

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (FOR FEBRUARY 28, 2021)

For Community Groups or Personal Study

This past month we have been exploring what it means for Grace of Christ to be the "Gathered Church." Why do we gather together? What does God intend for us when we meet together?

When we gather we reflect on the goodness and faithfulness of God. When we gather we receive the promises and assurances of God. We offer our thanks to God. We affirm our desire to live in gratitude for all God has done for us. We support and encourage each other. We depart on Sundays to live as His disciple: following Jesus, loving Him, doing what Jesus did, serving others.

The Gathered Church does not end with the Benediction on Sunday morning. That's only the beginning. Throughout the week, whether individually or with others, we represent His Gathered Church.

This morning Bill is focusing on the importance of being plugged in to, connected to, Jesus (John 15), as His Gathered Church.

How can we be His Gathered Church if we are not continually connected to Him, and through Him to each other? Being His disciple requires us to: listen to, learn from, and follow Jesus. With the Bible as our guide, with others helping us along the way, with the work of the Holy Spirit within us, our lives are reshaped to reflect the life of Jesus, our Savior and Master.

At Grace we are His Gathered Church both within our walls (Gracia de Cristo and Grace of Christ no longer co-tenets but one church), and also beyond our walls.

2021.CHURCH: THE GATHERED CHURCH

SERMON PASSAGE: JOHN 15:1-4

"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."

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

This morning's Bible passage comes from the book of John. John was a dear friend and disciple (student) of Jesus. For three years John followed Jesus. During those years he watched the impossible happen: the blind received new sight, the deaf could hear again, the sick were healed, the tormented found peace, the broken hearted were healed, the sinner forgiven, the dead returned to life, the love and plan of God revealed. All of that is contained in his book, the gospel of John.

Chapter 15 captures another of Jesus' famous parables: the parable of the vine and the branches. In language that engaged His disciples, hours before He was betrayed and condemned, Jesus spoke of the importance of remaining connected to Him.

- 1. Picture the setting of this parable: a vineyard in the middle of growing season. What does it take to grow grapes?

- 2. Why do you think Jesus used the image of vines and branches in this teaching? How does your knowledge of vines and growing grapes help you understand the meaning of this parable?

- 3. Do you learn best from theories and lists or from stories and parables? Explain.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- 4. Identify the various parts mentioned in the parable: Who is the vine? The branches? Who cares for the vineyard?
- 5. In this parable what is the only requirement for those who desire to grow good fruit? (verse 4)
- 6. What happens to the branches that bear no fruit? What about those branches that do bear fruit? (verse 2)

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

- 7. What is your current relationship with the vine (Jesus)?
- 8. What kind of fruit are you producing right now? What kind of fruit do you want to be producing in your life and in your relationships?
- 9. Are you abiding with, remaining with, connected to, Jesus? What are ways you can get more connected to Jesus?

Notes: _____

Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a minute or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don't know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray. In your prayer ask God to help you trust Him. Ask Him to forgive you for trying to live your life apart from Him. Ask God to help you stay connected to Jesus. Ask Him to help you love and follow Jesus, and love and serve others. He will help you (us).