

Good morning and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your bibles to John 15?

One of my favorite things not only as a bible teacher, but as a Christian, is to hear how the Word of God has impacted someone's life, often times in surprising, unexpected ways.

Before we begin our study I wanted to share with you how this section of scripture, John 15, not only impacted my life, but in fact changed it forever.

STORY

I believe the HS desires to work in each of our hearts, to speak to us in a very real way this morning.

We're only going to study verses 1-11, and the title of this morning's message is ABIDING JOY.

Let's read verses 1-5 and then we'll pray 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;[fn] 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.

Lets Pray.

Hudson Taylor, many of you are familiar with his name, was the mighty missionary who spent 51 years in China. And it was more than 100 years ago that Hudson Taylor said this "Since the days

of Pentecost, has the whole church ever put aside every other work and waited upon Him for ten days, that the Spirit's power might be manifested? We give too much attention to method and machinery and resources, and too little to the source of power."

In a day and age in which there is the proliferation of information and instruction everywhere we turn, John chapter 15 is the blueprint for victorious Christian living.

Now let's remember the scene. The last words of John 14 say **John 14:31 "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here.** Jesus and His disciples were leaving the upper room, from where they had the last supper. So, it would seem the words we have before us were given to the disciples when they are in route from the upper room thru the city of Jerusalem as they headed to the Garden of Gethsemane.

If you're not familiar with John 15, it speaks of Jesus being the vine, and we the branches, emphasizing Christ as our source of strength.

Now being that it was Passover, Jesus and the fellas would've been traveling under the bright light of a full moon. **SHOW PIC 1** And although we don't know for sure, perhaps they travelled past the vineyards on their journey, displaying the flourishing fields of grapes. This would've been an incredible illustration as Jesus spoke these words about the vineyard. **CLOSE PIC 1**

Or perhaps they could see the magnificent temple off in the distance as they journeyed, and the gold covered vines etched into the temple reflected in the moonlight as Jesus spoke these words.

It's fun to ponder, but we don't really know. What we do know is that Jesus spoke in a very clear, obvious, and relatable way to His disciples and He does the same for you and me.

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Jesus said He is not just THE vine, but the TRUE vine. There will be those who claim to be the vine, some who even appear to be the vine, but only Jesus is the true vine.

Now at the end of the verse it says **and My Father is the vinedresser**

What does a vinedresser do? A vinedresser cares for the vines, he prunes, and cultivates vines. Now a vine-dresser doesn't just take a lopper and haphazardly cut here and there. No, the vinedresser is thoughtful and very careful to make sure the vine is producing the best fruit possible.

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away;[fn] and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

The vine and branch are a very real and powerful picture of our relationship with Christ because it emphasizes 2 things

1) Complete dependence and 2) Constant connection.

The branch depends on the vine. The branch needs the vine to not only produce fruit, but just to survive!

And that is what Jesus is saying here and to each of us this morning. He is the vine; we are the branches.

Notice there's a progression here in this verse. No fruit, some fruit, and more fruit.

But it begs the question, what is fruit?

SIMPLY PUT, FRUIT IS THE EVIDENCE OF FAITH.

What is the evidence of your faith? I like to ask the teenagers at YG sometimes 'if being a Christian were against the law, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Would they find a dusty bible, or a used bible? Would their or your internet history and TV viewing look like one that Jesus followers should have?'

Fruit is the evidence of faith, and the bible gives many examples of it.

Romans 1:13 defines sharing the gospel as fruit. **Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some FRUIT among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.**

Romans 6:22 defines fruit as holiness **But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your FRUIT to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.**

Romans 15:27 says tithing is bearing fruit. **27 It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. 28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this FRUIT, I shall go by way of you to Spain.**

Hebrews 13:15 says praising God is a form of fruit **15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the FRUIT of our lips, giving thanks to His name.**

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

But for a vine to produce the maximum fruit, long before the harvest, it has to be pruned. To get the sap to the fruit, and not waste the sap on fueling the foliage, the dead wood and excess greenery has to be lopped off.

