

Remain in Jesus to bear fruit

John 15:1-8 ESV

Lord's Day – February 20, 2022

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."

This is the second part of the farewell disclosure from John 15:1 – 16:33, followed by John 17 Jesus prayer. (First part is from John 13:31 – John 14:31). John 14 ends with Jesus saying, 'Rise, let us go from here'. This leaving is leaving the upper room and on their way to the Olive Grove, where the betrayal took place, but before they left the City of Jerusalem itself. This is the best possible explanation for John 14:31 leaving when Jesus says – *Rise, let us go from here*, and in the light of *John 18:1* – we read – *'When Jesus had spoken these words (John 15 thru John 17 including high priestly prayer), He went forth with His disciples to the other side of the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, into which He entered with His disciples.'* (Map above – from 1 to 2).

So far, we heard Jesus' teaching in the upper room, around the table, and now they are on their way, where Jesus teaches the second farewell disclosure. We took 6 weeks to study the first farewell discourse.

We are in week-7 of our 12-weeks journey of 'Discipleship series - Preparing for the Cross'. This passage teaches us the traits (distinguishing qualities or characteristics) of a true disciple. In our study of chapter 14, we know A true Christian, loves the Lord, and consequently obeys the Lord. The mark of a true Christian is his continual obedience to Jesus.

Jesus again starts off with saying:

1 I AM (Ego Emi) THE TRUE VINE, and my Father is the vinedresser.

This is the last of 'I AM' statements and the only one that runs on into additional assertion, *and my Father is the vinedresser/gardener*. Although the Son's role is central in these verses, the Father's is not mere background (but an active role): he trims and prunes the branches. (1) I AM the bread of life – John 6 (2) I AM the light of the world – John 8 (3) I AM the door of the sheep – John 10 (4) I AM the good shepherd – John 10 (5) I AM the resurrection and the life – John 11 (6) I AM the way, the truth, and the life – John 14 (7) I AM the true vine – John 15

Q) Why the allegory/imagery of vine?

In the Old Testament the vine is common symbol for Israel, the covenant people of God. We see this in many books of the OT. (*Psalms 80, Isaiah 5, Ezekiel 15, 17, 19 also in Jeremiah 2, Hosea 10*). Perhaps the most important part of the OT passage is Psalm 80, here we see this passage brings together the themes of vine and the son of man.

Psalms 80:7-8, 14-17 - 'Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved! You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine, the stock that your right hand planted, and for the son whom you made strong for yourself. They have burned it with fire; they have cut it down; may they perish at the rebuke of your face! But let your hand be on the man of your right hand, the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself!'

Against the OT background of Israel as the vine that failed to produce good fruit, Jesus said, *I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener*.

Jesus is using this allegory to indicate that, as the true vine, he produced what the nation of Israel failed to produce: fruit for which the gardener (the Father) was looking.

By depicting the Father as the gardener/vinedresser/farmer, Jesus indicates that the Father was in control of both his ministry (as the vine) and that of his disciples (as the branches).

The TRUE (Alethinos – genuine, real, sincere, veracious; opp: counterfeit, fictitious, imaginary, simulated, pretend) vine, here is not the apostate people, but Jesus himself, and those who are incorporated (connected) in him.

The theme would prove especially telling the Jews, if they wish to enjoy the status of being part of God's chosen vine, they must be rightly related to Jesus.

[All those who are incorporated in Jesus, is not limited to the 11 disciples here, but by way of extension this applies to all who love and obey Jesus' commandments].

² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He cleans (prunes) it so that it may bear more fruit.

In Me – should remind us of the mutual indwelling of the believer and Jesus (*you are in me, and I in you* 14:20), the same notion is portrayed in the vine imagery.

Jesus is the vine; his disciples are the branches. The branches derive their life from the vine; the vine produces its fruit through the branch.

