

Be With Jesus//John 15:1-11

One Off for The Brook

When Jesus says in verse 1, **1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.** He is not giving us a random devotional thought, He is making a claim about reality.

All throughout the Old Testament, the vine was a picture of the people of God, Israel. God planted them, protected and provided for them. Because they belonged to Him, He expected them to bear fruit.

Fruit that looked like obedience and trust and life that reflected His character to a watching world. But that's not what happened.

Instead of fruitfulness, there was failure. Instead of faithfulness; wandering. Instead of trust; idols. So when Jesus says, **“I am the true vine,”** He's saying: Where they failed, I didn't. Where you fall short, I don't. What you cannot produce I already have.

I am the faithful one. I am the obedient one. I am the source of the life you've been trying to create. And that means this: **When you are with Jesus, you are connected to a source of life you could never create on your own.**

Then, to add the cherry on top, He says “My Father is the gardener.” That means God is not distant from your life. He is

involved. I'm not a gardner in any sense, but I do love taking care of my lawn. I tend it, cut it the right length, I look out for weeds.

This is what God does! He cultivates! So here's what that means: **When you are with Jesus, you are personally cared for and intentionally formed by God Himself.** God is actively working in your life.

I'm about to preach, fam...Then Jesus says in verse 2: **2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.**

This tells us something: This isn't about looking the part, it's about being alive. Fruit is the evidence of connection. Does that make sense? Because if it doesn't let me explain it this way...so often we see fruit as activity. If we reduce it to just that we miss out on what it actually is...it's transformation.

It's a life that actually begins to change. Fruit looks like a growing desire to obey. A softening towards the things of God. A love for people that didn't used to be there. A shifting of what you value.

So here's the reality: **When you are with Jesus, your life actually begins to change.** Not fake change. Not surface-level change. **Real transformation.**

Then Jesus says something that changes the entire tone in verse 3: **3 You are already clean because of the word I have**

spoken to you. Man...before He tells them to be with Him, He reminds them of what's already true. They are already clean.

Which means this: **When you are with Jesus, you are already accepted.** Already...not working for it or striving for it and trying to prove yourself. His! Already clean and loved.

Man, let this minister to you because when you recognize you belong to Him because of what He has done for you and not what you can do for Him, it begins to produce something in us that is the antithesis of pressure...it's peace.

And because Jesus knows that's what we get He says this to centered it all where it should be. He says at the beginning of verse **4 Remain in me,** then He tells us why at the end of verse 5...**apart from me you can do nothing.**

That word "remain" means to dwell, to stay, to make your home in. This is not a moment or a simple glance, this is life.

And Jesus is clear: Apart from Him, we can do nothing. Apart from Him, there is no real fruit. Apart from Him, no lasting change. Apart from Him, no spiritual life.

You know what that tells me then? **When you are with Jesus, you are actually alive.** Not just busy or more religious, loved ones, actually alive. Connected to the only source that can sustain your soul.

And then Jesus starts unfolding what being with Him actually produces. In verse 7, being with Jesus produces prayer that is

shaped by His word. In verse 8, it produces fruit that glorifies the Father. In verses 9 and 10, it produces a life that remains in His love and walks in obedience. And in verse 11, it produces joy that is full.

So just step back and look at what Jesus is offering us: Life. Growth. Transformation. Alignment. Purpose. Love. Joy. And every single one of those things comes from one place: **Being with Him.**

So let me say it clearly: Jesus is not just helpful to your life. He is your life. He is not one source among many, He is the source.

And if that's true, if being with Jesus leads to everything we actually want then here's the question we have to wrestle with: **Why don't we actually live like that?**

Why do we still struggle to be with Him? Why is it so hard for us to simply slow down and be before we ever think about doing?

I came to from NASHville, TN to tell you why, loved ones. If we're honest, we don't struggle with understanding this, we struggle with choosing this.

And that's what I want to show you next. Not just why we should be with Jesus, we just looked at that. I want to show us why it's actually so hard for us to be with Him.

1. We prefer control over dependence

At the core of why being with Jesus is so difficult for us is this reality: We don't like being dependent. Jesus says it plainly in verse 4 and 5: **4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.**

That is one of the most humbling statements in all of Scripture. Jesus doesn't say, "Apart from me you can do a little less." He doesn't say, "Apart from me things will be harder." He says, **"Apart from me you can do nothing."**

Nothing of real spiritual substance. Nothing that meets the standard of God. Nothing that produces the kind of life you were created for.

