

JESUS IS THE TRUE VINE. ABIDE IN HIM!

I. John 15:1-17

A. Our text today takes place at the Last Supper, the First Communion. Chapters 13-17 in the Gospel of John are often referred to as *Jesus' Farewell Discourse*. It takes place on the night Jesus was betrayed, arrested, abandoned, and denied. Today's text will also take us to the Lord's Table...

B. As we move into our text, we should know that the OT gives imagery of Israel being a vine or vineyard and God being the Vinedresser. The hopeful expectation of every farmer growing a crop is of a fruitful harvest, including those growing grapes. Was God disappointed? Isaiah 5:1-7 (NLT) is the prophet's song with sad lyrics: *1 Now I will sing for the One I love a song about His vineyard: My Beloved had a vineyard on a rich and fertile hill. 2 He plowed the land, cleared its stones, and planted it with the best vines. In the middle He built a watchtower and carved a winepress in the nearby rocks. Then He waited for a harvest of sweet grapes, but the grapes that grew were bitter. 3 Now, you people of Jerusalem and Judah, you judge between Me and My vineyard. 4 What more could I have done for My vineyard that I have not already done? When I expected sweet grapes, why did My vineyard give Me bitter grapes? 5 Now let me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will tear down its hedges and let it be destroyed. I will break down its walls and let the animals trample it. 6 I will make it a wild place where the vines are not pruned and the ground is not hoed, a place overgrown with briars and thorns. I will command the clouds to drop no rain on it. 7 The nation of Israel is the vineyard of the Lord of Heaven's Armies. The people of Judah are His pleasant garden. He expected a crop of justice, but instead He found oppression. He expected to find righteousness, but instead He heard cries of violence.*

C. John will reveal through Jesus' words that Jesus Himself is the Vine that bears the beautiful fruit that Israel failed to bear; that all men have failed to bear. We will see that more than grand words and poetic sentiments, more so even than ordinances and sacraments, that fruit borne from loving obedience is the telltale evidence of regeneration--of true life--of eternal life found in Christ alone.

D. John 15:1-17 (ESV) takes us to Jesus' words...

1) **V1: 1** *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. (John records Jesus making seven "I Am" statements. To review, those are: "I am the bread of life" John 6:35, 48, 51; "I am the light of the world" John 8:12 & John 9:5; "I am the door of the sheep" John 10:7, 9; "I am the good shepherd" John 10:11, 14; "I am the resurrection and the life" John 11:25; "I am the way, the truth, and the life" John 14:6; and "I am the true vine" John 15:1.)*

2) **V2: 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. (Taking away a branch and pruning a branch are two different things. One leads to judgment, the other to fruitfulness. There's a pear tree in downtown Millersport. To cut off one of its branches means that branch will never bear pears. To prune that tree means it will bear even more pears. When God prunes us, deals with us through various trials and circumstances, He's doing so that we might bear more fruit, i.e. become more Christlike, bear the fruit of the Spirit, exhibit His virtues, bear the fruit of love-generated obedience.)*

3) **V3-4: 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. (What does it mean to *abide* in Him? To know Christ, to have been made alive in Christ, to be in communion with Him, to have a blood-bought relationship with Him, to be bonded to Him in love, to have an eternal life-flowing connection with the Eternal One. Is this you?)*

4) **V5: 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. (Nothing of eternal significance, nothing of Godly value, nothing worthy of God's table.) (While quantities of fruitfulness differ per individual, total fruitlessness suggests that a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ does not actually exist. 'But I belong to a church!' 'But I prayed the sinner's prayer!' 'But I was baptized!' 'But I own several Bibles!' 'But I sometimes watch TV preachers!' But where's the fruit? We absolutely know we don't become Christians by trying to bear fruit. But once we become Christians, fruit is the expected outcome. John Piper says it succinctly: "Fruit does not make a tree good; A good tree bears good fruit... it shows that the tree is good.")*

5) **V6: 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. (Like V2, this clearly refers to judgment, to damnation, not to some temporary separation. Verses such as this are horrifying! Like when Jesus said: "Depart from Me, I never knew you!")*

6) **V7: 7** *If you abide in Me, and My words in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (If you abide in Jesus; if His word abides in you; if the desire of your heart is the desire of His heart for you; then ask*

what you will. When there's no daylight between you and God, watch your prayers be answered in big ways and small! Consider a man in a third world country, called to spread the gospel to remote villages. He prays for transportation. God blesses him with a bicycle or motorcycle or a camel or donkey. He's thrilled! Then consider a televangelist who wants a newer, fancier lear jet to trek around the world to pedal his false gospel. *Let him who has ears hear...*)

