

Whosoever Will 8-2-26

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Good morning. Today we're going to be looking at John chapter fifteen. We're going to be talking about the true vine. We're going to be looking at the very last of Jesus's great I am statements in the book of John. At the end of John chapter fourteen, Jesus concluded by saying, "Get up and let's go from here." So now they're on the move to their final destination, which of course is the Garden of Gethsemane. The next two chapters are going to record that journey. They walked and they talked that evening. As they walked, perhaps they passed through some vineyards. They possibly walked past the temple, which was famous for its beautiful golden vine decor. For whatever reason, Jesus is prompted to tell them a parable, and he chooses again, something very familiar. ∴ He chooses a vine and branches.

It is followed by his great "I am" statement, "I am the vine," is followed by a rather lengthy dissertation about living the Christian life. Like many of his stories, it's very simple. The elements were those things that anyone could have understood, especially the disciples. They're the only ones hearing this particular message. In this case, it is agricultural. The vine was a very common theme running through the Bible, and it actually has three tenses to it ∴ In the past tense, the vine always represented the nation of Israel. If, you remember when the spies went into the land before they were banished to the wilderness, They came back with massive clusters of grapes so big that they were carrying them on poles between their shoulders. God eventually transplanted them into that land, and he gave them everything they needed to grow both as a people.

To grow their needs, to grow their food, all the things that they needed. That it was a lush and wondrous land. But unfortunately, the vine Israel produced wild grapes, rebellious grapes. The final blow ∴, the owner sent his son Jesus to the vineyard, and they crucified him. So Israel had to deal with this. And today, they're still paying a great price for that rebellion. They are still on the shelf ∴. God has turned his favor to the Gentile nations. And eventually he will return his favor to Israel, but not yet. They are still paying a great price for having killed and rejected the owner's son. In the present tense, the vine represents Jesus Christ. He is the true vine. He is completely honest. He is completely true. We are his branches. We depend on him for our every need, and he provides everything that we need to be successful victorious Christians, just as he provided everything in the land.

That Israel needed, He provides everything that we need also. But there is a future tense to the story of the vine. In the future tense, the vine represents the evil world system. And we've talked many times about it in the Bible. The Bible just says "the world." And it is the evil world system. It is everything that is opposed to God. It is everything that opposes what God stands for. In the future, this evil world system, of course, is going to be headed by the Antichrist. In Revelation 14, John talks about this final great harvest of the grapes. He says the grapes are ripe with evil, with deceit and with oppression.

The final battle in the Bible, of course, is the standoff between God and mankind. It takes place in the battle that's called the Battle of Armageddon. It takes place in the Valley of Megiddo right outside the city of Jerusalem. Some believe it was that way to spare the city of Jerusalem.

In the book of Revelation, John describes the horror, the aftermath of this battle of Armageddon. It says the blood will flow for two hundred miles to the depth of a horse's bridle. Two hundred miles was literally the length of the nation of Israel from north to south. The depth of a horse's bridle is symbolism ;. It's talking about just how awful the bloodshed is. The, If you remember from our previous discussions, it really is no battle. God simply speaks the word and the enemy is destroyed. That's where the bloodshed comes from. There is no battle. God simply destroys the enemy, But it is this one final overwhelming judgment of sinful, unrepentant mankind, and it talks about Him pressing out the grapes of wrath in the wine press. So, that's the final description of The Vine in the Bible, and it is future even for us today.

There are four players we find in this story. There's the vine, which is Jesus. There are the branches, which are us, His children, the believers. There is a vine dresser, which is God. And, the last thing is the fruit of the vine ;. It is the evidences of our salvation. When we get to the book of James, We'll talk about the works that we do that are evidence of the fact that we have been saved. And because we are saved, we want to be fruitful; We want to Show evidence of our salvation. The story begins in chapter fifteen, verse nine. It says, "Just as the Father has loved me, I also have loved you. Remain my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain my love." Just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain His love. The word "remain" here is a word we're very familiar with; it's abide, it's dwell to stay.

