

John 15:7-11, "Joy Is Following Jesus"

3.26.23



See this picture. That's a bunch of children and parents at the soccer field on Saturdays and we could use 4 more folks to be golf cart drivers. You need to be over 18. Contact Pastor Dale.

Keep looking at the screens...you will remember last week, Pastor Dale shared about this picture...

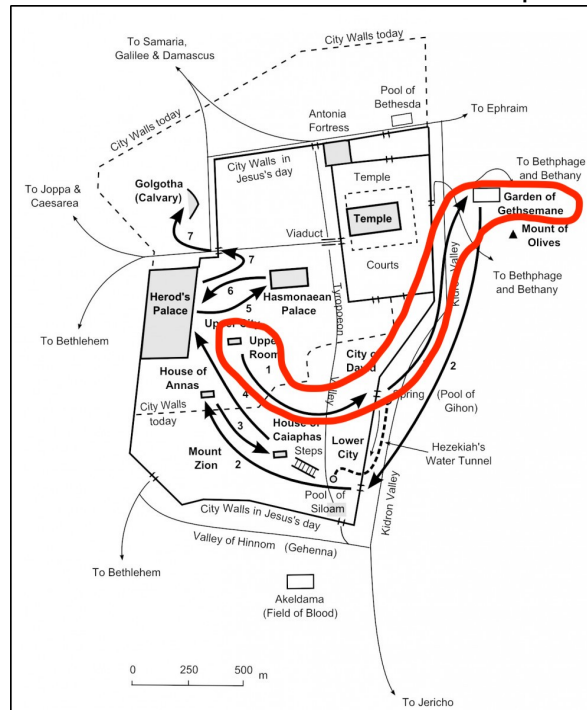


That's where Lori cut off (pruned) a branch and the sap, (or the life of the VINE), is visibly flowing through the vine. See the drip of sap under the cut? You will remember it's Jesus who is the vine and we are the branches, while God, the Father, is the vine dresser, the One who cares for the vineyard.

We also learned last week there are two kinds of branches. One kind produces fruit and another kind doesn't. Those that produce fruit are the branches that ABIDE...or remain attached to the vine...the ones that don't produce fruit, are cut off, thrown into a pile and burned.

Now church family, why is Jesus talking about branches and vines...abiding and remaining versus those who don't? Remember who left the upper room quickly? Jesus had literally said... "Get out and go do what you are going to do." JUDAS. And where is Judas today? He's in Hades...he's burning...he's a branch that never produced the fruit of salvation AND what those disciples were getting ready to see was Judas coming to Jesus with a band of soldiers in Gethsemane. And Jesus is preparing them for what is going to appear very odd to them.

Now remember, all of this is taking place in Jerusalem. Jesus and the disciples have left the upper room and are headed to the Garden of Gethsemane. See the map we're using...



They're making their way to Gethsemane, which it seems was perhaps a common occurrence for Jesus to go there and pray. They're walking through the Kidron Valley...see the picture I took when I was there in 2007:



As they walk, Jesus is sharing what we're reading here in John 15. So, Judas has left the upper room, possessed by Satan and gone to let the chief priests and Temple guard know where Jesus can be arrested. And at some point, it would seem the other eleven would look around and say, "Where's Judas?" At this point, they have no idea that Judas has defected...turned on Jesus...but, when they see him again...in a matter of minutes...they're going to see him with soldiers who have torches and swords.

Do you see now why Jesus is talking about branches that don't remain...don't abide? Judas was attached visibly to Jesus, but it was a superficial, temporary attachment. It was an attachment with no life...he looked like the real deal...but, because He abandoned Jesus, he showed he wasn't. He would therefore be cut off, discarded to the "dead pile" of branches that produced no fruit.

What a sad, sad reality for Judas. He thought money was enough to betray his Master...but, in the end this was his demise.



He hung himself and from that moment, the moment his life ebbed out of his body, he's been in torment: no peace, no comfort, no joy! BUT, for the one who abides in Jesus, we're going to see today, THERE IS JOY!! The title of our message today is: "Joy **IS** Following Jesus."

John 15:7-11

⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I 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 be in you, and that your joy may be full.

There's a word that we read in those five verses five times...and we saw that word four times last week...so that's 9 times in 11 verses... I believe Jesus is trying to get something across to us, don't you? The word: see it...

Abide (Greek: menō): to stay, to remain or to continue.

It's a command. To say the word: "Abide" is a command. It's what you tell a dog: STAY. If the dog stays, he's being obedient, right? That means the dog is trusting the owner. As followers of Jesus we STAY, REMAIN...it's the exact opposite of what Judas did. So, Jesus is walking with His Apostles to His place of betrayal (Gethsemane) and He's preparing them...don't do what Judas is doing! Abide in me...stay in me, remain in me, continue in me.