And when God prunes us, it can be painful. Our identity can get clipped. Our goals and aspirations can get trimmed down when God prunes our lives.

But if a plant wants to prosper, it can't bypass the pruning process.

Sometimes when we're being pruned we think God is angry with us, or punishing us, but He's not. He wants us to produce fruit, more fruit, and even much fruit, but to do so He must remove some things out of our lives.

3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. How were the disciples made clean? Because they believed in Christ's words. Clearly they didn't understand all of it, but they trusted Jesus by faith in what He said.

Today Jesus continues to wash His people through the Word. This is why we place such an emphasis on your personal bible reading time: **2 Timothy 3:16** All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work

The word of God is a cleansing agent. How do we clean our lives up, how do we overcome addictions, how do we gain the courage to stand, how do we bear more fruit? We get it through reading AND OBEYING God's holy word. **James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.**

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. The branch is more than just connected, really its rooted in the vine.

It's always amazing to me after powerful thunderstorms rip through to see a large, mighty tree cast down and become worthless, yet a smaller, seemingly weaker tree by all outward appearances remains firmly planted.

How can that be? Well it's all about the WIDTH AND THE DEPTH of the roots isn't it?

You and I control the width and depth of our roots in Christ. Nobody else does. And how do our roots in Christ grow deep and wide? Time spent with Him.

ANDREW MURRAY QUOTE?

Let's read verse 4 again.

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. The word "abide" means "to rest or stay." You never see the branches on a vine struggle or strain to grow. An apple is never grimacing.

To bear fruit all the branches have to do is abide-to stay in the vine.

And the same is true for a Christian. It's not up to us to produce spiritual fruit. Our responsibility is to stay connected to the vine.

Yet this is where Christians so often find frustration, because they're trying to produce fruit as if it's up to them. Instead of cultivating their relationship with Jesus, they try to accomplish in the flesh what can only be accomplished in the spirit.

In reality, a branch has little to do with growing grapes. Grapes occur when the branch is properly connected to the Vine.

And we grow by resting and trusting-abiding in Jesus.

I want to encourage you to meet the Savior daily. Let His Spirit supply your power.

But you're well aware, as am I, that abiding never just happens-it's something we must deliberately choose each and every day.

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. It wasn't that the disciples could do no activity without Jesus. They could've been plenty busy without Him. But Jesus is telling His disciples, AND ALL OF US, that we can't do anything of real, eternal value apart from Jesus.

This past week marked the 9 year anniversary of my brothers motorcycle accident, where he stood up in front of a group of strangers, pulled out his concealed carry, and killed himself in front of them.

I don't get back to NY very often, and I haven't seen his grave since I left it that first time. But online you can actually see-you can find anything online. **SHOW PIC 1**

I remember years ago looking at this grave marker, which is literally right next to my moms, I remember focusing in on one thing. The dash on the grave marker. There's the birth date, and the date of death, but in between those dates there's a dash.

One day you and I will stand before our Lord and give an account for what we did during that dash. You don't control your birth date and most likely you don't control your date of death. But we choose what takes place during those dates. **CLOSE PIC 1**

Can we really say we're abiding in Christ this morning? I pray the answer is yes. Because the alternative is heartbreaking, look at verse 6.

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. A branch that's separated is pretty worthless when it comes to future fruit production isn't it?

Notice the progression in verse 6 for the one who doesn't abide: cast out, withered, gathered, thrown, and burned.

This progression is a sober and significant warning of the danger of not abiding.

Notice with me Jesus didn't say, 'If anyone does not bear fruit he is cast out.' Jesus said, **if anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out.** The Lord knows who is abiding, and who is not, even when there may be the appearance of fruit.

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will^[fn] ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. Sometimes I think we can be so fearful of how others have mutilated the gospel by preaching about financial prosperity, that we're tentative about promises like this from God.

I'm sure you've seen the headlines of pastors asking congregations for private jets, saying Jesus wouldn't ride on a donkey today. It's heartbreaking and disgusting to witness these wolves in sheep's clothing.

But verse 7 is very clear. You can ask what you desire and it will be done! But in order for that to happen something must occur first-abiding in Him.

You see if we abide with Christ, if our life's goal every day is to seek Him, and glorify Him, and obey Him, and proclaim Him, my will won't matter anymore.

How I feel won't be my number 1 concern.

How I'm treated by others won't be a focal point of my life anymore.

How I can accomplish my goals won't be my inspiration.

My drive to accumulate things and possessions will naturally give way to an unending hunger to draw near to God.

When we're truly abiding with Him, God's will becomes our priority. When that happens, let's read verse 7 again...

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will^[fn] ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. It's tragic how the world has twisted what it means to be obedient to God. Most

people think if you're obedient it leads to a life that is dull, boring, and uneventful. That's what the world says isn't it?

But that totally contradicts what the bible says. the bible tells us that God's plans are infinitely better than our plans. **Isaiah 55:8-9**
"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.

9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

The same God that created the universe is the one who wants you and I to live the most incredible life, for His glory. And it will be beyond anything we can imagine. But we **MUST ABIDE IN HIM.**

8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. When is God glorified? When we bear much fruit!! God wants, God's desire is for us to bear fruit because He gets the glory!

Did you ever think about how fruit always produces for another to enjoy it? Fruit never gets to partake of the fruit! Yet so often we have an underlying ambition that when we bear fruit, we be able to enjoy it ourselves.

9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. Jesus loved the disciples just as much as God loved Him. I mean how else could you explain the patience of Jesus with Peter and John, and the others? Jesus didn't grab 'em and shake 'em- 'why aren't you getting this?'

But in His love Jesus didn't do that did He? Because that's not His love.

The last thing the world does needs is to celebrate pride. Trying to exalt self and relying upon pride will always result in a person to NOT abide in Christ, because they are searching within themselves, instead of relying upon God.

So much of our worlds problems today are because folks don't recognize the Fathers love for them.

And Jesus takes abiding one step further in verse 9-abide in My love. We're to rest in it, to hold onto His love for us!

But how do we do it? I'm glad you asked:

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.

You and I have free will. And Jesus demonstrates this clearly by saying IF you keep my commandments. Spiritual growth is about abiding and obeying. Love and obedience go hand in hand.

Now a person may say 'if I do keep His commandments, and abide in Him, well what really do I get out of it?'

Verse 11 tells us the result, and we'll end our study this morning in verse 11.

11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. Nowhere in the bible does Jesus promise ease. Nowhere in the scripture does it say you won't have to work hard, to sweat and struggle. It doesn't say people will always love you. But the word of God promises Joy to us when we abide in Christ.

Walter Knight is quoted as saying “Joy is the flag that flies over the castle of our hearts, announcing that the king is in residence today.”

Folks as followers of Christ we are chosen for Joy. However difficult the journey, there is joy because of Jesus.

How can we have such joy in Jesus? **Matthew 11 8 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**

Nehemiah told the repentant Israelites that the joy of the Lord would be their strength **Nehemiah 8:10 Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”**

The early church was characterized by gladness and the joy of the Lord **Acts 13:52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.**

Joy in the Holy Spirit is a distinguishing mark of the kingdom of God **Romans 14:16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.**

In fact, it is our Christian duty to rejoice in the Lord

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

And

1 Thessalonians 5:16 Rejoice always,

In Christ, no matter what our hardships may be, the believer is “filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy” **1 Peter 1: 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen[fn] you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.**

The Christian should be filled with the joy of Jesus, remembering that we will be spending eternity with Him.

But you will only ever experience this joy, if you are abiding, meaning to rest or to stay with Him.

And the verses are clear, to abide with Jesus, we need to keep His commandments-to keep His word.

And to keep His word, we need to know His word.

And to know His word, we need to be in His word.

It's that simple, and that hard.

Remember, the gloomy Christian is at best a walking contradiction. At worst, the gloomy Christian is terrible witness for Christ.