The same idea of John 14:2, "Abide in Me." Abiding places, dwelling places. He makes a permanent residence in our hearts when we are saved. So we are the branches. We are the branches of all time. Every believer that has ever believed, Whether Jewish or Gentile through all the ages becomes some of these branches that are grafted into the true vine. But remember also, branches cannot reproduce themselves. Branches cannot create life. Only God can do that. And in the human sense, only God can do that through the Holy Spirit. Christ and His children are totally inseparable, like this image of the bride and the bridegroom, like the image of the sheep and the shepherd. The one cannot exist without the other. The vine has to have branches. ; branches have to have vine in order to be fruitful.

In order for the branches to abide, to continue, to remain. It's an expression that he uses really three times in John chapter 15. To remain in fellowship with him is what he's talking about. To remain immersed in his word, to rely on his word daily for our guidance, for our counsel. But not only to hear his word but be doers of it, to obey his word. And we do all of this because we love Him. He loved us enough to die for us, and therefore we should love Him enough to be fruitful, productive Christians for Him. But how do you know if you are abiding? You think you are, you hope you are, but how do you know it? It's not a feeling; that's an emotion that has nothing to do with it. But it's the evidences of it; it is the fruit we could produce.

Other Christians. We produce good works. We are obedient to God's revealed Word to us, and in response to that we see answered prayers when we pray. God answers our prayers. We find ourselves having a deepening love for the things of God, the things that we used to reject, The things that we used to consider to be too hard, are now a joy to do. We study His Word, we attend worship service, we come to Bible fellowship and all of these things bring us great joy. These are the evidences that we are abiding in Him. It's not automatic. He doesn't force it on us. He never makes us do anything. He gave us a free will, but abiding does take time and it takes effort. We should worship, we should pray, we should study and meditate on the Word, we should serve Him, we should sacrifice for others. So all of these things are ways that we can abide.

And then, when we have the great joy of knowing we're abiding, that's the evidence that we have been abiding. Verse eleven : " The se things I have spoken to you so that My joy. Jesus' joy may be in you and that your joy may be made full." In verse two, Jesus spoke about the vines and the branches bearing fruit. In verse five, he spoke about the branches bearing more fruit, and then finally in verse eight, he talked about much fruit. That, it is a progression as we grow as C hri stian s. ;, we will produce more and more and more fruit. We will learn new ways to do it. We will feel more confident about doing it. And remember this too : the branches do not eat the fruit. ; other people eat the fruit. The branches only produce the fruit so.

The idea is that our fruit should be beneficial to others, that we should win others to Christ. When we see a brother or a sister hurting, we should do whatever we can to relieve that pain. We should exhibit holiness and obedience that others can see in our lives to know that we are one of God's children. Even giving, Paul talked about giving as being evidences of the fruits of salvation. To praise God for all the things that He does in our lives, the little things and the big things. And sometimes at the time it happens, we don't even realize some of the things that God does for us. And later we can look back on it and say, "Oh, of course! Why didn't I recognize that then? It was so small; I overlooked it." But to God, it was very significant. It was significant enough that He did it. Paul wrote in Galatians chapter five that not every branch is going to produce.

A bumper crop, but every branch should produce some crop. Should produce some fruit, and we all have different talents. We all produce different kinds of fruit. Some have the gift of teaching, some have the gift of helps, some have the gift of just a kind word. So, there are different kinds of fruit, and we're going to produce different kinds of fruit. Everybody's going to produce different amounts of fruit, but our joy will grow By that same progression, as we abide, as we obey, as we work for Him, we will have joy. We will have more joy and we will have much joy. Verse twelve says this is my commandment that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Jesus gives the disciples a new commandment. Some writers have called this the eleventh commandment to love one another.

