

SERIES - CHRIST - CULTURE - CHURCH
SERMON: THE SIMPLICITY OF ABIDING
9-22-24

OPENER:

John 15:1-17 “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 bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

⁵ “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

⁹ “As the Father loved Me, I also have 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 remain 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, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I 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 remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. ¹⁷ These things I command you, that you love one another.

The model that Christ gave us as his disciples is so simple that it confounds the wise of this world. Jesus told us to simply follow Him and remain connected to Him. That’s it. No ten step program. No chart. Just stay connected to Him. Abide in Him.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS PASSAGE:

- **THE INTIMACY BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE FATHER**
vs. 1... "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

We have three characters in this parable. Jesus is The Vine. The Father God is the Gardener or Vinedresser. We are the branches growing out from the vine.

Media: Show illustration slide of vine and branches

Jesus begins His analogy of the vine and branches by saying that He is the "true vine" and God the Father is the "vinedresser" (or husbandman) (gardener). He pictures the loving care of His Father for Him and the disciples through the picture of a vinedresser's concern for his plants.

- > A vinedresser, or husbandman, is more than a mere farmer.**
- > Grapes are more than an annual crop.**
- > A vinedresser's grape vines remain with him for decades. 20 to 30 years**
- >He comes to know each one in a personal way, much like a shepherd with his sheep.**
- >He knows how each particular vine is faring from year to year and which ones are more productive or vigorous than others.**
- >He knows what they respond to and what special care certain one's need.**
- >Every vine has its own personality. And the vinedresser comes to know it over the years.**
- >The vinedresser cares for each vine and nurtures it, pruning it the appropriate amount at the appropriate times, fertilizing it, lifting its branches from the ground and propping them or tying them to the trellis, and taking measures to protect them from insects and disease.**

SO WHEN JESUS CALLS HIS FATHER THE VINEDRESSER, HE IS DESCRIBING HIM IN TERMS OF HIS CLOSE RELATIONSHIP AND CARING ATTITUDE AS WELL AS HIS DAILY ACTION IN THE LIVES OF HIS DISCIPLES.

To call Him a vinedresser is to tell us He cares for us personally and is wise to know exactly what to do to make us fruitful. With such a Vinedresser, the branches can experience complete confidence and security - The constant care of God.

- **THE INTIMACY THAT CHRIST WANTS WITH US IS JUST LIKE HE HAS WITH HIS FATHER**

The relationship that a gardener has with his vines is very intimate.

Jesus says...John 10:30 *"I and My Father are one."*

Then He prays that we have that kind of relationship with the Father God.....when he prays before his is arrested.....

John 17: 9-11 I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. ¹⁰ And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.

- **THE TOTAL DEPENDENCE ON HIM THAT WE MUST HAVE.**

vs. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

- **HE SPEAKS SERIOUSLY ABOUT BEARING FRUIT AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT.**

vs. 6.....If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

- **OUR PRAYER LIFE CHANGES WHEN WE ABIDE IN HIM AND HAVE HIS HIS HEART.**

vs. 7..... If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

- **THE FATHER IS GLORIFIED WHEN WE BEAR FRUIT**

vs. 8.....By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

- **THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE IN THIS PASSAGE - HOW WALKING IN LOVE IS CONNECTED TO OUR OBEYING HIS COMMANDS AND LOVING OTHERS**

vs. 9-10,12..... "As the Father loved Me, I also have 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. ¹² This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

- **JOY IS A BYPRODUCT OF ABIDING IN CHRIST**

vs. 11.....These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

SIDE NOTE:

The month of Elul is often called the month of repentance, as it is a time to prepare for the upcoming High Holy Days of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, and the last great festival of Sukkot. According to Jewish calendar it started September 4th and goes through October 2nd. We are in the Jewish month of Elul.

This traditional period of return is an opportunity to examine one's life and the fruit that is being produced. What needs to be uprooted? What needs to be pruned? What needs to be nourished? It's the season to set things right with Adonai and our fellowman. While these things should be a daily exercise, the feast days direct the path of the righteous to dedicate this season, to give an honest account of one's soul.

