

## Reasons To Follow Jesus John 15:1-6 3.19.2023

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Turn in your Bible to John Chapter 15. We start a new series today called, "Reasons To Follow Jesus" and we look at those reasons for the next six weeks. Jesus and the disciples are in the upper room, and they have finished the Passover meal. During the meal Jesus tells the disciples one of them would betray him and he would be arrested and turned over to the Jewish religious authorities and he would be put to death. Judas, the betrayer has left the room to set the plot in motion.

Though not recorded in the Gospel of John, we know from the other Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, that Jesus took bread and broke it and explained the bread was an example of his body soon to be broken for their sins and the sins of mankind. Jesus, as he took the cup of wine and once again gave an example that the wine represented the blood, that in a few hours that he would be shedding for the sins of them and for all of mankind.

Jesus explained because of the sacrifice he was about to make he would be going away. This brought his disciples to despair, but he encouraged them to, "Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." Jesus told them he would not leave them orphans, that he is sending the Holy Spirit, who would comfort them, help them, teach them and bring to remembrance what Jesus had taught them.

Jesus told them, "If you love me you will keep my commandments, if you love me you will keep my word!" What is his word? Right here! The Bible! This is God's Word! The Bible is the absolute and authoritative truth that pertains to all of life's questions. The Bible has the answers!

The Bible is the absolute truth when it comes to creation detailing how we got here on this earth, why we are here on this earth, what we are to do while we are here on this earth, and it tells us of the one of two places we will go after we die. Where we go depends on whether we have truly repented of our sins and surrendered our life to the Lord Jesus to see him glorified and lifted up, and therefore Heaven! Or, if you have not repented of your sins and truly surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus, then Hell for all of eternity!

The Bible is God's Word that speaks to the truth of marriage, sexuality, gender, and it tells us what sin is and what sin is not, and God's Word shows us our need of salvation and that salvation is provided through Jesus Christ because of his death, burial, resurrection, and his ascension to heaven as Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the father.

Jesus reminds them again in verse 27 that he is not leaving them alone and to be comforted as Jesus says these words.

### ***John 14:27***

***27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. Not as the world gives do I give you. Let not your hearts be troubled neither let them be afraid.***

Now, Jesus feels it is time they leave the upper room as he says, "Rise, let us go from here." But Jesus continues to teach his disciples. Let's see what he is teaching them now. Let's read our verses for today.

### ***John 15:1-6***

***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, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can***

***do nothing. <sup>6</sup> 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.***

We see a couple of transitions going on here. First, as I already said, Jesus has told the disciples, let's go from here. Where are they going? They are leaving the upper room and they are going to make the trek across the Kidron Valley to the Garden of Gethsemane.



It's hard to see but right around 9:00 o'clock, is Herod's palace, then you see where the Upper Room is labeled. They left there and began walking out of Jerusalem. Do you see something interesting there? They walk right by Caiaphas' house. Caiaphas, who was the high priest, and the other Jewish leaders had been seeking to arrest Jesus but wanted to wait because of the Passover feast. Where was Jesus? Right under their noses, as we say, and as the Passover meal ends, Jesus walks right by Caiaphas' house. They couldn't touch him until his time had come.

Here are some pictures to give us an idea of this walk.



This first picture is where Jesus and his disciples would be heading out of Jerusalem.



This is a picture of the Kidron Valley looking back towards Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives.



This is a picture of the Garden of Gethsemane, of where Jesus and his disciples are walking to, and Jesus will be arrested.

As I mentioned there is a transition going on here. They are leaving the Upper Room, and Jesus begins teaching them to prepare them for their task ahead. What is that task? Go and make disciples of all nations! As they are walking, Jesus is reminding them where they will get their faith, where they will get their strength, where they will get their words, are to abide, remain in him, they will produce fruit for the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is also teaching them how they can assess, oh, let's just say it, judge someone's life of whether they need to share the Gospel to this person or not, as well to see if they are one that is falsely professing to follow Jesus Christ.