But remember, love cannot be commanded. You cannot be demanded. You cannot be forced to love someone. And Christian love, the love that he's

talking about here is not a feeling. It's an act of the will. It's to make a special effort to extend Christian kindness, love, service. The Bible says even a cup of water given in his name will be rewarded. A kind word, a prayer for a friend. A hug, an arm around them, and a whisper in their ear that you are praying for them. All of these things are ways that we show that we love one another. But Jesus, of course, made the ultimate sacrifice. He loved sinful men so much that he laid down his life so that we might spend eternity with him. And, he gives them the example here in verse twelve : “ Y ou love one another as I have loved you.” I loved you enough to die for you.

For you, all I ask in return is that you love me in the same way. Now, Not many are going to be called on to lay down their lives for another, but Jesus is simply asking the question: if it came to it, would you be willing to do it? Do you love your brothers and sisters in Christ enough to do that? I may not ask you to do it, but would you be willing to? Verse thirteen, he says, “ G reate r love has no one than this : that a person lay down his life for his friends.” So, who are our friends? Who is he talking about here? Remember, on this night, he's talking specifically to the remaining eleven disciples. In the days ahead, They were going to have to learn to rely on each other as they never had before. Previously, They have fussed ;. They have bickered ;. They've argued over who's going to be the greatest in heaven.

They've argued over who was going to be the closest to Jesus as they moved along. But he says, “You are going to have a new bond. You are going to be under the love of the Holy Spirit very soon, and it's going to change your relationship.” He says, “You are my friends because you have obeyed me. You have walked with me for three and a half years. You have done as I have asked you to do.” So it kind of leads us to the conclusion that as believers. Our friends are really our fellow believers, just as the friends of the disciples were the other disciples. So, our friends—the ones that we should be looking out for—are other believers. They are our Christian friends. We all have acquaintances, but how many actually true real friends do we have? And look at the example of J esu s. ; He had called twelve—they were His friends—and even one of those twelves turned out to be.

The betrayer, Peter, James, And John fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane when they should have been praying. Peter denied Jesus three times this very night. So friends come and go; friends wax and wane. They have times of closeness and we have times of distance. He uses as a perfect example here: we talk about Abraham in the Bible, and God speaks up Abraham as His friend. And in the book of Genesis, late one afternoon, God came to visit Abraham. Abraham treated him with great kindness, with great hospitality, even though he did not recognize God. He recognized that he was someone special. He was someone that deserved reverence, but not really knowing that he was having a visit from God. And James 2:23 records that at that time God called him my friend.

As a result, God took him into his confidence. He told him the story of what was about to happen in Sodom and Gomorrah. And as a result of God's friendship with Abraham, Lot and his family were spared. Abraham was the perfect friend. He was also the perfect servant that he always stepped up to

benefit others. He had rescued Lot on another time that Lot got himself into trouble, that he was the perfect companion, the perfect friend. The perfect servant, but remember too that Jesus chose us to be His friends, to be His children before He even knew us, before we were born. Literally, not only did He choose us, He ordained us. The Bible says He appointed us to salvation, and it was for the purpose that we would bear fruit more fruit, much fruit.

But that we were chosen before we were even born. God had such a great destiny for us. He was so certain of the things that we would do for Him, that He chose us to be His friends. He gives them one final reminder to love one another, to bear one another's burdens, to lift one another up, but also to serve one another. And, these were going to be important lessons for the disciples in the days ahead and literally for us today, too, in our body of the church. How we love one another, how we bear one another's burdens, how we lift one another up, how we serve one another. He continues on in verse eighteen and says, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world because of this, the world hates you." So Jesus has gone now from.