7) V8: (But what happens when believers bear good fruit?) 8 *By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples.*

8) V9-10: 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. (We've covered this ground often: God's love is inseparable from obeying Him. You can be filled with giddy gushiness (sloppy agape) and totally disregard God's will and word and ways. That's not the love Jesus demonstrated towards the Father or the Father towards Him or They toward us. Their love put Jesus on the cross to appease God's wrath and atone for our sin. Their's was a committed-to-the-highest-good-of-another Love!) The Bread & Cup remind us...*

9) V11: 11 *These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. (Not drudgery but joyful, love-driven obedience, acted out with gratitude & love, producing the same variety of fruit as Christ.)*

E. How many of you desire to be fruitful for the glory of God? So is there hope for us who wrestle with the want for increased fruitfulness? Puritan theologian & preacher, John Owen, who lived in the 1600s, said these words that will prepare us for the Lord's Table: "He can make the dry parched ground of my soul to become a pool and my thirsty barren heart as springs of water. Yes He can make this habitation of dragons, this heart which is so full of abominable lusts and fiery temptations, to be a place of bounty and fruitfulness unto Himself." **(Do it, O' Lord, we pray!)**

II. Communion

A. As we prepare to take Communion together, we do so to affirm our abiding connection to The Vine, to Christ our Lord, who obeyed the Vinedresser, to make what was barren, fruitful. He became the crushed Fruit to make us fruitful. Love took Him to the cross and He went with the joy set before Him--the joy He would bring to the Father in reuniting us with Him. The Bread & Cup remind us...

B. And Who again is this One who was poured out for our sins? That ancient credal song found in Philippians 2:6-11 (VOICE) says it beautifully: 6 *Though He was in the form of God, He chose not to cling to equality with God; 7* *But He poured Himself out to fill a vessel brand new; a servant in form and a man indeed. The very likeness of humanity, 8* *He humbled Himself, obedient to death--a merciless death on the cross! (The Bread & Cup remind us!) 9* *So God raised Him up to the highest place and gave Him the name above all. 10* *So when His name is called, every knee will bow, in heaven, on earth, and below. 11* *And every tongue will confess "Jesus, the Anointed One, is Lord," to the glory of God our Father! (Let us all, therefore, abide in Him!)*

*** Pray & Serve Communion...**

*** Jesus' continuing words in John 15:12-17 (ESV) will serve as our Benediction: 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.*

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

John 15:1-17 (ESV)

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. **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.

Isaiah 5:1-7 (NLT)

1 Now I will sing for the One I love
a song about His vineyard:
My Beloved had a vineyard
on a rich and fertile hill.
2 He plowed the land, cleared its stones,
and planted it with the best vines.
In the middle He built a watchtower
and carved a winepress in the nearby rocks.
Then He waited for a harvest of sweet grapes,
but the grapes that grew were bitter.
3 Now, you people of Jerusalem and Judah,
you judge between Me and My vineyard.
4 What more could I have done for My vineyard
that I have not already done?
When I expected sweet grapes,
why did My vineyard give Me bitter grapes?
5 Now let me tell you
what I will do to My vineyard:
I will tear down its hedges
and let it be destroyed.
I will break down its walls
and let the animals trample it.
6 I will make it a wild place
where the vines are not pruned and the ground is not hoed,
a place overgrown with briars and thorns.
I will command the clouds
to drop no rain on it.
7 The nation of Israel is the vineyard of the Lord of Heaven's Armies.
The people of Judah are His pleasant garden.
He expected a crop of justice,
but instead He found oppression.
He expected to find righteousness,
but instead He heard cries of violence.

Philippians 2:6-11 (VOICE)

6 Though He was in the form of God, He chose not to cling to equality with God; **7** But He poured Himself out to fill a vessel brand new; a servant in form and a man indeed. The very likeness of humanity, **8** He humbled Himself, obedient to death--a merciless death on the cross! **9** So God raised Him up to the highest place and gave Him the name above all. **10** So when His name is called, every knee will bow, in heaven, on earth, and below. **11** And every tongue will confess "Jesus, the Anointed One, is Lord," to the glory of God our Father!

Quote by John Owen

"He can make the dry parched ground of my soul to become a pool and my thirsty barren heart as springs of water. Yes He can make this habitation of dragons this heart which is so full of abominable lusts and fiery temptations to be a place of bounty and fruitfulness unto Himself."

- John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*.