The role of the Father is twofold, taking in the reverse order: *First, he prunes or trims every branch that does bear fruit.* No fruit bearing branch is exempt. Doubtless the Father's purpose is loving; it is so that each branch will be even more fruitful, but the procedure may be painful.

The Lord disciplines his own, the way a father disciplines' his children. All this is for our good, that we may bear more fruit and share in Christ's sufferings, that we may share in his holiness.

The best passage that would help us understand The Father's Discipline thought here is in *Hebrews 12:5-11* - *'And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.'*

1 Peter 4:12-14,19 - *'Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Therefore, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.'*

The procedure may be painful, but God has you covered.

Second, the Father (Jesus says) *takes away (cuts off) every branch in Me that bears no fruit*, i.e. he gets rid of the dead wood so that the living, fruit-bearing branches may be sharply distinguished from them, and may have more room for growth.

This verse simply insists, there are no true Christians without some measure of fruit. Fruitfulness is the infallible mark of true Christianity; the alternative is dead wood, and the vine metaphor makes it necessary that such wood (fruit yielding branch) be connected to the vine.

The contrary (living a fruitless life) would be like Judas Iscariot, who had some degree of connection with Jesus (as one of the 12 apostles, in a prominent role as treasurer with the money bag), but never bore the fruit, never persevered, never remained.

Indeed, there is a persistent strand of New Testament witness that depicts men and women with some degree of connection with Jesus, or with the Christian Church, who nevertheless by failing to display the grace of perseverance, finally testify that the transforming life of Christ has never pulsated within them. (*Matthew 13 – Parable of the sower; Matthew 24:12 – un-lawlessness will increase and the love of many will grow cold; Hebrews 3 – those who heard and yet rebelled and failed to enter the rest*).

Remember, it's not the professors, but those who persevere till the end, are the ones who will be preserved.

³ ***You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.***

The disciples have already been rendered 'clean' through the word; Jesus spoke to them. The sanctifying word of God, His Truth.

- *John 17:17 – Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*
- *1 Peter 1:22-23 – Now that you have purified yourselves in obedience to the truth ... through the living and the enduring/abiding word of God.*

Now the Father also cleansed/pruned the disciples/branches so that they would bear much fruit. through the word of Jesus (John 13:31 – 15:2) spoken to them and by removing the dead branch - Judas Iscariot (John 13:27, 31-32).

By extension it is as we hear and respond to the teaching of Jesus, in its entirety, that we are made clean and become more fruitful. [Note: Not just listen but respond to his teaching, in obedience – abiding in him]. - *James 1:22 - 'become doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.'*

Summarizing the 3 verses, is my **first observation** - **A true disciple** is the one: (1) Cleansed/made pure by Jesus' word in its entirety, one who hears his words, and responds (not only hearer, but a doer), (2) bears fruit, (3) endures pruning, (4) bear much fruit.

Are you a true disciple of Jesus or a counterfeit? Are you being refreshed/cleansed/made-pure by Jesus' word? Are you bearing fruit? Are you willing to be pruned/disciplined so to bear more fruit?

If so, then you and I are disciples (branches) and are connected to Jesus (the vine), and are part of God's vineyard, the Father (our gardener).

Now there are many disciples, but not all of them are true disciples. We know that many who were following Jesus after feeding the multitude, stopped following him at the end of chapter 6.

Second observation – **True disciple remains (abides), never departs (abandon).**

⁴ ***Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit from itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me.***

The word 'abides/remains' occurs 7-times in these verses (1-7). This is an imperative, a crucial, vital, authoritative command, essential, urgent.

Continuing from verse 3, once the branch (disciple) is connected to the vine (Jesus) as in, not just hear Jesus's word but respond to his teaching in its entirety, Jesus continues to say *abide in me and I in you*.

These words are familiar from our study of previous passages, but Jesus defines again what it is to ‘*Abide in me and I in you*’ in the allegory of the vine.