The concept of love to the concept of hatred. So, why would the world hate us? Well, it hated Jesus before it hated us. It hated him two thousand years ago. And here we are today still being hated by the world system, by the atheists, by those that do not believe as we believe, those that do not carry the same Christian standards that we do. But Jesus says because you are Mine you are no longer a part Of the world system, he says, "The world has rejected me. It has rejected my words. It has rejected my commandments. The world has gone its own way, and it's a way that leads to destruction." The world does not know the heavenly Father. The world does not know me. And not only do they not know us, They don't want to know us ;. They have no interest in who we are and what we stand for. And he said, "The reason is because I expose their sin; I expose their depravity."

I expose their shortcomings, he said. The world does not follow me, does not love me, but the world does have a leader and it's Satan. And Satan not only leads them but he also hates Jesus' children. The world hated us literally before were born because were going to be born to represent him. And it's going to continue to hate Christians long after we are gone. So we shouldn't take it personally; it's not aimed at just us. It is anyone who stands up for Christ will always be hated by the world. Always have been, always will be. If, you remember when Jesus was on the Damascus road with Paul when they first met, He posed a question to Paul. He says, "Why are you persecuting Me?" But if you remember on that day, Paul's task was he was going to Damascus. He had orders to arrest possibly even to kill the Christians.

That were in Damascus, but Paul he's not saying why are you persecuting Christians. He says why are you persecuting me? But on that day, Paul was out to arrest Christians, not Jesus. Jesus was already dead had been for several years when this story takes place. The point is, he's saying you are persecuting me because you are persecuting my children. They belong to me. What hurts them hurts me so Why are you persecuting me by persecuting my

children? And of course, Paul was dumbfounded; he had no answer for that question. So, when we are saved, we get a new position. And Jesus talked about it in this very verse :. We are taken out of the world, and we are placed into Christ. We have a new point of view; it is a heavenly point of view. We see things from God's perspective. We get a new set of values.

Romans talked about being conformed to the ways of the world. When we are saved, we are no longer conformed to the world. We no longer have to do what the world expects us to do. We have indeed been transformed. There's an old adage, you've probably heard it all along. : " It ' s okay for a boat to be in the water, but where you get into trouble is when the water gets into the boat." We are to be in the world, but we are not to be of the world. We are to be in the boat, but not let the sin of the world get in the boat with us, or we're all going to sink. He says, "But even Christians can become worldly. We can be tempted. We can be swayed. We can be lured away, especially when we take our eyes off of Jesus." We realize that we have strayed, that we have transgressed. Probably Lot was a perfect example of this in his life; he had, of course been.

Virtually raised by Abraham, so he knew all the principles. He knew about God. The Bible gives every evidence that Lot was a saved person, but he was a carnal Christian. He was one that let the world creep into his life more and more and more. When the situation between Abraham and Lot got such that they were both so wealthy, they had been so blessed by God, so many flocks, such large families that they had to separate. The land could not support both of them. Graciously, Abraham gave Lot the first choice, and the Bible says Lot looked. He used his eyes. He saw Sodom and Gomorrah, and he saw that it was beautiful. James four four calls this friendship with the world. So he looked; it looked beautiful. He and his family walked towards Sodom and Gomorrah. First John two calls this, the love of the world or the love for the world for the things of the world.

Ultimately, they arrived in Sodom and Gomorrah, and Lot sat down in the place of honor at the gate. He was one of them, and he was highly respected. The authorities, the judges all sat at the gate, and Lot was right there with them in Sodom and Gomorrah. And Romans 12:2 calls this conformity with the world. So he looked, he walked, and he sat down. And well we all know how that story worked out for him. Verse 20, remember the word that I said to you. A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you as well. If they followed my word, they will follow yours also. But, all these things will all these things. They will do to you on account of my name because they do not know the one who sent me in other words, They do not know my heavenly Father he says if.

If the world hated me, if the world crucified me, how can you expect any better? You are going to be left. You are going to be my representatives. You are going to be my hands, my feet, my eyes in the world. So you can expect no better treatment than the world gave to me. And, he said the main reason that the world hated me was because I obeyed the Father. I represented the Father. I represented The things of The goodness, The kindness, The mercy that The Father stood for and yet The world hated it Because it exposed their

sin and their depravity. So the world hated Jesus, the world hates us, but it hates us because not because of who we are, but it hates us because of whose we are. Who do we belong to? We are children of the King and basically Satan and his followers hate the whole royal family. They hate Father, Son, Spirit and the kids. Us. Verse 22.