And church, what have we seen throughout the Gospel of John...those who haven't. Superficial followers of Jesus. Remember John 6. Jesus had fed 20,000 to 25,000 people by making food from 2 fish and 5 barley cakes of bread...and the people were back the next day wanting more. But, Jesus said, "No...all you get going forward is ME!" And they left in droves...the clippers came out and they were whacked from the vine...verse 66, says, "After this MANY disciples turned back and no longer walked with him." They left. They did not abide. They did not remain. They did not stay.

All throughout Jesus' ministry He said, "Count the cost." In other words, "You better understand what you're signing up for." Jesus said, "To be one of my followers, you'll have to die to yourself...totally trust in ME!" Because that's what branches do...they totally trust in the vine. Because it's being attached to the vine...where the branch gets life...see it again...



It's the vine that has the sap or life in it (see the drop) and it's when we're attached to the vine that we'll produce what? Fruit. That's verse 7.

John 15:7

⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Now you may remember that we've talked about verse 7 when we studied John 14, verses 13-14. Go back and look at those two verses:

John 14:13-14

¹³ Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me^[e] anything in my name, I will do it.

What did we learn... We learned this doesn't mean if you just tack "in Jesus' name," at the end of a prayers, you're going to get anything you want? No. It's not some kind of a formula. Remember, it's this: "If we ask anything that's consistent with the Father's will...that's what I'll do." In other words, we're asking that which is going to be best for the Kingdom of God and that which will glorify the Father. That's what He answers.

Let's look at it from the other side of the coin. Let's say you're not a true branch, you're not saved. Well, then God guarantees no answer to your prayers. You have no promises, no assurances. It's just words in the air...they never reach the throne. God has no obligation to answer the unbeliever. There's only one prayer that God will answer from an unbeliever and that's the prayer of repentance and calling on the name of Jesus to be saved! That's it! The rest are just floating words in the air!

John 15:8

⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

I've said it so many times and I'll say it again: God cares about what we do. God wants us to be righteous...to be like His Son... He wants us to live holy, pure lives... He does not want us living in sin and making excuses for sin and justifying sin. That's what a lot of Christians do...they sin and

justify it... “Well, no one’s perfect.” “At least I’m not like so-and-so.” “Oh, He’ll forgive me.” Yes, He will if you’re truly repentant. Repentance, true repentance is NOT just being sorry for what you did...it’s crying out to God saying, “Please help me to hate that sin as much as you do...because it killed your son!” True repentance is killing sin...not excusing it! Are you excusing sin today?

If you are...that’s where you’re abiding. Let me say it this way: **we’re all abiding somewhere**. Where are you abiding? With sin or with Jesus? Where are you letting your mind go...where does your mind abide? In pain. Anger. Unforgiveness. Bitterness. Your past. Where is your mind abiding...oh, it’s true: **we’re all abiding somewhere!**

Jesus is saying: “My Father wants you to bear MUCH fruit and it’s that fruit that proves you’re my disciples.” That’s Philippians 1. Paul said:

Philippians 1:9-11

⁹And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

That’s fruit bearing...and fruit bearing is righteousness...right living...and the world sees that and other believers see that and CAN TELL WHAT WE ARE. You know when we get saved and the Holy Spirit takes up residence inside of us, we know we will produce fruit. That’s the guarantee we have as believers, because we’re attached to the vine (the Lord Jesus) and it’s from Him that LIFE flows into us which causes us to bear fruit. Watch Luke 6...

Luke 6:43-45

⁴³“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit,⁴⁴ for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

What are you producing? You say, “I’m here, aren’t I.” Well, good for you, that doesn’t make you a Christian. I mean, I’m glad you’re here...but, you could live in a garage, but that don’t make you a car. No, we’re looking for fruit...spiritual fruit. You say, “What is that?” I’m glad you asked: it’s the fruit of the Spirit (we’ve been over this many times). See it...



Church, fruit bearing is not a matter of human effort. It's about surrender. You have to surrender to Jesus to show love...you have to surrender to Jesus to show kindness when someone is being mean...you have to surrender to show self-control when you want to give someone a piece of your mind. We have to surrender and that's what it means to **abide in Christ**,



it's from Him that we have the ability to do these hard things as believers. Church, this simple, it's all about focusing on Jesus. Remember, He said, "Follow me." That means we are to act like Him...and to do that...we have to focus on Him...and that means to read His Word, surrender to the Holy Spirit, come to church...focus on Him. And as we focus on Jesus, we're literally becoming like Him and when we do that, we'll act like Him, and that's because we'll be **ABIDING IN HIM!**

Church, we've got a big problem in our day...so many people say they're Christians; and yet, they act like anything but a Christian, according to the Word of God. Let me show you:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous^[b] will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,^[c] ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Christians are to act like Jesus...and Jesus didn't go around having sex outside of marriage with women...or men (in homosexual acts) for that matter. Jesus is not thief...He's not greedy, He's not a drunk...and yet, people claim to be Christians who live those lifestyles. That's not bearing fruit from the vine of Jesus. That can't be THEIR IDENTITT. I'm sorry, they're plugged into a different vine...because it sure isn't Jesus!

