

## Remain In The Greatest Love

February 27, 2022

John 15: 9-17 (ESV)

*9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

*12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*

Have you heard anyone say, "I can take it from here or I can handle it myself or I got this". Well, there are some people who are so convinced that they can live their lives independently of God. Some even scoff and mock that the idea that they need God. I know some people like that.

Well, to those who say they don't need God or live in a way God is so distant I would ask this. Can you arrive on the other side of physical death and say "my soul is finally at rest"? Someone hearing this might come back and say, "well you haven't been on the other side, so you don't know what it looks like either". Sure, I have not been on the other side but I sure know someone who did arrive on the other side and came back from the dead. More than five hundred people saw him after he rose from the dead. Now, to those who say there is no such thing as an after-life, there's nothing to handle. Because, everything ends with physical death. That's it. My daughter was asking me recently "Dad, do you know what nihilism is?". Yeah, everything is meaningless. And I said, we should not find any meaning with that statement. Because, saying everything is meaningless must have no meaning then.

Sadly, I believe, Western societies are now reaping what they have sowed with too much individualism. This over individualism is really masking itself with the guise of "your true self" or "authenticity". Every vile and wretched practice is now being allowed under the banner of identity. It's that false notion that you are free to be anyone you want in your identity, your sexuality, your gender, your personality. *And all of that is rooted not in any objective truth but in a feeling in an emotion in a sensation in a sentiment that appears to be so fluid.* And the consequences that come with decisions backed by those feelings are catastrophic. Little children who have yet to develop full cognitive or mental ability are being treated with all kinds of invasive procedures in their precious bodies.

Your body is made in the image and the likeness of God. It deserves the respect the dignity the worth of a precious soul. Not mutilation not chemicals and hormones.

You should worry about the next generation and as a parent how much do you spend for the godliness and character of your child is crucial.

We need divine help. We need constant nourishment from God and His Word. We need God and we need each other.

Last week we saw a very obvious depiction of the vine and branch Jesus uses to teach his disciples about dependency.

Jesus says "I am the true vine". Jesus is the true life. Meaning Jesus is the life-giving sap that flows through the branches. Jesus gives that gives health, nutrition, nourishment to its branches. And when the branch is healthy, it bears fruit. Imagine having a vine and not seeing a single grape on its branches. That would be terrible.

God's vineyard is the Church, the family of believers.

And Jesus is the vine. He is life of the vine.

And how did we get to be part of his vineyard? By the word of Jesus. Jesus called us through the Gospel. When you repented and trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior. When you received his forgiveness through his death for your sin, you

were made clean. The Holy Spirit resides in you. God accepts you because of His Son Jesus Christ. And if you have never truly confessed your sin before, do it today before wrath and judgment comes.

So after we become part of his vine as his branches God doesn't leave us to ourselves. God keeps working in you for your benefit. And God also desires to work through you. An ongoing work to cleanse us to repair us to make us fit and healthy for what? To bear fruit. And in order to bear fruit there is only one thing we must do you must remain in him. Jesus tells his disciples, "Remain in my love".

So, in today's passage, in verses 9 through 11, Jesus gives his disciples a sort of big picture about abiding in him. And in verses 12 through 17, Jesus unpacks what he says in the previous verses.

*9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*

This is the second time Jesus instructs his disciples to "remain in him". The first time Jesus instructed his disciples was in verse 4 – "Abide in me". Why does Jesus say this again? Why does Jesus keep emphasizing the need for this disciples to remain in him and in his love? Now, the word "abide" itself Jesus uses at least eight times but Jesus uses this word as a command twice. And this is the second time.

*As a christian, there is a great danger in living life with a sort of self-dependence. Self-reliance is the opposite of true Christianity. Jesus himself said that "the flesh is of no help at all". The flesh is useless. To mind the flesh is to give power to sin. The flesh is the old nature that is not redeemed yet. The flesh is at war with the Spirit. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory. I don't know about you but this Christian life is a daily discipline. Continual dependence on God.*

And Jesus knows this about his disciples. He had been very close to them. He had given precious promises. And Jesus knows they will attempt to do things in their own strength. In Mark chapter 9, a boy who had been suffered with convulsions was brought to the disciples and they were powerless to do anything. And the disciples asked Jesus, "Why?". Jesus says prayer is key. A constant prayer life. A regular prayer life. A hidden prayer life. There is no alternative to personal prayer. Jesus never says if you pray, do it this way. What did Jesus say? When, not if you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to you Father who in in secret. A secret prayer life is one of the keys to remain in him. And by the way what a privilege it is to ask God. Jesus says he will grant it. You see this verse 7 and verse 16. This asking is directly connected to fruit bearing not for personal increase in wealth or material possessions. So in verse 10, Jesus gives the key to remaining in his love. That key is to observe to obey to guard to keep his commandments.

Now, Jesus tells his disciples that he kept the Father's commandment too. Jesus voluntarily submitted to the Father and never acted independently of His Father. Even though Jesus is equal to the Father, Jesus became an obedient Son. Before the Son of God took on humanity as Jesus, he was always with the Father. There was perfect communion and fellowship between the Father and Son. However, when the Son of God took on humanity, was he not by himself? Yes but he was not alone. Jesus regularly spent time with conversing with His Father. So even though was by himself on this earth, he said in John 8:29 "*He who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone*".

And what is the outcome of those who practice these things – remaining in his love. Living in obedience to his commandments.

Verse 11.

*11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

The outcome or result is abundant joy.

*A few days ago, my mom's sister passed away in her sleep. She was a year older to my mother. And they were quite close. They prayed together regularly. Mom said my aunt used to pray for us. So when I heard the news that she was gone, I was quite concerned for my mother. And as I kept calling and talking, much to my surprise, there is something I noticed in*

*mom's disposition. Joy. Yes there were grieving. Yes they were sad and sorrowful. There is no denying her sister has passed. And yet in the middle of processing death, there is a calmness I could perceive.*

This is the joy that Jesus gives. Jesus himself knows that joy. He is very close on the heels of his death. And yet he is joyful. The Gospel of Luke gives a unique view of how Jesus was full of joy even when he was marching to Jerusalem. Luke chapter nine verse fifty-one tells us that Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem. Meaning he was ready to accomplish his mission on the cross. And yet in the next chapter, in chapter ten, Luke writes that Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:21).

This world does not know this joy and can never offer such joy. There are so many people including some well meaning Christians who appear who so distraught, upset over little things, so restless, so panic-stricken. It appears like nothing will calm them. *I wonder why they are that way?* I wonder if the reason could be because they never took the words of Jesus seriously. Very likely they never came to the point of having an internal dependence and reliance on Jesus. I wonder if they ever cry out to Jesus when nobody is watching and say "Lord I need you, help me". Jesus wants you to bear fruit. And the only way that happens is by remaining in him. Abiding in Jesus is a daily thing and it is non-negotiable. And some people offer all kinds of methods to trying to lighten your pain – like meditation exercises, unbiblical practices like yoga, or some new age philosophy. Jesus offers no such thing. Jesus promises you that his joy he will give and that joy just by remaining in him. And Jesus doesn't promise only a portion of his joy. He says *"that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full"*. Full joy. Overflowing joy is yours. What an incentive to remain in Jesus!

Do the promises of Jesus seem empty to you? Does joy seem so evasive to you? Remain in Jesus. If you have gone far from him, come back to him.

You know I found new comfort in the words of 1 John 1:9 *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"*.

When Jesus is faithful and just, there is no need to give in to discouragement or self-pity. Confess your sin. Reject the sin. Resist the sin. Don't desire the sin. Move on with confidence in Jesus. He is faithful.

So as Jesus tells his disciples to remain in his love by keeping his commandments. And here Jesus narrows down to one specific commandment. Look at verses 12 through 13.

*12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*

Jesus gives one specific commandment for them to keep.