This Jewish holiday centers around agriculture and harvest. During the month of Elul, Adonai our King is "in the field" and people are His planting. We are His vineyard, and He is looking for fruit. While the King is in the field, He is particularly accessible, as near as a co-laborer and a friend.

May we submit to His tender affections, pruning, and cleansing before He returns to the Throne of Judgment on the High Holy Days. His desire is for us to enter Sukkot, the figurative end-time harvest and wedding feast, clean and sealed in Him with a heart that is altogether joyful.

I. FIVE WORKS OF THE VINEDRESSER:

1. REPOSITIONING

Unlike fruit trees, a grapevine cannot stand upright on its own. As a grapevine grows, the natural growth is downward. Before long, the lower part of the vine is laying on the ground where it gets wet on the bottom. One of the responsibilities of the vinedresser is to take hold of the vine and entwine it on a trellis or wires, to keep air flowing underneath it so it can bear healthy fruit.

Have you ever been in a place where you had become comfortable, only to have God in His wisdom determine it was time for an adjustment, a change in position in order for you to continue bearing spiritual fruit?

Like the wise vinedresser, our heavenly Father has the right to adjust our position in life to help us bear more fruit. Whether it's an actual move to another location, or simply a change of circumstances, we may find ourselves facing change, moving from a place of comfort and self-assurance to one of uncertainty and even fear. Could it be that God is at work in your circumstances, preparing you for greater productivity for His Kingdom?

2. PRUNING

Now, let's look at the rest of verse 2, *"...and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit."*

In addition to repositioning us for greater productivity, our heavenly Father like the good vinedresser prunes us so we can bear more fruit. This is different than just moving us or repositioning – this is painful pruning. Pruning is removal, and it isn't **DONE BY US**.

prune = Greek = to cleanse

What does God prune from our lives?

- 1) As part of our sanctification process we know that God will strip us of the sin that so easily entangles us but that is not all.
- 2) He will also take us out of certain situations and close doors so that we will continue to grow in the way that He wants us to. Neither way is easy and both can be painful. Yet, it's a necessary part of our growth so that we can mature in the Lord.
- 3) The branch is dead – results will be fruitless, no obvious growth, no life is flowing through.
- 4) The branch is sick – the fruit is rotten, there is striving with little results, growth is hindered because it is oppressed.

If God is going to cleanse something from you it means it is no longer in alignment with His will for you.

ILLUSTRATION:

The healthiest vine is not the one with the brightest green leaves for show, but the one that bears fruit. Many are the branches filled with leafy activity,

growing that which will shade them and make them more comfortable. Grapevines, when left untended, will sprawl out and produce leafy canopies. While their green leaves look healthy, they yield very little fruit. Since the purpose of a grapevine is to produce grapes, pruning is needed.

3. REMOVING DEAD BRANCHES

⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

The work of the Father also includes organizing the removal of those branches that have dried up due to disconnection

4. LOOKS FOR FRUIT AND DELIGHTS IN FINDING IT

John 15:8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

God is glorified by our fruit bearing. The more fruit, the more glory to God.. The sweetness of the aroma of the Spirit's work wafts Heaven when we are acting in obedience with a right heart, and searching for ways to be used of God.

One of my favorite passages of the Bible is found in the pivotal passage of

5. LOVES THE VINE

I don't want to leave the four works of the Vine dresser without noting the last one.

Vs. 9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.

Jesus didn't tell us that we should "tough out" a life for God out of duty. That won't honor Him. In fact, what He is looking for is this: that we will move our deeply rooted love of SELF and replace it with an ever deeper love for HIM.

**GOD LOVES HIS VINE.
HE WORKS HIS VINEYARD OUT OF LOVE.
THERE IS NO GREATER LOVE THAN THIS.**

WE ARE CALLED TO LIVE AND WALK AND GROW IN HIS LOVE.

