

Abide – The Abiding Life

1/10/21

John 15:1-13

Sunday AM

Last Sunday we kicked off 2021 w/ a challenge from Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount to *seek first His kingdom and righteousness* – that is... we're to make the priority of our lives seeking first God's **control over us** and His **character w/in us**.

I am convinced, this is only possible if we know Christ as Savior and abide w/ Him as our Lord.

W/ this in mind, I want to begin a series of lessons on what it means to live an **abiding** life. What it means to walk in intimate fellowship w/ God on a daily basis.

Most of you know my story/conviction on this issue. After coming to Christ and being discipled well, **I lost Jesus at church**. I went from thriving w/ God to barely surviving in my religion. It was no one's fault but my own, but I got so caught up in **doing** church; I lost my sense of **being** a child of God. I'd become an expert at serving but remained a novice at abiding.

The parents of Jesus lost Jesus at church, and they are not the last ones to lose Him there. *Vance Havner*

As I was struggling w/ my call to ministry, one night outside Santa Fe, NM, God put a spiritual 2/4 up to the side of my soul to help me to see how far out of alignment my life had gotten playing church.

I won't bore you w/ the details, but I will say, that what I learned that evening thru the analogy of a dance is that God is far more concerned about our **connection** w/ Him than He is our **activity** for Him. ***Our faith is not defined by doing but by being.***

Isn't that what we learned last week in the story of Mary/Martha. Remember Jesus' words to a busy and frazzled Martha – *Martha, you're worried/upset about many things, but few things are needed – or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.*” Luke 10:41-42

Mary had chosen **being** over **doing** and **intimacy** over **activity** – and so must we if we're going to **abide**.

It's vital to realize that abiding is more than having Jesus as Savior. Abiding is living connected w/ God under the influence of the H.S. surrendered to Him.

In **John 15**, we find a familiar story involving Jesus and the disciples that's often mistaught/misunderstood – yet it's a critical passage that we must understand and apply to our lives if we're to live an abiding life.

SET – Jesus and the (11) disciples have just left the upper room where they shared the Last Supper. They begin the ½ mile walk down Mt. Zion toward the Kidron Valley and the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus would be arrested. W/in the next (12) hrs, Jesus would be tried, tortured, and nailed to a Roman cross.

As they make the journey in the light of a Passover full moon, meandering thru the vineyards outside the Temple walls, I can imagine Jesus stopping at one of the grapevines to offer a critical final teaching.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean b/c of the word I have spoken to you. Abide in me, as I also abide in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are

like a branch that's thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:1-8

Here in His final, **I Am** discourse – Jesus not only declares once again that He's God in the flesh, but He expresses a fundamental teaching regarding living in communion w/ God – ***we must abide!*** So, using the allegory of a grapevine, Jesus offers a powerful picture of the Christian life thru 4 characters:

First, **Jesus** identifies Himself as the vine – the very source of our spiritual lives.

Next, **God the Father** is the vinedresser/gardener – that is, He's the one who tends the garden by cutting, pruning, and lifting so every branch produces fruit.

The **branches** represent you/me. As a branch attached to the vine (showing that we are in Christ – saved) we either produce fruit or we don't produce fruit.

Finally, there's the ***fruit***. The fruit represents the nature of Jesus in us living thru us.

Sidenote – the word ***fruit*** appears 64 times in the N.T. always referring to a quality/activity of character b/c ***fruit is the outward expression of our inner nature***. So, if I see an apple hanging on a tree, I know it's an apple tree; if I see a peach hanging, it's a peach tree.

The interesting miss w/ this passage is that people often focus on *being fruitful* instead of on abiding. It reminds me of **Matthew 4:19** – *Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men*. So often in this text, we focus on being a **fisher of men**, but the emphasis really is on following Jesus so that He can make us what He wants and needs us to be. The same is true here in John 15. We don't bear the fruit thru our actions/words, our calling is to abide. When we abide, God in us bears His character and fruit thru us.

I The **PRINCIPLE** of Abiding

abide (*meno*) to remain; it's to live in alignment under His authority. It's to be grafted into intimacy thru salvation so the source of your lives is the H.S.

When Jesus said, 'Abide in me' He meant, 'Cling to me. Stick fast to me. Live your life in close/intimate communion w/ Me. Cast your whole weight on Me. Never let go your hold on me for a moment. J.C. Ryle

Abiding in Christ is all about cultivating and enjoying the most important relationship/friendship in your life. It's embracing/accepting that apart from Him you're nothing and that also, you can do nothing – instead of thinking you're something and can do anything.

Abiding isn't measured by how much you know about your Bible, how good you are, or how long you spend each day in prayer. In abiding, it's all about seeking, longing for, thirsting after, and waiting on so that you can know, experience, see, taste, touch, and hear God in your life. It is engaging to enjoy.