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin. But now they have no excuse for their sin. The one who hates me hates my Father. Jesus is not saying that if he had not come, there would not have been any sin. Sin's been around since the Garden of Eden, but he said what I did is I came and exposed their sin. They didn't realize they had sin until I came, and I was the perfect standard of righteousness, and then mankind suddenly knew that they had sin. They didn't like the fact that it was exposed, And so they hated me because I came and showed them exactly what they are. He says, "I came, I confronted them, I talked about their awful sins." And the only thing they did was to reject me. They chose the dark over the light; they chose evil over good. They had so many times, so many opportunities to have done the right thing and they never did. And he said.

The thing that compounded the sin in the day in which Jesus lived was that they saw God in the flesh. We see God through eyes of faith, But they literally saw the Son of God walking with them, daily right in front of them and yet still they hated him, still they rejected him multiple times. They tried to kill him to silence him because he was against everything that they stood for. And. As you read down through the history of the church, You will find that some of the greatest persecutions have come from people who are religious, people who think they are Christian, who act like Christians, they talk like Christians but they are not. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. Their eyes and ears have been blinded and deafened to the truths of God. They believe the lies and deceptions of Satan instead of the truths of God. And.

Jesus said, "You know, I revealed the will of God to them through my words, through my works. And even these things did not impress them. The more I did, the more they hated me. The more I exposed their sin, the more they wanted to get rid of me." And he said, "You know it wasn't just the religious leaders that hated me. It was the common ordinary people, and it wasn't just the Jews ;. It was the Gentiles too." They loved the miracles. They loved the excitement. They were kind of interested in the parables and the stories, but he said when they came right down to it, they still hated me. They hated the one who performed the miracles, the one who preached the parables. They just could not understand me. Verse 24 : If I had done nothing among them works, which no one else did, they would not have sinned. But now they have both seen and hated me and my Father as well.

But this happened so that the word that is written in the law will be fulfilled. They hated me for no reason. Jesus is quoting here from Psalm sixty nine four, David was the author of this psalm. And he's talking here about his weariness, about his depression. He has been hounded by the enemy for a long period of time. They hated him because of his relationship with God, because he represented God, the purity and the honesty of God, the joy of God. And these people wanted to see him ruined, just as they wanted to see

Jesus ruined. So as he wrote about his own life, He was also predicting the life that Jesus was going to live about 500 years later. But David was confident that the Lord wouldn't allow this to happen. So he. Jesus quotes from this prophecy and he tells the disciples, He said you have seen this fulfilled.

In your own lives. You have seen how the world has hated me, how the world has tried to discourage me and to be rid of me. But, he said David was confident that God was going to see him through and was going to deliver him. And he said it was a source of strength and encouragement to him, And I am giving it to you today as as your source of strength and encouragement. He uses this expression for no reason or without cause. He said, "I came to Earth with no agenda. I came simply with a heart of love for mankind. I went about; I only did good." He said, " But the part of it is that my perfection just highlighted the enemy's sin and prejudice, and they saw no way out of it, no alternative except to kill me. And they have no reason to; they have no cause to. I did no harm to them; I hurt none of them." And yet.

All they want to do is be rid of me. Verse twenty six When the Helper comes, and He's speaking here of the Holy Spirit, when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, namely, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father. He will testify about Me, and you are testifying as well because you have been with Me from the beginning. And remember this is a continuation of a conversation that literally began In the upper room at the Last Supper, in chapter 14, he promised them this oncoming companion, this Paraclete, this one to walk beside them to help share their burden, To be their advocate before the Judge when Satan comes to accuse them before God. So, he's speaking here about the Holy Spirit of what a helper, the Holy Spirit is going to be. They intellectually understand that the Spirit is coming but they have no concept.

