOHN 15:18-27)

REAL HOSTILITY

Jesus lets His disciples know there will always be opposition. They have an archenemy (John 14:30). The world rejected Christ and will reject His followers as well.

- **We should expect the world to be against what the Bible teaches. Biblical principles don't make sense to unbelievers.**

REAL HATRED

The reason the world hates Jesus is because He exposes sin. Jesus speaks plainly so they are without an excuse. **The truth of the gospel convicts people of sin.** Society today is enamored with their own "truth." Jesus further reveals their preference for darkness rather than light (John 3:19).

JESUS OFFERS HOPE

Jesus uses two names for the Holy Spirit; Counselor and Spirit of Truth (John 14:16, 26).

- Our hope as followers is having the Holy Spirit to guide us, strengthen us to endure persecution, and serve God effectively.
- **We are equipped to share with others what God has done for us** (2 Timothy 3:17).

THE "SPIRIT OF TRUTH"

We must approach God both intellectually and spiritually. This means **we're to learn and follow simple biblical teachings but also depend on the Spirit to continue to "teach [us] all things" through the fruit** (Galatians 5) **and gifts** (1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4; Romans 12) **that He offers.**

DO WE TRUST OUR OWN EFFORTS?

- **There is only one path to eternal life: Jesus Christ.** We have no excuse.
- Are we relying on our "acts of righteousness" to earn our way into a relationship with Christ?
- The work of a Christ follower is to remain in Christ.

DO WE TRULY LOVE OTHERS?

- If we want God to work in and through our lives in practical and miraculous ways, we must remain in Him.
- When we pray, whose desires are at the forefront of our minds? **Are we more interested in our desires or loving others?**
- Bearing fruit requires loving others.

DO WE TRULY LOVE GOD?

- A relationship with God is marked by **obedience** to His commands. In other words, we live by the Word.
- Loving God means we're at odds with the world. How will we love the world when there is so much hatred and hostility?
- **Loving God is evident in our lives.**

LIVING IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

- We have been given the Counselor/Spirit of truth to help us, lead, and equip us to bear fruit.
- Relying on our own gifts will fail us. We must surrender daily to the work of the Holy Spirit.
- A real relationship with Christ results in fruit: joy, peace, love for others, and a testimony of His grace.