Think of **Psalm 42:1-2** – *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.*

Abiding is all relational. It requires a submissive seeking that desires God over the things of God.

II The **PRACTICE** of Abiding

Throughout the Scriptures, there are a number of texts that speak to the necessity of living an abiding life:

Galatians 5:16 says – *Walk in the Spirit and you will not seek to gratify the desires of the flesh.*

Colossians 3 says – *Since, then, you have been raised w/ Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

Instead, put to death everything motivated by idolatry so that you can be clothed w/ H.S. who'll produce in you the character/nature of Christ thru compassion, kindness, humility, patience, gentleness, and love.

I want to offer a few tips to seeking an abiding life:

1 **SEEK** God and not His Benefits

Too often, we treat God like were God and He's not. We want Him to be our spiritual sugar daddy who takes care of all of our whims/wishes.

But as we discussed last week – our priority must be to seek Him and not His blessings/benefits – or even our own agenda. **The priority is intimacy and not information.**

Intimacy is **into-me-you-see**. That is, the intent of seeking God is experiencing transparency w/ Him. It is to know Him and to be known by Him.

2 Make Quality **TIME** for God Every Day

We're going to take about this in greater detail next Sunday, but there's no greater need in our lives than to commune and hear from God on a daily basis.

Too often, if we have one-on-one time w/ God, the mindset behind it is *a verse a day will keep the devil away*. But this isn't what a QT is about. A QT is about sharing intimacy/transparency w/ God and aligning our lives w/ Him on a daily basis.

W/out my heart laid at your feet, it always tries to take your seat. In this silence I sit still and stay, for there will be much noise today. In the quiet I adore you, before I set my hands to do; in this silence, stillness all alone, I prepare my heart to be Your throne. *Gilmour*

3 God's Will Begins w/ God's **WORD**

Logos and **rhema** – God speaks to us thru the general counsel of God's Word to speak directly into our lives to guide our steps and to lead us to His will for us.

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

words (*rhema*) revelation

In the Bible there are (3) words about the prompting and voice of God – **logos** – **rhema** – **hupakouo**.

logos refers to the full counsel of the Bible applicable to everyone. It's God's truth for life/salvation. In the Bible, we find everything we need for life/godliness. It reveals to us the truth of God, the way of salvation, and the guidelines of a disciple's life.

For the word (logos) of God is alive/active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts/attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

The logos is God's tool to teach us right/wrong, good from evil, and God from not of God. It's truth to live.

rhema – is truth realized by revelation special to you. It's God speaking **logos** directly into your life thru the H.S. to influence your daily life. It's God speaking directly into your situation to guide you to His will.

*Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the **word** (rhema) of God. Romans 10:17*

4 Abiding Always Leads to **OBEYING**

The abiding life always trusts and obeys the Lord's leading – *If you love Me, you'll keep my commands.* Consider **John 10:27** – *My sheep **hear** (akouo) my voice. I know them, and they follow (obey) me.*

hupakouo – is truth embraced/lived. The word means to **hear under** – calling us to follow God's leading in our lives. It's our response to **logos/rhema** – it's what we do when God speaks – we **obey**.

Oversimplified – God gives us **logos** that we might **KNOW** Him, **rhema** that we might **HEAR** Him, and **hupakouo** that we might **OBEY** Him.

John 15 reveals the greatest secret about the Christian life. I've learned that I can't live the Christian life unless God in lives thru me. My submission is key.

Major Ian Thomas served in the British Army during WWII. He was a decorated hero who received the flag of surrender from the Germans. Thomas was also a perfectionist, a soldier's soldier who lived strictly by army regulations. After the war, he set out to devote this same sense of obedience/perfection to his pursuit of God. Determined to be a perfect Christian, he was often frustrated b/c he continually found himself unable to be Christ-like in his actions/reactions.

This human pursuit led Thomas to the edge of spiritual burnout – exhausted and embarrassed by his inability to do anything for God, he finally fell on his face before the Lord, broken and humbled.

In his book, *The Indwelling Life of Christ*, he described his conversation w/ God. He wrote, "The Lord said to me, 'For (7) yrs, w/ utmost sincerity you have been trying to live for Me, on my behalf, the life I have been waiting for (7) yrs to live thru you... You have been busy trying to do for Me all that only I can do thru you.'" He wrote, "From that day, I learned to say 'Lord Jesus, I can't. You never said I could; but You can, and always said You would. That is all I need to know'. From that moment life became the adventure that God always intended it to be."

Maybe this is where we need to start today. "Jesus, I can't. You never said I could. You can. You always said you would!"

Abiding in Christ means to being one w/ Him by faith. It's living in conscious dependence upon Him, recognizing that it is His life, His power, His wisdom, His strength, and His ability operating in/thru us that enables us to live according to His will. We do this by surrendering the throne of our lives to Him, and by faith drawing upon His resources to live a supernatural, holy fruitful life.