Of how valuable the spirit is going to be, how valuable the spirit will be to deepen their understanding of things, to be their companion, their conscience, their guide. All of these things it is something they cannot even imagine. In verse five in this chapter John quoted Jesus as saying, "I am the vine and you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him, bears much fruit for apart from me, you can do." Nothing. So what he says here is, if you will abide in me, if you will let my word abide in you, there is nothing that you cannot do. Nothing is impossible, if you will abide in me and let me abide in you. Well, that brings us down to America 250 our continuing study of how religion, how faith how God has shaped.

Our American way of life. His name was Theodore Roosevelt. He was the twenty sixth president of the United States. He was the youngest man to hold that office, and actually, He was the cousin of Franklin Roosevelt that we studied last week in our America two fifty. Theodore Roosevelt wrote this: "The true Christian is the true citizen, lofty of purpose, resolute in endeavor, and ready." For hero's deeds, But never looking down on his task because it is cast in the day of small things. Scornful of baseness, awake to his own duties as well as to his rights, Following the higher law with reverence and in

this world, doing all that in his power lies so that when death comes, he may feel that mankind is in some degree better because he has lived.

Every thinking man, when he thinks, Realizes that the teachings of the Bible are so interwoven and intertwined with our whole civic and social life that it would be literally impossible for us to figure out ourselves what that life would be if these standards were removed. And in Zechariah, fourteen four, fourteen Zechariah wrote this Do not despise the small beginnings. For the Lord rejoices to see the work begin. And Theodore Roosevelt said, as Zachariah said, “For us as believers, there’s nothing too small. Every work has to start small and grow big. We rarely ever start at the top and work down.” That don’t look down on what you are asked to do. Don’t look down on what you are doing as it being too small and insignificant. Because as I said earlier, remember even a cup of water.

Given in the name of Jesus will be rewarded for the believer. There is nothing but small beginnings, and we only have up to go. Let’s have a word of prayer. Father, thank you for your word. Thank you that we have in this country had leadership through the years that recognized you as the ultimate authority, not themselves, Lord, and we pray that that will continue to be the case. It seems like every year we lose a little more Christian ground, but Lord, you are still in control; you are still the one that’s managing everything, and we have to trust. And rely on you. Be with us this week, Lord, that our week would be joyous, our week would be fulfilling. That others would see in us something that they would like to have in their own lives. We ask all of this in your name, Amen.

JOHN CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The True Vine

Take-a-Ways

We encounter four things in this chapter

The True Vine – Jesus

The Branches – All believers of all time

The Vinedresser – God

The Fruit – The visible results of our abiding in Him

Sometimes the Vinedresser has to “prune” the branches to make them more fruitful

Take us to the woodshed

It can be painful – but – necessary

It may be a passage of Scripture

A helpful word from a fellow Christian

A message from the pulpit or Bible Fellowship

John has talked about three relationships in this chapter

- a) Our relationship to Christ
- b) Our relationship to other Christians
- c) Our relationship to the world

Notice the order:

Jesus first – fellow believers second – then we are equipped to take on the world

His name was Theodore Roosevelt – 26th President of the United States – youngest man to hold that office. He wrote: The true Christian is the true citizen, lofty of purpose, resolute in endeavor, ready for hero's deeds, but never looking down on his task because it is cast in the day of small things; scornful of baseness, awake to his own duties as well as to his rights, following the higher law with reverence, and in this world doing all that in his power lies so that when death comes he may feel that mankind is in some degree better because he lived. Every thinking man, when he thinks, realizes that the teachings of the Bible are so interwoven and entwined with our whole civic and social life that it would literally be impossible for us to figure out ourselves what that life would be if these standards were removed

Zechariah 4:14 – do not despise these small beginnings for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin