

John 15:1-8

Abide

Image Church // Changes Week 1

Introduction

Well, good morning Image Family, and friends that are joining in this morning!

Hey, really quick here's what I want to ask you to do before we get started, I want you to **take out your phone** and take **a picture or video** of you watching and post it and tag Image Church.

- *Long as you're wearing something appropriate...*

And then we'll share it through our feed...

- *And if you don't follow us on social media, you need to go ahead and do that now!*

We can't gather in person, but it doesn't mean that we're not gathering... Collectively right now we're all doing the same thing this morning, and we want to glimpse of that as best we can so that we can through the technology available to us!

Also, feel free during the sermon to comment in the comments section below! We want to do all we can to facilitate the opportunity to participate together, pushing against the spectating as much as we can!

Alright, well we're going to be hitting pause on the **Love Your Neighbor Series** for now, but we'll be coming back to it in the future... And this morning we're going to be kicking off a new series called **Changes**!

Here's the thing, if we're being honest, all of us want to experience change in our lives in some capacity...

- Case and point: Justin Bieber's new album is called **Changes**
 - *Yummy was def. the mark of true change*

And if we're being real, the truth is, regardless of whether or not you **want** to change, we all need to change...

And if anything, **what's going on in the world around us** should serve as a cause for self-reflection opening our eyes to certain things in our life that need to change...

In 1992 **2 PAC** released a hit single called **Changes**... Where he talks about how he **sees no change**... *And he's talking about a broken cycle of things in society that need to change but haven't... And over and over again he says I see no change* as he highlights that reality...

For some of us, that song characterizes the theme of our lives... We know there needs to be change, **but we see no change!**

See, the one thing that we all have in common, is that **none of us are perfect**... Because of that, we each have qualities about ourselves that we're not crazy about... Areas of our life where we fall short of where we want to be...

- Some of y'all are seeing this in real time in this **quarantine- box in a bunch of sinners under one roof and you're going to have an awakening!**

Or at the very least asking the question: **Is change really possible in my life, and if so, I want to find out how to make it happen?**

- *It's why*

But the question is how do we really change and what does it look like??

This morning I want to hold up for you the answer for real change and how you can experience it in your life starting today...

So, if you have your Bibles go ahead and turn to John 15...

What we're going to see in **John 15** is that **Jesus Himself** is going to lay the foundation for change, showing us the key for how we can experience lasting change in our lives...

And He's going to start by laying the groundwork here in the first **3 verse** that make change possible...

John 15:1-8

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

Now you have to understand the imagery here that comes with what Jesus is saying... We can't miss this because it's huge!

All throughout the OT the vine is a very common symbol for Israel- Israel is God's chosen people- not because there was anything *special* about them, but because God chose them as the mean by which He would reveal Himself to the world...

And every time this **imagery of the vine** was used for Israel in the OT is was always accompanied by the vines failure to produce fruit—in other words the people's failure to follow and obey God— and because of their failure to follow God, and their rebellion, that Gods wrath was coming...¹

So, vine in the OT= judgment...

It's when you understand that, that you see what Jesus is saying here is incredibly shocking... and yet it's very intentional... Jesus is saying that He is the True Vine that produces fruit...

In other words: ***I came to do what you couldn't do.***

Let me give you the first thing that we need to see this morning when it comes to change...

¹ Carson, D. A. (1991). [The Gospel according to John](#) (p. 513).

1. Christ makes change possible

Broken things can't fix themselves...

We live in a society that has a hard time grasping that with is why the *Self-help industry* is a **1 billion dollars a year** industry!

Here's how it works for us:

- **Examples:** Temper, impatience, selfishness, pride, lack of compassion, lack of confidence, lust, racism, jealousy, anger, fear, lying, need to be more loving, lack of spiritual disciplines...
- For some: I need to clean up my life... and we could just keep on going...

And we recognize those things and we want to change them, but they keep coming back over and over again...

- Try to make tweaks to our behavior, try to read a book on it...
 - **Example:** like holding a beach ball under-water

But at the end of the day we're powerless to bring about change in our life *because we're broken, and broken things can't fix themselves...*

- **Might can fire some duct tape on the outside, but you can't fix what's on the inside...**

When Jesus says that He's the **True Vine**, He's saying that He came to fix what's on the inside...

See, we have a sin problem that infects every part of our lives... it's the reason why we're not able to change- We're infected...

And Christ comes...

Romans 5:8 God demonstrates His love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ **died** for us!