Film Clips & Article Links

The "I AM" Statements of Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBE-hTTFQsk>

I Am Statements - 1 Word

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKMxqh1tv8c>

I Am the True Vine - Francis Chan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4tl3InVQ2c>

What Does it Mean to 'Abide in Christ'? - John Piper

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pSwB7y2z4o>

5 Most Ridiculous Books to Ever Become Christian Best Sellers - Tim Challies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDZW3Oj9WV8>

Bonus Stuff

Galatians 5:16-26 (ESV)

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. **19** Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, **21** envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **24** And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. **26** Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Hebrews 6:1-2 (ESV)

1 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, **2** and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. **3** And this we will do if God permits. **4** For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, **5** and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, **6** and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding Him up to contempt. **7** For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. **8** But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned. **9** Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things--things that belong to salvation. **10** For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for His name in serving the saints, as you still do. **11** And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, **12** so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Psalms 80:1-19 (NLT)

For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph, to be sung to the tune "Lilies of the Covenant."

1 Please listen, O Shepherd of Israel,

You who lead Joseph's descendants like a flock.

O God, enthroned above the cherubim,

display Your radiant glory

2 to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh.

Show us Your mighty power.

Come to rescue us!

3 Turn us again to Yourself, O God.

Make Your face shine down upon us.

Only then will we be saved.

4 O Lord God of Heaven's Armies,

how long will You be angry with our prayers?

- 5 You have fed us with sorrow
and made us drink tears by the bucketful.
- 6 You have made us the scorn of neighboring nations.
Our enemies treat us as a joke.
- 7 Turn us again to Yourself, O God of Heaven's Armies.
Make Your face shine down upon us.
Only then will we be saved.
- 8 You brought us from Egypt like a grapevine;
You drove away the pagan nations and transplanted us into Your land.
- 9 You cleared the ground for us,
and we took root and filled the land.
- 10 Our shade covered the mountains;
our branches covered the mighty cedars.
- 11 We spread our branches west to the Mediterranean Sea;
our shoots spread east to the Euphrates River.
- 12 But now, why have You broken down our walls
so that all who pass by may steal our fruit?
- 13 The wild boar from the forest devours it,
and the wild animals feed on it.
- 14 Come back, we beg You, O God of Heaven's Armies.
Look down from heaven and see our plight.
Take care of this grapevine
- 15 that You Yourself have planted,
this son You have raised for Yourself.
- 16 For we are chopped up and burned by our enemies.
May they perish at the sight of Your frown.
- 17 Strengthen the man You love,
the son of Your choice.
- 18 Then we will never abandon You again.
Revive us so we can call on Your name once more.
- 19 Turn us again to Yourself, O Lord God of Heaven's Armies.
Make Your face shine down upon us.
Only then will we be saved.

Isaiah 27:2-6 (NLT)

- 2 "In that day,
sing about the fruitful vineyard.
- 3 I, the Lord, will watch over it,
watering it carefully.
Day and night I will watch so no one can harm it.
- 4 My anger will be gone.
If I find briars and thorns growing,
I will attack them;
I will burn them up—
- 5 unless they turn to Me for help.
Let them make peace with Me;
yes, let them make peace with Me."
- 6 The time is coming when Jacob's descendants will take root.
Israel will bud and blossom
and fill the whole earth with fruit!

Hosea 14:4-8 (NLT)

- 4 The Lord says,
"Then I will heal you of your faithlessness;
My love will know no bounds,
for My anger will be gone forever.
- 5 I will be to Israel
like a refreshing dew from heaven.
Israel will blossom like the lily;

it will send roots deep into the soil
like the cedars in Lebanon.
6 Its branches will spread out like beautiful olive trees,
as fragrant as the cedars of Lebanon.
7 My people will again live under My shade.
They will flourish like grain and blossom like grapevines.
They will be as fragrant as the wines of Lebanon.
8 "O Israel, stay away from idols!
I am the One who answers your prayers and cares for you.
I am like a tree that is always green;
all your fruit comes from Me."

Ezekiel 15:1-8 (AMP)

1 And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, **2** "Son of man, how is the wood of the grapevine (Israel) better than any wood of a branch which is among the trees of the forest? **3** Can wood be taken from it to make any object? Or can men take a peg from it on which to hang any vessel? **4** If it has been thrown into the fire for fuel, and the fire has consumed both of its ends and the middle section has been charred, is it suitable or useful for anything? **5** Notice this, even when it was complete, it was not useful and was not made into anything. How much less, after the fire has burned [part of] it and [the remainder of] it is charred, can it still be made into anything? **6** Therefore, thus says the Lord God, 'Like the wood of the grapevine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so have I given up the people of Jerusalem; **7** and I set My face against them. Though they have come out of the fire, yet the fire will consume them. Then you will know [without any doubt] that I am the Lord, when I set My face against them. **8** I will make the land desolate (ruined, deserted), because they have acted unfaithfully [through their idolatry],' says the Lord God."

