

John 15:1-17

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^{2a} so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

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. ⁶If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

Sermon Bearing Much Fruit Jeremiah 31:31-34, Psalm, 119: 9-16,
Hebrews 5:5-10

Delivered by A J Johnson 03 18 18

Our focal scripture this morning Jesus speaks of our relationship with the Father as one of a gentle and careful Gardner cultivating for a particular harvest.

And let's just name that harvest.

A harvest of 'fruit' for those in God's vineyard can be described by that old Galatians 5:22-23 passage "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance/patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

Jesus reminds us that He is indeed the vine. And connected to the vine He will produce a harvest through us of love, joy, peace, forbearance/patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The illustration of the garden is an important one, and a beautiful one.

Imagine if you will a garden similar to what Jesus describes in John.

Lush, colorful, and fruitful grape vines.

Each cluster is labeled one of the Galatians fruits:

love, joy, peace, forbearance/patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Each segment of the plants are connected to a vine.

A vine whose roots are deep and strong, nestled in good soil.

A vine that transports food, water, nourishment, and all that is needed to sustain the plants to produce a bountiful harvest.

Jesus tells us that He is that vine. His roots in the heaven realm.

The water He brings to the plants is the Holy Spirit.

And in the garden we see a Gardner.

Wise looking. Gentle. All knowing.

Having ancient wisdom upon His face.

He comes in love to tend the vineyard with the tools at His disposal.

A pruning shear, to cut away growth so as to encourage new growth.

A trowel, to move the plants deeper into the soil.

The fertilizer that will cause the plants to have an abundant growth that will yield to an abundant harvest.

His keen eye scanning the garden so that any hint of a weed or a destructive element can be dealt with so that the plant is not totally destroyed

See the Gardner has cultivated His garden not by chance, not by happenstance, and not by accident.

The Gardner has planted each one lovingly and with great care.

Jesus says to us that we should remain in Him, the True Vine, because if we are cut off from the vine, we are cut off from all the Gardner and The True Vine offer.

If we are cut off from Jesus, we are removed from the amazing power of His Word.

If we cut ourselves off from Jesus, we remove ourselves from the nurturing and life giving presence of the Holy Spirit and the loving tending of The Father, The Gardener.

If we remove ourselves from the vine, we cause a situation in which we are simply unable to function.

We become unable to bear the good fruit of good works that benefit the kingdom and those around us.

“Remain in me” Jesus says. You need me.

But that first scripture comes with a warning.

Did you catch it?

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit...” John 14:2

I don't know about you, but I don't want to be cut off from the vine.

I certainly don't want to be cut off because The Father deemed that I wasn't bearing fruit.

After all, God planted me in the vineyard for a purpose. His purpose.

And if I'm not producing any fruit, but I am still drawing from the vine, I diverting what could be used to help other parts of the vineyard produce their abundant harvest.

Jesus tells us to 'abide' in Him.

To 'abide', meaning to 'live with, to stand on, to remain in, to be fully committed to, and to be fully known'.

It is the place of being “fully committed” that Christ speaks to us this morning.

TO be fully committed to Christ means to be in that place that Jerimiah spoke of when God says, "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

We remain in God by staying attune and committed to His Word.

If we don't know His word, than we cannot claim to fully know Him.

We remain in Him by being fully committed to the mission of the Church, to spread the gospel to every corner of the world.

To seek and work for justice and the furtherance of God's kingdom on this earth.

It means to be fully committed to God's 'agape' or all-encompassing love.

Our Psalmist says in Psalm 1 "Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither whatever they do prospers."

We are blessed when we delight in the Word of the Lord, and that we should study, meditate, learn it, make it a part of us.

This is an active call to actively understand God's Word. To actively know The Son. To actively desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus calls us to a fruitful relationship that is not one sided. He gives and He expects us to be an active and not a passive participant in this relationship.

Abide in me, and I'll abide in you.

And it applies to any age, speaking to my young people up here.

Psalm 119:9 asks “How can a young person stay on the path of purity?” and the answer “ By living according to your word.”

We have to be like the Middle School student who determines to come prepared each day to learn what the teacher is teaching, knowing that there will be a test at a later date.

That student cannot passively just sit in the classroom and hope that the knowledge will get absorbed.

The good student purposes to study so that they will be able to produce the desired result when the time comes.

Church, there is always another test just around the corner for those of us who dwell in the vineyard of the Lord.

The question to us is will you be ready when the test comes?

Have you studied His Word, so you’ll know how to respond?

Have you and are you abiding with the Lord in prayer and meditation?

Are you really connected to the Lord?

If not, praise God that we serve a God who allows ‘U turns’.

Praise God that if we fail one test, He will give us another chance.

If you didn’t abide with Him yesterday, praise God today another day.

Another chance to seek His face and another chance to do His will.

Another chance to abide in Him and restore the relationship He is calling you to.

Now in a few minutes in our program we are going to see the an example of what total commitment to discipleship looks like as we witness the CMF and CWF dedication.

Women and men who have worked hard at the foot of the cross.

Who made a commitment not to a discipleship class but to a lifestyle and a lifetime of discipleship living.

I close with these words from John, “Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

Ask yourselves, am I bearing fruit for the kingdom? Am I really abiding in Jesus?

AMEN

JOYS

I am aware of the following birthdays this coming week:

Maribelle Nchumulah – March 18

Gwendoline Ngwana – March 19

Grace Akambi – March 19

Richard Akambi – March 20

Viana Mbah – March 21

Glory Fofou - March 22

Lekefac Nkengateh – March 23

Madalyn Schoberg – March 23

Hilda Azong – March 23

Pauline Tanwani – March 24

Thelma Abunaw – March 24