How? As essential as it is for a fruit bearing branch to be connected to the vine, and the vine (pulsating life, sap) is truly in the branch, the disciple must abide/remain in Jesus, so to bear fruit for the gardener, the Father, who also prunes so to bear much fruit.

Unless it abides, [perseverance is the key to abide in Jesus (the vine)]; the branch (disciple) cannot bear fruit.

You either abide and bear fruit, or you are a dead wood. Absolutely, no room for imposters.

- *John 5:38* – “*And you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He (God the Father) sent.*”
- *1 John 2:19* – Talking about false teachers - *‘They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.*”
- *2 John 9a* – *Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God.*

Whereas the true disciple (who love Jesus and obey his commandments) will abide/remain/persevere/continue, in him.

- *John 8:31-32* – “*If you abide in My word, then you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free*”
- *1 John 2:24* - *Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. ’*
- *2 John 9b* - *The one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.*

The essential condition to be spiritually fruitful is to remain in the vine (Jesus) and that means to be:

1. In continual dependance on the vine (Jesus, the vine). *John 14:26* - *‘But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.’ (Jesus’ teaching in its entirety – The Bible)*
2. In constant reliance upon him (Jesus, the vine). *Galatians 2:20* - *‘I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ’*
3. Persistent spiritual imbibing of his life (Jesus, the vine). *Ephesians 5:18* - *‘And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.’*

Today, it’s the combination of the disciples’ remaining in fellowship with Jesus, and by Jesus’ institution of his church, fellowship with the saints, by obeying his word and Jesus’ remaining in his disciples through the coming of the Spirit (Mutual Dwelling) which produces ‘fruit’ that pleases the Father.

Therefore, it is essential for a true disciple of Jesus, to be in the fellowship of saints. The author to Hebrews, writing about ‘A new and living way’ section of 19-25, of Chapter 10:25 – ‘not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some’

⁵ ***I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me, you can do nothing.***

⁶ ***If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned.***

The central thoughts of v1-4 are repeated here, but without mention of the gardener, or of the pruning. It’s made plain and simple. It’s either one remains in the vine and is a fruit-bearing branch, or one is thrown away into fire and burned.

Jesus says, *for apart from me you can do nothing*. Apart from abiding (being/remain/continue/persevere) in Jesus, one can do nothing, can't bear (bring forth/produce) fruit.

The implication is that those who do not obey Jesus, will experience judgment – *he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and cast them into the fire and are burned*.

- *John 3:18 – He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*
- *John 8:21, 24 – Then He said again to them, “I am going away, and you will see Me, and will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.” 24 “therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins. For unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”*
- *John 12:25, 48 – “He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.” 48 “He who rejects Me and does not receive My words, had one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him on the last day.”*
- *John 17:12 – “While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.”*

Q) Now, why does Jesus explicitly command his disciples to remain/abide in him?

1. Jesus taught this truth to his disciples again and again to remain in him, as he remained in his Father.

- *John 5:19 – Jesus answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing from Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in the same manner*
- *John 5:30 – “I can do nothing from Myself”.*
- *John 12:49 – “For I did not speak from Myself, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment what to say and what to speak.”*
- *John 14:10 – “The Father abiding in Me does His works”.*
- *John 9:33 – “If this man were not from God, he could do nothing”.* (From the mouth of the blind man who is healed.)

As Jesus remained in his Father and obeyed His commandments, Jesus is repeatedly commanding his disciples (that is you and I) to remain in Him and obey his commandments.

Jesus in his teachings, and through His works, revealed that He is the Great I AM. The seven I AM statements, reveal his identity and where He came from and to where He is going now, after He is exalted, lifted Up.

To bear fruit, Jesus commands the disciples, it is essential that you remain in me, because I AM all you need. I AM the bread of life; The light of the World; the door of the Sheep; Good Shepherd; Resurrection of life; the way, the truth and the life and the True Vine. I AM with you now, but I will be going back to my Father, I will not leave you as orphans, but I will send you Holy Spirit and He will be with you forever. I will come and abide in you, both My Father and I will make our home in you. My Spirit will teach you all things and will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Abide in Me as I in you, receive and respond to My Word; I will cause you to bear fruit. My Father disciplines you and you bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing. Believers can do nothing of eternal value apart from relying on His indwelling Holy Spirit.