Jesus uses an analogy of a vine that produces fruit. We believe Jesus is referring to a grapevine. The Kidron Valley now has olive trees planted through out the land. During the 1<sup>st</sup> century and before there were grapevines. Were they walking beside a grapevine full of plump, juicy grapes as Jesus says:

***John 15:1***

***<sup>1</sup> I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.***

Now in no way is Jesus diminishing his deity or his sovereignty with this statement. Jesus is saying, in his humanity that he is going to be submissive and obedient to God the Father. There are many religions and people that say you can find abundant life and even eternal life through them or this ritual or this act or just being good. There is only one person that true life and true eternal life come from and that is Jesus Christ. Remember from John 14:6, ***“I am THE Way, and The Truth, and The Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”***

So, as Jesus and his disciples passed these grapevines, as they were making their walk to the Garden of Gethsemane, did Jesus stop to inspect a few of the branches. As many of you know, when you plant that grapevine, you get that center vine established and then you begin to allow branches to branch out of that center vine.

The center vine gets rooted and begins to take in nutrients from the earth and the life flow comes up through that vine so the new growth of the branches can begin. The vinedresser will take care of the branches to prune or cultivate so fruit will be produced. With Jesus, not only is he the true, center vine, life and eternal life is in and through Jesus! Therefore, Jesus can say these next words in verse 2.

### ***John 15:2***

***<sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.***

Now this is where it may sound a bit confusing. Jesus is talking about every branch that is in me that does not bear fruit he takes away. If a branch is in him, ***“How in the world does that branch not bear some sort of fruit for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or as we may say, for the Kingdom of God?”***

I want to make a specific point as we ponder on that thought. First, as it says in Genesis Chapter 1, God said these words:

### ***Genesis 1:26-27***

***<sup>26</sup> Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.***

### ***Genesis 2:7***

***<sup>7</sup> Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.***

The word for living creature, can mean being, person, or soul. Human beings are different from all other creatures created in that we are an eternal soul. These bodies are just shells, it is the soul that is within these bodies that make us who we are. Because of this soul, we are image bearers of God.

Every person ever born after Adam and Eve were created bears the image of God within them. Every person that has lived, is living, or will live bears his image. But, to make one thing clear! Though everyone bears this image, not everyone is a child of God.

In Chapter 1 of the Gospel of John, it describes exactly how we become children of God.

### ***John 1:12-13***

***12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.***

As we get closer to Easter, Resurrection day, may I remind us that it is only through being convicted of our sin to a godly sorrow that leads us to repenting of our sins, as we look to Jesus, who on the cross bore our sins upon him and paid the debt for our sins that we could not pay, in that he died, and praise be to God, rose from the grave three days later to show he had defeated, sin and death to save us from sin and God's eternal wrath that will come upon sin when Jesus returns.

In that repentance, we surrender our life in a show of our love to Jesus in a willful obedience to his Word and to his direction in our lives to glorify him with our whole being. We open our hands and we say to Jesus, we say these words from the hymn, I Surrender All.

***All to Jesus I surrender  
All to Him I freely give  
I will ever love and trust Him  
In His presence daily live***

With that thought, Jesus continues to make a distinction from those that abide in him and those that don't. Before he does, he has some more words of encouragement, words of assurance for his disciples. Look at verse 3.

***John 15:3***

***<sup>3</sup> Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.***

Jesus is assuring the disciples that they are already abiding in him. Jesus has been pruning them for several years now. Yes, in a about an hour, maybe more, maybe less, they will all scatter as Jesus will soon be arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. It shook their faith, they faltered, but in the end it increased and strengthened their faith.

That is one way that reveals that the disciples and reveal to us that we are abiding in Jesus, when through the tough times in our lives that can shake us, cause us to falter a bit, we get to that point where our faith is strengthened and increased when we say we surrender all to you Lord Jesus.

As I mentioned Jesus is describing the distinction between those that are abiding in him and those that are not so the disciples can recognize them. Let's read verses 4 through 6 again.