What is that commandment? *To love one another.*

And how are they to love one another? *Just as Jesus loved them.*

And how did Jesus love them? *With the greatest and costliest love.*

There is no greater love and costlier love than the love of Jesus. And the disciples have received that love. And by extension, you have received that love. A love that overlooks sin and the penalty of sin. A love that Jesus himself gave to you and I by giving up his life. By laying down his life. When Jesus had washed the feet of his disciples, he commanded them to love one another. One test of true discipleship is the love we have for each other.

*Why is this the greatest love?* Jesus loves in spite of our rejection of him. Jesus' love is unilateral love. Like sheep we were all going astray. Once we turned our backs toward him. And yet by his great love, he sought us, he forgave us, he cleansed us, he laid down his life for us. So in this sense, the love of Jesus is contingent on you and I appropriating it in our lives. And this love is also a love that brings us close to God. So close that Jesus calls his disciples as friends. Once

we were his enemies. Once we thought we could live our own way as enemies of the cross. Now his great love has brought us near. So near that Jesus no longer calls his disciples servants. A master did not disclose anything that the servant needs to hear but Jesus disclosed everything that his Father has told him. Look at verses 14 and 15.

*14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*

*The friendship of Jesus is for those who carry out his commands.*

This is a strange way of friendship. Jesus tells them what describes or characterizes this new friendship : Obedience. Again, this is a parallel to verse 10. I have a very close friend since my kindergarten days. It would be strange to talk to him and say you are friend if you obey me if you do what I command you. But here Jesus is Lord. He is still their Master. And yet he calls you his friend. He wants to share his peace and joy with you. His divine nature with you. His holiness with you. This is a unique friendship. Meaning you don't get to command Jesus like he commands his disciples. We can surely ask him whatever we want. He calls us friends. But he is our Master. Finally, Jesus reminds this disciples again why they are to remain in him. Look at verses 16-17.

*Jesus chose his disciples to bear fruit*

*16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*

Allow me to read literal translation of verse 16 with the pronouns expanded:

16 You all did not choose me, but I myself chose you all and appointed you all in order that you go and bear fruit and your fruit may remain, in order that whatever you may ask the Father in my name he may give to you all.

If you are in Jesus, it's because Jesus himself picked you out. And Jesus a mission for you. To bear fruit. Not some fruit but lasting. Jesus said, "Remain in me". Now Jesus ends this discourse by saying bear fruit that will remain. There is someone in your life who needs the Gospel. And that someone may never know the Gospel without you. You may not know who that person but God wants you to ask him. And he will give that fruit. And Jesus does wants you to bear fruit by being in the vineyard being in community by loving each other.

*A few months ago, my wife volunteered me to go with her to pick some grapes at a local farm owner's vine not too far from here. The owner had an abundance of grapes, and put an ad online for anyone to help themselves to these sweet grapes. So we gathered our bags, got a pair of scissors and arrived this mini vineyard. And as we began picking the grapes, the owner walked by and showed us all kinds of grapes – red, green, black, big and small, sour and sweet. Some were delicious. And we walked by, I noticed that every branch on the vine had grapes on it. There was not a branch that did not have grapes.*

*Now, imagine your life as a sweet savor that others can enjoy. Is there something flavorful and delightful about you for others to enjoy and be part of.*

*If you think there is an age limit to bearing fruit, if you are too young or too old, there is not. Psalm 92 tells us that the righteous flourish and are planted in the house of the Lord, they still bear fruit in old age they are ever full of sap. How wonderful! If you think you are too young to make a difference, think about Josiah. He was only eight years old and he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord (2 Kings 21:1-2). Your life can be full of fruit to others.*

----- Discipleship Questions -----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **Remain In The Greatest Love.** John 15:9-17

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What kind of love did Jesus show to you? How did Jesus demonstrate this love? Go around and share.

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. In what specific ways does Jesus instruct his disciples to "remain in his love"? Share at least two ways from the passage.
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: Do you desire to bear fruit? Why or why not? Have you asked Jesus anything lately regarding fruit-bearing?