And the image He gives makes it undeniable. A branch has no life in itself. A branch cannot manufacture fruit. A branch cannot sustain itself. A branch does not wake up one day and decide to be fruitful. Its only hope is connection.

If it is connected to the vine, life flows. If it is disconnected, it withers. And Jesus looks at His disciples, and by extension, us and says: That's you.

You are not the source, the strength, or the life. You are the

branch. And if we're honest, that's where the tension hits us. Because everything in us wants to believe the opposite.

We want to believe we've got this. We want to believe we can manage our lives. We want to believe we can fix what's broken, overcome what's hard, and produce what's needed if we just try a little harder, focus a little more, discipline ourselves a little better.

We don't mind Jesus being helpful, we just don't want Him to be necessary. But Jesus doesn't give us that option. He doesn't present Himself as an assistant to your life, He presents Himself as the source of your life.

This is why being with Jesus feels so unnatural to us. Because being with Jesus starts where control ends. It starts where you admit: "I don't have what it takes." "I can't produce this on my own." "I can't fix myself." "I can't grow myself into Christlikeness through effort alone."

And let's be real, nobody enjoys that. Nobody enjoys admitting weakness. That's why confession is hard. That's why prayer is inconsistent. That's why we avoid slowing down.

Because all of those things force us to face something we would rather ignore: **We are not as strong as we think we are.**

We must understand our inability to please God apart from Jesus' work in us. And until we embrace that, we will keep trying to live the Christian life in our own strength.

We'll keep showing up. We'll keep doing the right things externally. We'll keep trying to modify behavior...but underneath it all, we're still operating as if we are the vine.

And that's exhausting. Loved ones, listen to me: **If dependence is the goal, then weakness is an advantage.** But we don't live like that. We spend most of our lives trying to hide our weakness, not embrace it.

We highlight our strengths. We avoid situations that expose our limitations. We protect the image that we have it together. But Jesus is saying the exact opposite. Your strength is not your advantage, your awareness of your need is.

Because when you finally admit your weakness, you finally position yourself to abide.

Let me say it this way: ***The reason many of us are not being with Jesus in Jesus is not because we don't know we should, it's because we still think we can do life without Him.***

Maybe not completely, but functionally we still default to ourselves. And as long as that's true, being with Jesus will always feel optional.

But Jesus removes that illusion completely. "Apart from me... you can do nothing." And here's the invitation in that.

Jesus is not saying that to shame you, He's saying that to free you. Because if you really believe that, then you can stop

pretending. And instead...you can abide.

Being with Jesus looks like bringing your weakness to Him instead of hiding it. It looks like opening your Bible not as someone who has it together, but as someone who needs Him to speak. It looks like prayer that is honest, not polished. It looks like turning to Him throughout your day, not just checking a box in the morning. It looks like saying, again and again: "I need you."

You ready for this? ***You don't drift from Jesus because you hate Him, you drift because you slowly start believing you don't need Him like you actually do.***

So the question isn't: Do you believe Jesus is important? The question is: **Are you living like He is necessary?** Because if He is the vine, then being with Him is not optional. It's everything.

And that leads to the next tension in this passage. Because even when we start to accept our need for Him, we still struggle with what comes next.

Because being with Jesus doesn't just require dependence, it also involves pruning. This leads us to the next thing: It's hard for us to be with Jesus because

2. We want comfort more than formation

Jesus doesn't just tell us to be with Him, He tells us what it will involve. Verse 2 says: **"Every branch in me that does bear fruit**

he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

That means this life of being with Jesus is not just about connection, it's about transformation. And transformation is not always comfortable.

I spoke about fruit earlier but I want to make sure we understand what Jesus means by fruit for a moment, because that matters. Fruit here is not success. It's not platform. It's not results you can point to and say, “Look what I did.”

Fruit is what flows out of a life that is fully dependent on Jesus. Obedience, love for others, joy that isn't tied to your circumstances, a life that increasingly looks like Christ.

And Jesus says if that kind of fruit is going to grow in your life then the Father is going to have to prune you. Family, I'm not trying to sign up for that!

Pruning is cutting and removing and taking things out of my life that are hindering my growth. And what's so wild to me about all of that is sometimes... those things aren't even bad things! That's what makes it so difficult.

