

I Am: Part 15

I Am the True Vine

Pastor James Bell

John 15:1 NLT

1 “I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener.

As I sat down to study this week. I asked the LORD to give me His heart for today's message. I specifically asked the LORD for a new set of lens for today's word. I asked that this message would not be cliché. We do need a reminder of what this word speaks on the surface but I know that God wants to take the seed of this surface and give us a greater understanding that will cause us to shift in such a way that our fruit becomes glory for His Kingdom.

Jesus stated that “I Am the True Vine”. This means that Jesus declared Himself to be the genuine. The real deal. And if He is the true then there must be a imposter or someone else who was the vine prior.

The Old Testament vineyard imagery establishes what the false vine looks like. Israel was the vineyard of the Lord of Heaven's Armies, and Judah was his pleasant garden (Isa 5:1–7), yet the grapes that grew were bitter (Isa 5:1–7). They had produce but what they produced was not pleasing to the taste God was expecting.

This pattern repeats across centuries. God planted Israel as a vine of the purest stock—the very best—but it grew into a corrupt wild vine (Jer 2:21). The people of Jerusalem became like grapevines growing among the trees of the forest, useless and thrown on the fire to be burned (Ezek 15). Israel was a luxuriant vine loaded with fruit, but the greater the people became in numbers, the more pagan altars they built (Hos 10:1).

Not only does Jesus establish Himself as the true vine but also addresses the position of the Father. God is the one who tends and addresses the need of the vine.

John 15:2–3 NLT

2 He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. 3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you.

We are faced with two variables: You are cut off or you are pruned. And the deciding factor is whether we bear fruit. As they both consist of a removing but they are two different elements to their procedure. The cutting is removing lifeless branches. Cutting is being disconnected from the vine. And the cutting occurs because it is not drawing life from the vine. If the branch was drawing life from the vine then there would be fruit.

We see a lot of leafy Christians in society today. And many people have mistaken leaves as a sign of life. Leaves on the branch indicates that they are connected to the vine. But the leaves are not what the vinedresser is looking for. Notice the vinedresser cuts the branches that don't have fruit. Other translations use the words: remove, take away, or breaks off. The cutting or removing of the branch is not strategic in its removal. This greek word refers to the uselessness of that branch with the intent to destroy or do away with it.

Pruning on the other hand is purposed. Jesus said that pruning was to produce more fruit. So if it is producing fruit then why is it pruned. Pruning redirects energy to the areas that are producing fruit. The pruning is the removal of the leafy areas of our life. The leafy areas are areas of our life that aren't producing fruit. And God removes them so that we can give Him what He desires. But if we look at the greek definition of prune we will find that it means to cleanse from filth, to purify. And what does God cleanse us from? He desires to cleanse us from sin! The things in our life that is affecting our fruit.

Hebrews 12:1–2 NLT

1 ...let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus,

Removing the things that slow us down. And excess growth on a vine is cumbersome and robs the parts that are producing. This extra weight must be removed and the only way to do it is by keeping our eyes on Jesus.

John 15:3 NLT

3 You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you.

The word of God is what strips off the things that are not producing fruit for His Kingdom. The vinedresser prunes or cleanses away sin by the word of God. Why do you think the devil fight against you having knowledge of the word of God.

Genesis 3:1 NLT

1 The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

Did God really say? The questioning of God's word! Satan caused Eve to question the trustworthiness of God's word. Not only did she question it but added to it. God said nothing about touching. This means she articulated God's commandment in her own words.

When we fail to know and have a revelation of God's word we are not allowing the word of God to cleanse us. And if we take it a step further: 1 John 1:19

1 John 1:9 NLT

9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

We must acknowledge the areas of our lives that need pruning.

John 15:4-6 NLT

4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. 5 "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned.

To remain means to dwell or live. But it is referring more to the continuation of living. If you live in your home then you are continuing to live there. If someone visits your home then they are not continuing. They are only visitors. And Jesus was about to make this really plain for the disciples to see.