***John 15:4-6***

***<sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> 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.***

So how do we determine that we are abiding in Jesus and if we aren't. Remember from verse 2 Jesus said every branch that is in me bears fruit he will prune it so it will bear more fruit. This branch, this person, has life giving nutrients if you will flowing through their life. A true follower of Jesus not only abides in Jesus, but Jesus abides in them.

It is an intimate relationship. When we repent the Holy Spirit of God takes up residence in our life and we will be obedient to the Lord, and we will want to obey. Let's look at two verses one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament that details this very well.

***Ezekiel 36:26-27***

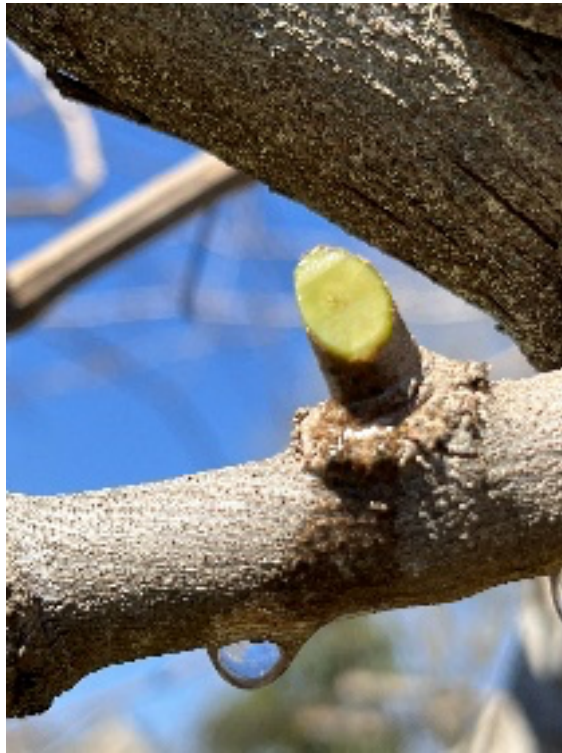
***<sup>26</sup> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put with you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.***

***1 Corinthians 6:19***

***Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?***

The Holy Spirit and we say Jesus Christ is the life that now lives within us and that will be evident of the fruit that is produced through our lives. Then the Lord will prune us, one reason to make us produce more fruit, but also to keep us humble. Does pruning always feel good? I brought some pruners today.

Personally, I don't believe whatsoever a tree, vine or bush can feel. But think about it. If it could do you think it hurts when this set of pruners clamps down on it? What is the reason the branch that is abiding in Jesus gets pruned? To produce more fruit! How do we know it has produced fruit and can produce fruit again?



Last Saturday, as I was pulling weeds, Lori was pruning our grapevines. As I watched her the Lord impressed upon my heart to go to where she was and see if he could show me something. This is what I saw.

See the sap that is coming out of that branch Lori just pruned? That shows that that branch had produced fruit and will produce fruit again. I believe it to be very important that we detail what this fruit is and how it should look in our lives.

Can we use Scripture? I think that is a good place to go to see the fruit that we are to produce.

## Love

- ***Love the Lord your God, with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself.*** Matthew 22:37-40, Deuteronomy 6, and Leviticus 19:18
- ***Love the Word of God: Psalm 1:1-2, Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.*** Jesus said in John 14:15; ***“If you love me you will keep my commandments!”***

## Pray

- You will desire to commune with God through prayer and you will intercede for others to be saved, to be healed, to have comfort in suffering. ***Pray without ceasing, 1 Thessalonians 5:17***

## Give of your resources

- ***Give of your resources cheerfully and without grumbling – 2 Cor. 9:6-7***

## Have a desire to gather together with a body of believers.

- ***Hebrews 10:24-25 – And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.***

## Something close and dear to my heart. You will have a desire to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ

- ***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Act 1:8***

If we abide in Jesus those things I just mentioned will be fruit that comes from our lives. I am not talking about a religiosity, boxes to check off. I am talking about lifestyle, I am talking about desire, passion, willingness, I am talking about taking up our cross daily and following our master, the Lord Jesus Christ!

What is the final hope for those that truly abide with Jesus? What have we learned from John 14:1-6? A room in the house of God the Father!