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

"A church in the land without the Spirit is rather a curse than a blessing. If you have not the Spirit of God, Christian worker, remember that you stand in somebody else's way; you are a fruitless tree standing where a fruitful tree might grow."

Quote by John Bunyan

"If my life is fruitless, it doesn't matter who praises me, and if my life is fruitful, it doesn't matter who criticizes me."

Quote by John Owen

"There is only one way to be revived and healed from our backslidings so that we may become fruitful even in old age. We must take a steady look at the glory of Christ in His special character, in His grace and work, as shown to us in the Scripture."

Quote by John Owen

"Great winds and storms help fruit-bearing trees. So also do corruptions and temptations help the fruitfulness of grace and holiness. The storm loosens the earth round its roots so the tree is able to get its roots deeper into the earth, where it receives fresh supplies of nourishment. But only much later will it be seen to bring forth better fruit. So corruptions and temptations develop the roots of humility, self-abasement and mourning in a deeper search for that grace by which holiness grows strong. But only later will there be visible fruits of increased holiness."

Quote by Charles Stanley

"The amount of time we spend with Jesus - meditating on His Word and His majesty, seeking His face - establishes our fruitfulness in the kingdom."

Quote by Francis Chan

"There are periods that we forget that in the pursuit of fruit, that if we just abide in Him, then fruitfulness is a guarantee."

Quote by Nancy Leigh DeMoss

"Frustration is the by-product of attempting to fulfill responsibilities God does not intend for us to carry. Freedom, joy, and fruitfulness come from seeking to determine God's priorities for each season of life, and then setting out to fulfill those priorities, in the power of His Spirit, realizing that He has provided the necessary time and abilities to do everything that He has called us to do."

Quote by Rick Warren

"When God wants to remove the defects in your life, He doesn't just snap His fingers so that it happens instantly. He does it incrementally. When God wants to make a mushroom, He takes six hours, but when He wants to make an oak tree, He takes 60 years. Do you want to be a mushroom or an oak tree?"

Quote by Henri Nouwen

"There is a great difference between successfulness and fruitfulness. Success comes from strength, control, and respectability. A successful person has the energy to create something, to keep control over its development, and to make it available in large quantities. Success brings many rewards and often fame. Fruits, however, come from weakness and vulnerability. And fruits are unique. A child is the fruit conceived in vulnerability, community is the fruit born through shared brokenness, and intimacy is the fruit that grows through touching one another's wounds. Let's remind one another that what brings us true joy is not successfulness but fruitfulness."

- Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey: A Daybook of Wisdom and Faith*.

Theological Note on John 15:6

The Reformation Study Bible

"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." - John 15:6 (ESV)

15:6 If anyone does not abide in Me. Those that do not remain show that they never had a saving relationship with Christ, although they may have been members of the visible church for a time. Their destiny is described with the language of damnation (cf. Matt. 3:12; 25:41; Heb. 6:4-8; Jude 7; Rev. 20:14). The reference to branches of a vine that are burned with fire probably is to be understood against the background of Ezek. 15:1-8, where Israel is represented as a vine with wood branches that will be burnt up because of their unfaithfulness. Likewise, those who claim to be related to Christ the "true vine," the true Israel, but do not have true faith in Him will bear no true fruit, and so will be judged.

- Theological Note on John 15:6, The Reformation Study Bible, R.C. Sproul General Editor, Reformation Trust, © 2015, p. 1887.

Theological Note on John 15:6

The ESV Study Bible

"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." - John 15:6 (ESV)

15:6 The person who **does not abide in Me** is an unbeliever who does not have a personal faith in Christ (see note on v. 4). The verse echoes Ezek. 15:1-8, where a vine failing to produce fruit is said to be good for nothing but the fire (see Heb. 6:7-8). **Fire** is a common Jewish and biblical symbol for divine judgment (e.g., Isa. 30:27; Matt. 3:12; Matt. 5:22; 18:8; 25:41). Some take this "fire" to imply loss of reward for true believers, not eternal judgment for unbelievers, but this does not fit as well with the image of branches being burned up by a fire. See also note on John 15:2.

- Theological Note on John 15:6, *The ESV Study Bible*, Crossway, © 2008, p. 2054.