Again, I love my yard, I'm not a gardner. What is so wild to me, I've come to learn, when plants are starting to die, there are parts of the plant you have to cut away.

And at first glance, it looks like you're making it worse. Your plant is already struggling and now you're cutting more? But a few days/weeks later, what happens? New life. New growth!

Health.

That's exactly what Jesus is saying the Father does in your life. If you are connected to Christ, God is committed to your fruitfulness.

Which means He is committed to removing whatever keeps you from fully depending on Him. And this is where it gets real. Because pruning doesn't feel like a spiritual metaphor when you're in it.

It feels like loss. It feels like disappointment. It feels like something you trusted being shaken. Let me get more practical...

It can look like a relationship breaking. A door closing. A plan falling apart. Your health declining. Something you were counting on not coming through. We've been there and if you haven't you just haven't lived long enough yet.

In those moments, it's easy to ask: “God, what are you doing?”. Jesus has already told us ahead of time.

If you are in me, this is part of how I form you. Because here's the reality we don't always want to admit: We are really good at turning good things into ultimate things.

We take gifts and make them gods. We take blessings and make them saviors. We start to trust in things that were never meant to hold that weight. And when that happens, those

things don't just fail us, they keep us from real life in Christ.

So He prunes because He is for us! I've had to learn this the hard way family, **God's commitment to your fruit bearing is greater than your commitment to your comfort.**

That means He loves you too much to leave you where you are. He loves you too much to let you build your life on things that cannot sustain you. He loves you too much to let you stay shallow when He's calling you into something deeper.

Now, let me say this as clear as I can: pruning is not God trying to decide whether you belong or not, it's God shaping those who already do. How do I know that? Remember verse 3? "Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you."

That means if you belong to Jesus, your standing is already secure. Loved one, you have to hold on to that because when pruning starts our natural instinct is to pull away.

When things get hard, we don't lean in, we distance ourselves. We stop praying, we disengage, we get frustrated and we question God's goodness.

We interpret His pruning as His absence instead of His care. Can I challenge you? What if the very thing you're tempted to run from is actually the place where Jesus is inviting you to remain?

Stop wanting the fruit of being with Jesus without the process

of being with Jesus. Can't have the growth without the cutting. When God begins to remove things from your life, will you run from Him or will you remain with Him?

Because if you remain, you will eventually see what He was doing all along.

You will see that He wasn't taking life from you, but what He was trying to protect and what He was deepening. He was producing something in you that could not be produced any other way.

And as if that's not enough, Jesus takes it even further. Because being with Jesus doesn't just expose our need and involve pruning, it also begins to reshape what we actually want.

And that's where He moves next, into how being with Jesus aligns our hearts with His will. It's hard for us to be with Jesus because...

3. We are distracted and want control over our desires

Verse 7 can be understood in a way that can be harmful for you and negatively impact our prayer life. Jesus says **7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.**

At first glance it sounds like Jesus is saying, "Just ask for whatever you want, and I'll give it to you." I remember hearing this verse when I was a kid and I would pray for silver teeth to

grow in my mouth because my friend has a silver cap on his. Meanwhile I had no idea he had that because his teeth were bad. That's a sermon for another time.

Jesus isn't saying ask me for a silver teeth or even a million dollars and I got you. He says, **"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you..."**

That changes everything. Because now we're not talking about random desires, we're talking about desires that have been shaped by relationship.

We're talking about a heart that has been formed by His word. A mind that has been renewed by His truth. A life that is staying close enough to Jesus that what you want starts to reflect what He wants.

This is why being with Jesus matters so much because apart from being with Jesus, you don't just lack power, you lack alignment.

And this is where prayer comes in. Prayer is one of the clearest expressions of being with Jesus. People often say that "prayer is simply talking to God". That is so true, but it's deeper than that: prayer is dependence on God.

Prayer is you acknowledging: "I am not the source. I am not in control. I need something outside of myself to sustain me."

It's like food. You cannot survive without an outside source sustaining you physically, the same is true spiritually. If Jesus is

the vine then prayer is part of how that life flows.

It's the conversation that keeps your heart engaged with Him. But here's the problem. We struggle to remain here because we are deeply distracted and we want control over what we want.

Let's start with distraction. Most of us don't reject prayer, we just neglect it. It's rare that anyone wakes up and says...you know what...I don't need God today." That's not how we operate, but.