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Sadly, there is the other side to this coin. There are those that do not abide in Jesus. They have no desire for the things of God.

1. There is no passion for God’s Word.
2. There is no desire to gather together with other believers.
3. There is no desire to pray.
4. There is no desire to proclaim the Gospel because they have not been saved by the Gospel.

What is even more sad is that there are so many that portray or profess that they do abide in Jesus. They do read the Bible, they do come to church, they do pray, they even participate in outreaches and events to proclaim the Gospel. They know a lot about Jesus but they do not know Jesus in an intimate way that they have truly surrendered to the Lord Jesus and their life is all about Jesus and not about them.

Jesus as we will read has a warning for these branches that are not producing fruit. Jesus gave warning to these false believers as well, Look at the screens:

**Matthew 7:21-23**

***<sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’***

As the disciples are walking with Jesus and Jesus is continuing to teach them. Was there someone that was running through their minds? If not, maybe there should have been. Does anyone come to your mind that was in that upper room? Judas!

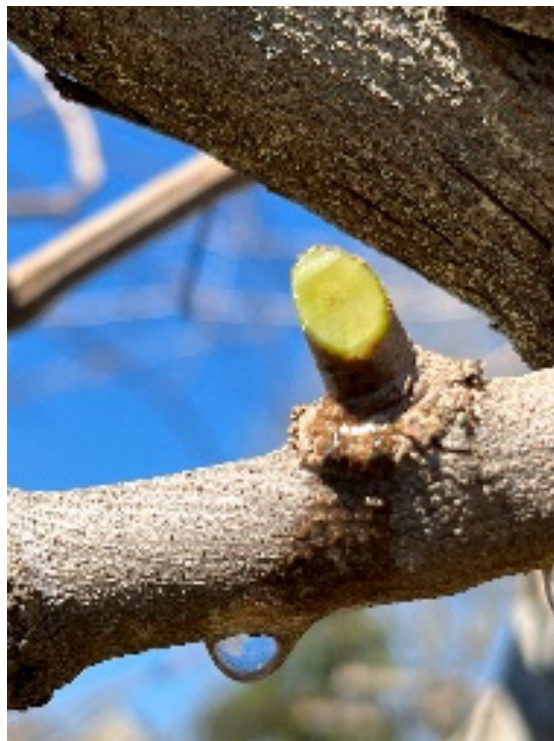
Judas had been with Jesus and the disciples for several years now, but he became the betrayer of the Lord Jesus Christ. In a few short hours he will be coming with a band of soldiers to the Garden of Gethsemane and will betray Jesus with a kiss.

At the Passover meal the disciples were still believing that Judas was one of them. In John 13:27 as Jesus gave that morsel of bread to Judas, it says that Satan entered him. Satan cannot enter, if I may use our southern vernacular, a born again, blood bought, regenerated follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan can harass us but he can not have us.

Here is that warning again for the branch that does not abide in Jesus.

**John 15:6**

***<sup>6</sup> 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.***



As you look at this picture. Are you abiding in Jesus? Are you producing fruit? Have you been pruned and are bearing more fruit. You see there were other branches on that grapevine Lori was pruning. This is one of them (Showing dead branch). It was attached to that center vine, but it was dead. This branch was not going to produce any fruit.



It had gotten hard, just as people harden their hearts against God and because of a prideful, obstinate heart there comes a time where God cuts them off. You know what we did with these branches? We made a pile of them and then I started a fire and burned them. I want you to look at this branch again. I want us to look at the picture again as well.

Let's say these represent people. Are you abiding in Jesus, are you saved, do you have a life that is producing fruit that is evident of abiding in Jesus, with the hope of eternal life with Jesus? Or are you dead in your sins and trespasses? Where you will be cast into the lake of fire, called Hell, and will experience eternal death. This series, called, "Reasons to Follow Jesus", and there are many reasons. The reason to follow Jesus is to be saved from our sins, to be saved from ourselves, to be saved from the wrath of God, to be saved from Hell.

One last time, a look at the picture, a look at the branch. Which are you? If you are this branch there is still hope for you today! Repent!