In His death, Jesus would take God's Judgment, He would experience the wrath of God— the wrath that we deserved...

But the incredible part of this is that Jesus didn't just stay dead, *not only* did He beat *sin*, but He beat *death*...

Romans 6:23: "The wages of sin is death," Jesus says: "I paid that," "the gift of God is eternal life," Jesus says: "I offer you that!"

See, Jesus is the True Vine and in Him flows life, life now and life for all of eternity.

The question is **do you believe**?! Jesus is the foundation of change, apart from Him is no change... You must believe in Him... And when you do:

2 Corinthians 5:17: **Anyone** who is in Christ is a **NEW CREATION**, the old is gone and the NEW has come!

Change originates in Jesus' work of taking your dead, heart and bringing it to life... You were a slave to sin, and now you're a son or daughter of God... You were lost and wandering and now you are washed and redeemed!

Which gives us context for what Jesus is going to say next...

Verse 2 Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he **removes**, and he **prunes** every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. **3** You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. *Jesus is specifically talking to His true followers who are made clean by believing the words He's spoken to them...* **Verse 4** **Remain** in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it **remains** on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. **5** I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who **remains** in me and I in him produces much fruit, **because** you can do nothing without me. **6** If anyone does not **remain** in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. **7** If you **remain** in me and my words **remain**

in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. **8** My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples.

Ok, so we've seen that **Christ makes Change possible**, and now we see **how change happens**...

Here's the second thing that you need to see this morning...

The second thing you need to see from this passage is:

2. Change happens by remaining in Christ

There's 3 things that I want to highlight that Jesus holds up for us as it relates to this:

Write these down in your notes:

A. Branch removal

God will cut away any branches that do not bear fruit... these are branches that are dead on the inside, they do not have the life of the True Vine running through them...

*If we must think of 'branches' with real contact with Jesus, we need go no further than **Judas Iscariot**.*

There is a persistent strand of New Testament witness that depicts men and women with some degree of connection with Jesus, or with the Christian church, who nevertheless by failing to display the grace of perseverance finally testify that the transforming life of Christ has never pulsed within them.²

If you don't bear fruit, then you do not have the life of Christ in you and according to this passage you are "dead wood,"

This is why some of you don't see change...

Proximity to the things of Jesus doesn't mean the presence of Jesus in you!

² Carson, D. A. (1991). [The Gospel according to John](#) (p. 515).

B. Pruning:

One of the ways that God works to bring about change in your life is through pruning...

Example: Think about a Rose Bush... If you don't prune it, it will grow to the point where it chokes itself to death... Even though it may not seem like it at the time, when you cut it back you are actually helping it become healthier so that it can grow...

God does the same thing with us... He cuts away idols in our lives.

What is an idol? Anything that keeps you from dependence on God.³

- These are not necessarily bad things, they could be good things that we make "god things" ...
 - Money, possessions, job, intimacy, your family, your spouse... **Anything that we are depending on more than God...**

This can be painful because we love our idols and we depend on them, that's why they are idols in our lives...

***Disclaimer:** God's not necessarily going to physically cut away your family or your spouse, but he is going to cut away your **dependence** on them away, and that's hard, when for so long you have looked to them to sustain you and to be your **everything**

Bottom line: when God reconstructs your dependence back on Him it will be difficult...

The reason why God does this is so that we can grow in our holiness, increasing our dependence on Him, that ultimately, we will **produce more fruit...**

I have said this before but **the goal for spiritual growth is not that we become morally better people, it's that we depend on the gospel more!**

We don't want to look back and see that we are better people we want to look back and see that we now rely on the gospel more

Gods purpose in the pruning process is rooted in love so that we would produce more fruit!

When you understand this, it changes your outlook on life where you begin to ask the what is God trying to show me in what I am experiencing?

- **Could he be cutting away an idol in my life??**

When you recognize the pruning process, you are expiring the love of God even though it may not "**feel**" like it because He is cutting away **things** that your dependent on to free you up to depend more on Him!

*The last thing that I will say on this is that **not everything that happen in your life that's painful is God pruning you... The way that you can recognize pruning is by looking to the 3 key things that God has given you:**

- The people of God (the local church)
- The Word of God
- And the Spirit of God

C. Remaining

Jesus says the word **Remain** is said 6 times... Anytime you see repetition in scripture there is a point being made...

The word "**Remain**" in the original language is *meno*: literally means to stay or reside, to lodge...