If we don't continue in the WORD then we will not produce fruit. How can a branch that has been severed produce any fruit? If the vinedresser is looking for fruit and He prunes in the manner to produce more fruit then what good is a fruitless branch? They have no purpose in the Kingdom of God and since they don't produce fruit then they will be gathered at the appointed time to be consumed by fire.

John 15:7-9 NLT

7 But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! 8 When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father. 9 "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.

We have heard Jesus mention the commandment of remain 2 times already but this time He said that if His word remains in us. The purpose of what He said this is phenomenal. Remember when David said that He would hide God's word in His heart so that he might not sin against God. Jesus said that the disciples are pruned by the words spoken. And now He says that if we live or continue in this manner that we could ask the Father of anything. Now I'm going to be real honest with you. I hear a lot of fruitless branches asking the Father for things but this promises was not made to the fruitless and lukewarm.

In verse 8 Jesus makes a definitive statement of identity. And since Jesus is the one authoring this statement then He is the one who defines the identity. The word of God is truth and it defines the heart of God.

James 1:22-24 NLT

22 But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. 23 For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. 24 You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like.

The word of God is a like a mirror. It reflects what is truly there. So how do we change what we are seeing? We bring and allow change. When we become doers of the word and not just hearers then we allow change.

And Jesus said that when we produce much fruit we are true disciples. Fruitfulness becomes the visible marker of an authentic disciple. And if we would be completely transparent, it's when much fruit is produced.

When Jesus proclaims who his disciples are, he's not merely describing observable behavior—he's establishing the standard by which authentic faith is measured. The author of the definition possesses absolute authority over its meaning, and Jesus exercises that authority to call believers into a transformed identity marked by fruitfulness, obedience, love, and costly commitment.

One more time Jesus mentions "Remain". But this time he said remain in my love. Remaining in the agape, the unconditional love. The love that has called us to death. Jesus said that this kind of love the world cannot receive. Jesus's love for us is equivalent to the love the Father has for Jesus. I think we need to hear that again. This means the value that God placed on Jesus is the very same for us.

John 15:10–12 NLT

10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! 12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.

This isn't the first time we have heard the mention of obeying His commandments. "If you love me then you will obey my commandments." When we love Him then we will obey His commandments and if we obey His commandments then His love remains in us. You cannot say that Jesus has loves cause Jesus is love. They are inseparable. And in the same manner, the fruit bearing branch cannot be identified apart for the word of God.

The branch is part of the vine and no branch can produce fruit if it is severed. Being connected means that the vine supplies the branches with everything needed to produce much fruit. The source is love.

These words are mentioned to bring joy. Not happiness. Don't get the two confused. Happy is derived from happenstance. Meaning in the moment. This word could be delightful in moments but purposed to be joyous. Meaning in spite of the situation. This word carries the same power that created the whole universe.

In Closing:

So as we look back to the beginning of this message we talked about Israel being the first vine. The Old Testament vineyard imagery establishes what the false vine looks like. Israel was the vineyard of the Lord of Heaven's Armies, and Judah was his pleasant garden (Isa 5:1–7), yet the grapes that grew were bitter (Isa 5:1–7). They had produce but what they produced was not pleasing to the taste God was expecting.

This pattern repeats across centuries. God planted Israel as a vine of the purest stock—the very best—but it grew into a corrupt wild vine (Jer 2:21). The people of Jerusalem became like grapevines growing among the trees of the forest, useless and thrown on the fire to be burned (Ezek 15). Israel was a luxuriant vine loaded with fruit, but the greater the people became in numbers, the more pagan altars they built (Hos 10:1).

This shows us that Israel was producing a fruit was not to God's standards because something was missing. Israel was doing this on their own and they became wild because they were not pruned. If we exclude the word of God within our fellowship then we will only produce something that is bitter to God. We will only be a foliage Christian and soon to be cut. If we neglect The word then pruning will not take place and we will be as wild as the first vine.

Let me pray with you today!