We just fill our day so full that we never slow down long enough to actually depend on Him. We move from one thing to the next. We check our phones before we check our hearts. We consume more content than we do Scripture. And over time we lose the ability to be still.

Jesus says, "If my words abide in you..." Loved one, His words cannot abide in a life that has no room for them.

And because we're distracted and full, our prayers tend to default back to us. Which leads to the second issue: We want control over our desires.

Let me ask you a question: Are your prayers shaped more by the word of God or the word of you? Are they centered on His kingdom or your comfort? Are they about His will being done or your plans working out?

And we do a really good job of trying to over spiritualize our

decisions made in the flesh. When you're praying about something that you really want, the voice of God starts sounding like your own.

What Jesus is saying here is that when you with Him and His words abide in you, your desires begin to change. You begin to want what He wants or cares about what He cares about.

You begin to pray differently not because you're forcing the issue but because you're being formed.

And that's where prayer becomes powerful. Not because you've figured out the right formula but because your heart is now aligned with His.

God answers prayers that are shaped by His will because those prayers are flowing from a life that is being with Jesus in Him.

But that's hard for us. Because we don't just want God's will, we want our will with God's blessing. We want Him to cosign our plans and when He doesn't, we get frustrated.

Let's make this personal. When you look at your prayer life, what does it reveal about you and your relationship with Jesus?

If prayer is minimal, if it's rushed, if it's only reactive, it may not be a prayer problem, it may be a being with Jesus problem.

Because when you know you need Him, you talk to Him. When

you know He's the source, you stay connected. When you believe life flows from Him, you don't treat prayer as optional.

And that leads to the final piece of this. Because when you begin to be with Jesus and your life is shaped by Him something starts to grow in you that you cannot manufacture on your own.

Jesus says it leads to something we're all looking for...Love, obedience, and real joy.

4. We look for life in all the wrong places

Jesus brings this to a deeply personal place in verses 9–11:

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love... that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full."

Don't miss this. He's not just talking about fruit, He's talking about **love, relationship, and joy**...the very things all of us are actually looking for.

You want secure love, lasting joy, and a life that actually satisfies? Jesus says: **That life is found in being with Him.**

But here's where we drift. We hear "keep my commandments" and immediately think performance. "I need to try harder." "I need to do better." "I need to prove myself."

But that's not what Jesus is saying. Notice the order: "As the

Father has loved me, so have I loved you.” Love comes first, then obedience follows. This isn’t mechanical obedience, it’s relational.

You’re not earning love, you’re responding to it. But here’s why this is hard...Even though Jesus offers love and joy...**we keep looking for life somewhere else.**

We run to success, control, comfort, relationships, approval, distraction. And those things can give you moments, but they can’t give you life. You’ll have moments of happiness, but not joy.

So we keep chasing and never fully satisfied. And all the while, Jesus is saying: “Stay with me.” Because what you’re looking for **is already found in Him.**

That’s why Jesus went to the cross, for your wandering heart, your lack of love, your failure to obey.

So you could be brought in and connected and so His life could become yours. And when that sinks in, you stop striving and you start resting.

So let me ask you: Where are you looking for life right now? Because whatever that is, that’s what you’re treating like the vine. And Jesus is inviting you back. Not to try harder, **but to come closer. That’s the invitation.**

Jesus doesn’t just give us an invitation in this passage.

He also gives us a warning. Verse 6 says: **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.**

That’s not light language and its not metaphor just for effect. That’s Jesus making something very clear: **There is a difference between being around Jesus and being connected to Jesus.**

You can be close to Christian things and still not be connected to Christ. You can know the language, sing the songs, show up consistently and serve and still not be being with Jesus.

That’s scary, but dare I say, it’s also very gracious of Jesus to say this. Here’s the grace in this warning: It invites honesty. It invites you to stop pretending. It invites you to stop hiding behind activity or familiarity and actually come to Jesus.

Because if you’re not connected, the answer is not to try harder, the answer is to come to Him. To Trust Him and to rest. Stop trying to produce what only He can produce.

And for those who are in Him, this becomes reassurance. Because even when you feel weak, even when growth feels slow, even when fruit feels small, if there is evidence of life, it means you are connected.

So don’t look for perfection, look for life. Look for evidence that Jesus is actually at work in you.