What is Jesus getting at?? He is saying that growth and change only happens by being continually connected to The Vine, to Jesus, so that His life can flow into us...

So how are we continually **connected** to Jesus? By remembering and believing the gospel... **Gospel** means "**Good News**," the good news of what Jesus has done for you...

³ JD Greear: Sermon. *Living above the ordinary: Real Power*

And it's by abiding in the gospel, by dwelling in the gospel, by making the gospel the center of our lives that we change!

One of the things that we say around here a lot is that ***the gospel isn't just the start of the Christian life, it is the Christian life...***

Or like we said at the beginning, belief in Jesus isn't a one-time thing, it is a continual posture...

Nothing in here says "**do**" ... Jesus specifically says "**remain**" or "**abide**" ... Implying that you actually "do" nothing, you just rest in what already is... The finished work of Jesus...

I know this may feel weird, and sounds weird to us because we're so "**works driven**" always looking for things that we can do... Ways that we can be a good person...

And so many times the church has failed us, because for so long it has held up a rule book and said: "**DO THIS**" ... **for the record we call those "Dodo Sermons" ...**

- **Example:** Stapling roses on a rose bush

Religion says "**DO**" the Gospel says "**DONE**"

The issue is when we focus on what we need to "do," we're assuming that we can fix ourselves, **minimizing the gospel and missing the root of the problem...** Our hearts...

We don't need behavior modifications, we need a heart reconstruction... And the only way that can happen is by believing in Jesus...

The change is a by-product of the gospel...

- Fruit is not something that you manufacture on your own it is the result of the work of Jesus that you are remaining in and the result of you remaining in Him produces fruit...

It is an overflow of the life that Jesus has given you:

- You have experienced forgiveness so you forgive
- Grace because grace was shown to you
- Love because love was given to you when you didn't deserve it
- Selflessness because Jesus gave up Himself for you
- You follow Jesus because of what He has done for you!

Instead of looking in the mirror and **evaluating** the areas where you are weak, the areas of your life that need to change, you need to look in the mirror and ask yourself, is the gospel the center of my life and is it transforming who I am?

The 3rd thing we need to see from this passage:

3. If you're not bearing fruit then you're not connected to the Vine

True belief is proved in the fruit that emerges from your life...

So, if there is no fruit then there is no belief...

This is a warning for those who are not experiencing the transformation power of the gospel

*******VAMP*******

Tim Keller says:

The two signs of being organically connected with two spiritual fruits are love and obedience. The obedience is more like an acid test. Love is an emotion and sometimes it is hard to judge love, but love leads to obedience. When you love somebody, you say to them your wish is my command. When you love somebody and they want something you are excited to get it for them. Your attitude is not, what do you want now! That is the difference between organic Gospel love and mechanical obedience to religion.

Is that true for you? Does that characterize your life?

- Flesh out?

Conclusion

At the end of the day it all come back to the same question we have been asking from the very beginning: ***Do you Believe?!?***

You need to know WHO JESUS IS!! You need to remember that He is the great I AM that purchased your soul... You need to ***remember*** and ***remain***:

You are here today and your saying:

- I am not good enough, I AM
- I am not strong enough, I AM
- My life is a wreck, I AM
- I have doubts, I AM
- My past, I AM
- My marriage, I AM
- My fears, I AM
- My dysfunction, I AM
- I have baggage, I AM

Jesus says whatever you're not, I AM!! Because it is finished...

No longer are you left without an identity, you are mine and I purchased you with my blood!

Outtake:

Verse 2 Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes:

- **Mt 3:10** The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.
- **Mt.7:19** Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So you'll recognize them by their fruit.
- **Mt. 15:13** He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father didn't plant will be uprooted. **14** Leave them alone! They are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both will fall into a pit."

Push against nominal Christianity

- You are Christian by name but it has no implication on the way that you're living...

Some of you claim that you are a Christian but... **You are happily doing the things that Jesus died for...**

- Give Examples...

Example: *If I got hit by a train on the way here...*

Fruit is the product of remaining in Jesus... for some of you there is no fruit... there is no real change... you keep looking for it and trying all kinds of things but you end up back at the same place...

You that need to trust in Jesus today, you need to Believe that He is who He said He is! Do not miss this warning!!!

Example: High level version of Garrett's story... "I am going to stop doing "X" but he would always revert back... never could really change, wanted to but couldn't..."

Then the gospel took root in his life... what a difference that they would could see!