



Pastor Jason Carter – August 7, 2022

I AM The Vine – John 15:1-8

The setting:

This is one of the most intimate of all times with Jesus because He is explaining to the disciples His upcoming death, and shares with them the last supper. He has already prophesied His death, Peter's denials, and the betrayal by Judas. He has taught them to be with Him, now He wants to explain how to remain in Him- in His teachings, in His leading, in His directives, in His love, in His power.

He is saying 'My life gives you life.'

What is about to take place:

- Jesus will be betrayed, turned over to Rome, beaten, stripped, crucified and made a public spectacle
- The disciples will scatter, experience extreme fear and shame
- Eventually, they build the new movement of church, they will routinely experience opposition, prison, the growth of the church, sabotage, betrayal, and difficulties that come with caring for more and more people
- Many will become martyrs for Christ
- And Jesus is wanting them to understand how to handle what is to come with what He is about to share

This passage about remaining in the vine should be a weekly meditation.

John 15:1- **"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener."**

Jesus is using an everyday, familiar picture to communicate

- The disciples have become accustomed to Israel the nation being called the vine, so there was mixture of nationalism and outward religious practice. Israel was described as both a vineyard and a vine and God as the vinedresser.
- Jesus is the true vine that produces life, not religion

The father is the gardener, and He is always at work in a believer's life. He tends to our life.

Jesus is reminding them of the nature of the Father.

- Would the gardener want to kill the plant? Is the gardener mad at the plant? What is the goal of the gardener? It is for the vine branch to flourish.
- God is not looking for a way to destroy you because you don't have it together.
- Faith is Christ alone. God does the work at salvation.
- God will not bless your sin, however. There will be consequences for sin. We will discuss how he deals with sin in a moment
- The Father is intimately involved with your life. He is at work in every aspect of our life.

² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^{a)} so that it will be even more fruitful.

- He cuts away those who are not connected to Jesus through faith
- For those in Christ, in faith, He prunes

Here are couple of things we need to know about a grapevine (taken from an Ohio vineyard):

- ***If it is allowed to have too many growing points, it grows too extensively, and its energy is wasted on growth and the clusters do not produce large or juicy grapes.***
- The gardener knows where to cut in order for the correct growth to happen

Two meanings to the word "prune" in Scripture: Greek Airo (Earo)

- a) Lift up
- b) Remove or take away

3 ways to look at this:

- 1. Lift up, to cleanse/purify, sanctification.** God is the great redeemer. The God of second chances. He is the way the truth and the life. He desires to see life in us, life to the full
- Mountain View Vineyard: *"If the vines flop onto the ground or drag in the dirt, they can attract detrimental mold, fungus, and insects. So, we do everything we can to guide the vine up as it grows."*

- Our old sin pattern, poor identity...He will lift you up, out of it, so you can GROW UP

2. Take away, remove excess

- *The nodes produce shoots that academics call "laterals." Most farmers call them suckers. We don't want those suckers becoming part of the plant structure at*

Religion tells us that we have to clean up our life to get to God. Jesus says we *come to God* and He will clean up your life.

encouraging it to grow down toward the dirt. So, we break them off. It doesn't hurt the plant.

- *Removing the suckers helps these babies to grow straight and tall. They'll reach the top guidewires, then branch out about three feet on each side.*

3. Cut back, concentrated growth

- Ohio: *"For best results the growth rate of a grapevine must be carefully maintained. If it has too few growing points, the wood will grow too fast and becomes vegetative, producing fewer flowers and smaller grape clusters."*
 - **This is when we have learning without application**
- Ohio: *"With any pruning system, at least 85 to 90 percent of the one-year-old wood will be removed during dormant pruning."*
- Ohio: *"Desuckering is a long process. By the time we get through the entire vineyard, we have to start all over again. But it's worth it to produce our grapes sustainably."*
- *Plus, if we keep up with desuckering while the vines are young, when they mature they will produce excellent fruit."*
- **God is amazing at cutting out the suckers in your life (not just people, patterns, behaviors,**

God is at work all the time, lifting you up, taking away and cutting away excess so you can grow.

³ "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."

⁴ "Remain in me, as I also remain 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."

- 10 times in these 8 verses, Jesus says abide or remain
- This has been God's plan from the beginning.
- From God to dwell within man and for man to dwell with God forever
- Jesus is saying 'the way I have committed myself to you over the last 3 years will continue'.

Jesus says 'You cannot bear spiritual fruit outside of My life.'

⁵ "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."

Our life, our growth, our healing, our freedom, our comfort, our dream, our calling, our purpose is found in Him. Remain in Him, stay connected to Him and you will grow. You will produce life. You will be changed.

Ohio: *The vine is hearty, will grow in most soils and will live for generations when cared for. There is much maintenance for a vine to flourish.*

Jesus wants our everyday life to be found rooted in Him.

God is at work all the time, *lifting* you up, taking away, and cutting away excess *so you can grow.*

⁶“If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.”

- Jews believed those who knew better and chose to disobey and rejected faith because they knew better
- A great concern for Big 'C' church and for Christianity is that our faith becomes independent and disconnected from one another.
- We grow better when we are around others who are also growing (larger, missional gathering)

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

- This is a pretty bold statement Jesus says.
- Sometimes we want to put conditions on this
- **The longer you stay connected, the more His convictions become yours, His heart becomes your heart, His mission becomes your mission**

⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

As the life of Jesus flows into us, we change. And that change is what people see.

God is committed to your growth. Jesus tells us to remain in Him and His life will cause us to produce His life. If we get disconnected, we die. God desires for us to produce much fruit, much growth, much transformation to be a witness to God's goodness.

As the life of Jesus flows into us, we *change*. And that change is what people see.

⁹“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.”

Questions for reflection:

1. Do you believe our Heavenly Father is *for* you?
2. What areas are disconnected from the life of Jesus?
3. What disconnects you from Jesus?
4. Think back to a time you were growing the most in your walk with God, what were some of the reasons you were growing?
5. Do you need to return to your first love? (Rev. 2)