Listen, when you're bearing fruit as a follower of Jesus, **you're not the explanation for your life, Jesus is**. When people look at your life and try to see how you could possibly be living in such a way that's so kind, good, peaceful, patient...like Jesus...they'll know it's not you, but Him! Verse 9...

John 15:9

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

What's the motivation for living for Jesus? LOVE! That was His motivation for obeying His Father and that's our motivation. Verse 10, that's why Jesus says this...

John 15:10

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.

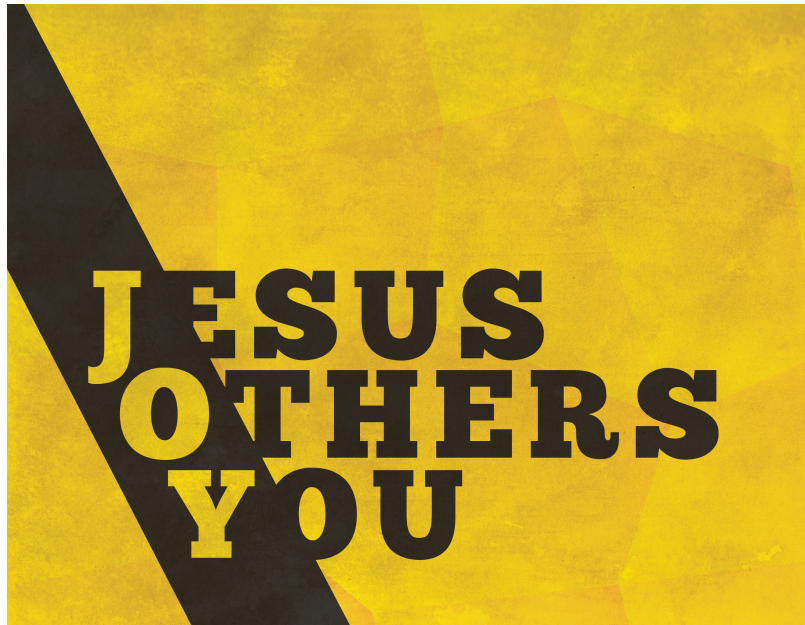
Never forget that Jesus showed us how to do all of this. He set the example. He obeyed His Father. You see, the more LIKE Christ we become, the more of God's love we will experience. Remember, **obedience equals love and love equals obedience** and so, if you're showing love and obedience to Jesus, you are "an abiding branch." You have that eternal life (sap) flowing through you. **And if that's the case...guess what you will have? JOY!**

John 15:11

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

These things...what things is Jesus talking about? Everything He's spoken to them on this walk...literally everything He's said in the upper room. Church, if you want a synopsis of Jesus' three-year ministry, just read John 14, 15, and 16. These three chapters describe how to live life and to do so with JOY!

Do you have joy? Be honest? Remember, joy is not happiness. It's better. It's the acrostic:



Jesus, Others, You. How is that order in your life? If you are at the top of the list, you will not have joy...and even if you are a philanthropic, giving person and just give everything away to others...you still won't have joy...joy only comes by putting Jesus first.

Church, the Christian life and bearing fruit is not about legalism, it's not about working our way into heaven...it's not about accumulating enough good deeds to get there...it's about following a person, Jesus and following what He has written down for us (via the Bible) on how we're to follow Him. To have joy is about loving Jesus...surrendering to Jesus! Have you? If you have...you will have joy. Watch the screens...we'll be to John 16:22 in about 6 weeks, but I want you to see it now.

John 16:22

²² So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

Brothers and sisters, everything we have from Jesus is eternal. We have eternal life that's permanent...we have joy that is permanent, not based on our circumstances... in Jesus, in the vine, as His branch we have permanent protection and permanent care from Him. For He said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you, I'll be with you till the end of time." That comforts me...because that means He will be with me...with you through all that's hard, horrible and terrible...all that's good and in the midst of it all, we'll have joy.

OR, there's the Judas alternative. you have an alternative. You can turn and do what Judas did. Do you think John had Judas in mind when He was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this down:

1 John 2:19

¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

So sad: Judas walked away. Oh...please remain...abide...continue...loving our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...longing to hear the words (one day) "Well done, good and faithful servant!" And that WILL BE JOY!