Q) What does Jesus know about our nature that could cause us to not depend on him?

Jesus knows our sinful nature. Our sinful nature wants to be self-dependent and self-reliant.

- *He knows our frame, that we are nothing but dust – Psalm 103:14*
 - *He knows our fall, that we were slaves to sin, and that ruled and controlled by Sin – Proverbs 5:22-23*
- true disciple will have the strength to flee from these only when they remain in Jesus.

Jesus has overcome these and so he sympathizes with you and helps you, but you must remain in Him.

- *Hebrews 2:18 – For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to help those who are tempted.*

- *Hebrews 4:15, 16a - He sympathizes without weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things like we are, yet without sin. Therefore, let us draw near*

He knows our sinful temptations, sinful attractions, sinful urges, sinful impulses, sinful desires, He has come down and freed us from bondage to Sin and its effects. Only through remaining in Jesus we will bear fruit.

Recap: First observation: A true disciple is the one, who is cleansed by Jesus' word, one who hears and responds, not just a hearer, but doer, bears fruit, endures pruning and bears much fruit.

Second Observation: A true disciple remains (abides), never departs (abandons). This leads to the third observation.

⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

Third observation – True disciple proves to be Jesus' disciple by bearing much fruit.

Here we see the great incentive with Mutual Dwelling, that is to remain/abide in Jesus (the vine) and Jesus' cleansing and transforming word in us, is the power to ASK, *whatever you wish, and it will be done for you*. The one who remains/abides in Jesus, and Jesus' words abide in him, he or she will ask nothing but to be

- Conformed to the image of his son – *Romans 8:29, For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son*
- Transformed to the will of God - *Romans 12:2, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
- Transformed into the image of The Lord – *2 Corinthians 3:18 – And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

The 'fruit' in the vine imagery represents everything that is the product of prayer (ASK) in Jesus' name and is to the Father's glory, including

- Obedience to Jesus' commands (v10); Experience of Jesus' joy (v11); Love for one another (v12); Witness to the world (v16, 27)

Few passages from the Scriptures that details the kind of fruit-bearing living:

- *Ephesians 5:8b, 9 – Live as children of light, for the fruit of light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth.*
- *Galatians 5:22, 23a – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*
- *James 3:17 – But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruits, without doubting, without hypocrisy.*

The fruit is nothing less than the outcome of persevering dependence on the vine, driven by faith (trust and obey), embracing all of the believer's life and the product of his witness, thereby proving to be Jesus' disciples to the world.

May the Lord guide with His Spirit and with his cleansing Word to prove us to be His true disciples to the World.

Discipleship Questions

MESSAGE SUMMARY: Remain in Jesus to bear fruit – John 15-1:8 ESV

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

1. In the light of Sunday's message, which revolves around three symbols: the vine, the vinedresser, and the branches. What is Jesus communicating by calling himself the "True vine"? Verse 1 – I AM the true vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser.
 - a. What is the significance of calling his disciples as "branches"?

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

2. In the light of verse 4 – Instead of commanding us to bear fruit, why Jesus command - "Remain (abide) in me"? Go around and share any Scripture verses. Here are a few verses: John 14:26; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:18.
 - a. What does it mean to remain in Christ? What are some elements you can think of?
3. As a true disciple of Jesus (remaining/abiding in Jesus), do you see fruit being produced? Ephesians 5:8b, 9; Galatians 22, 23a; James 3:17.
4. What is God convicting you of and to believe in the light of this passage?

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

5. For personal reflection (feel free to share): The Father (Vinedresser) prunes fruitful branches to make them more fruitful (verse 2). In what ways have you experienced the Father's "pruning" and what were the results?