II. THERE IS NO STRIVING IN ABIDING

ILLUSTRATION:

Here is a vine. Here are leaves that are abiding. Here is a leaf that is not abiding. It looks like the others. It has the same form and shape, but it is wilting. It is drying up. It is in the process of dying. That process began the moment it detached.

Now, I can tell this leaf to stop wilting.....to stop losing its petals. Telling it to stop turning brown. But it is incapable of doing that.

Because by itself it can do nothing. It must be attached to the vine. It has no power to change. It has no connection to life. It's power and life is in being connected to the vine. To grow, and to be healthy and strong it must be connected to the vine. And that inward life giving flow will start in its core and shoot up and out of it.

The same is true about sin and holiness in our own lives. We can concentrate on doing this or that and focus on changing the outward symptoms and never address the inner issues of the heart. This leaves us constantly striving to do better without any real hope for change.

III. WE CAN CONFORM OR WE CAN CHOOSE TO BE TRANSFORMED

**CONFORMING FOCUSES ON CHANGING THE
OUTWARD SYMPTOMS.**

- > CONFORMING DOES NOT PRODUCE INTERNAL CHANGE**
- > CONFORMING IS TOTALLY FOCUSED ON WHAT YOU DO**
- > CONFORMING IS FOCUSED ON WORKS NOT ON YOUR HEART**
- > CONFORMING HAS TO HAVE SOMETHING TO BE PATTERNED AFTER**

**WHEN WE ADDRESS THE OUTSIDE ONLY IN AN ATTEMPT
TO MODIFY THE WAY WE ACT THERE IS NO
SUSTAINING LIFE IN THAT.
BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION WORKS AROUND OUR SIN NATURE, BUT IT
DOESN'T FIX THE PROBLEM - OUR HEARTS.**

**WE MUST ADDRESS THE INSIDE.
OUTWARD CHANGE IS REFLECTED UPON WHAT
HAPPENS ON THE INSIDE.**

**ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL THINGS THAT AN INTIMATE ABIDING
RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST DOES IS**

**TO TRANSFORM US.
ALL BIBLE TRANSFORMATION BEGINS WITH
NEARNESS TO JESUS.**

**WHEN WE HAVE BEEN TRANSFORMED ON THE INSIDE, IT SHOWS ON
THE OUTSIDE.**

Ezekiel 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

>Spiritual transformation produces a life giving change of the Holy Spirit that affects your thoughts, your motives, your attitudes and your actions.

> Spiritual transformation is focused not on what you can do, but what Christ wants to do through you.

> Spiritual transformation is focused on your intimate relationship with Jesus more than anything else.

> Spiritual transformation only happens as we have an abiding relationship with Jesus.

EXAMPLE:

Luke 18:10-14 Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ ¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The Pharisee felt righteous and justified in his own works.

The tax collector humbled himself before God asking for his mercy and his help.

When we try to rearrange the flesh’s success to rule our lives, it produces one of two results:

FIRST: the result of pride

Luke 18:11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.

The tax collector had a list of what he did and didn't engage in which supposedly affirmed his righteousness....he fasted, he tithed, he was a faithful attendee of the synagogue. He had to feel pretty good about himself. His definition of spirituality was wrapped up in His actions. He fell in line with everyone else's expectations. Matters of the heart were not important. This produced pride in him that blinded him to his true needs. He needed his heart transformed.

SECOND: The second result is condemnation

Condemnation from the Pharisee said that the tax collector shouldn't be allowed in the temple.

When we decide that we will be saved by our own goodness we enter a sin cycle. Everyday you are depending on your own strength and you won't be able to, running but never getting anywhere. This produces condemnation toward ourselves. A oppressive attitude of judgment that says we are not worth, we are forever guilty.

CLOSING:

It is very simple.

If we want to overcome sin we stay connected to Jesus.

If we want to have joy we stay connected to Jesus.

If we want to know God's will we stay connected to Jesus.

If we want to have power in our prayer life we stay connected to Jesus.

If we want to become more like Him, we stay connected to Him.

The simplicity of abiding is something that we miss because it is so simple.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law

