



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERIES: JOHN (GOSPEL OF TRUTH)

LESSON: TRUSTING IN THE TRUE VINE TO SUSTAIN HIS BRANCHES

JOHN 15:1-11

NOV. 14, 2021

MAIN POINT

When we remain in Christ, the True Vine, we are sustained and we grow.

JOHN CONTEXT

Every lesson's purpose: "but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." John 20:31

INTRODUCTION

John 14 through John 16 is a parting list of instructions to Jesus's remaining disciples who are also His closest friends. His words would be reassuring and also informative. Although, the disciples may not understand the significance immediately, Jesus knows it is what they need to hear. They would continue the work of Jesus and become disciple makers and kingdom builders but they will also experience difficulty in the task. As usual, Jesus provides an analogy that would have been very familiar with the disciples and people of that time and place. We can take note of every detail and every word of Christ that has significance. He didn't have an extended amount of time at this point to fully equip them and Jesus even told them in (JN 16:12) – "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." Therefore, we might consider that would Jesus told them is the essential details that they needed to know. These instructions will help the disciples to navigate their new reality. They have learned to trust Jesus and through this trust in Him and His word, the Kingdom will advance.

EXPLANATION // ...believe Jesus is the Christ...

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 15:1-11

In the passage, Jesus tells his disciples that God is the vinedresser. God in his divine wisdom has planted a True Vine in our midst. Jesus tells his friends (v.15) that He is the True Vine. We should ask ourselves what is the distinction of the True Vine versus another vine?

What is the role of pruning in the life of the vine?

Verse 4 says "abide in me." Another translation says "remain in me." Look up abide and remain in the dictionary. What does it mean? What does this look like for the Christian life?

Abide is a verb and implies action. To abide in the vine is an action that we must take. This is not something that happens without effort on our part. So, how exactly do we abide in His presence? Jesus doesn't clearly say that here but we can look nearby text for help.

In verse 3, Jesus said that His disciples were pruned/clean by something - His word. John 8:31-32, also tells us that if we hold to His teaching, we are really His disciples!

Verse 7 adds a new idea to what it means to abide in the Vine. What is added? (Hint: it's in the second part of the verse).

As a good vinedresser would do, the branches need to be managed so that maximum harvest could be realized. From an agricultural perspective, there are branches that are dead and need to be removed. Additionally, any branches connected to a healthy vine are capable of significant growth. The interesting fact of grapevines is that only branches which are closest to the vine are the dependable enough to produce the highest yield of grapes, and the harvest is exactly why the vineyard owner has planted the vine. Pruning is a natural process for the branches and ensures fruit production by removing excess growth and concentrates energy into the area near the vine that will yield grapes.

In this analogy, believers are the branches that are connected to the True Vine and the expectation is that we are to produce fruit. John 15:8 tells us why it is intended that we bear fruit – so that the Father will be glorified. When we bear fruit, the Father is glorified and we prove that we are his disciples. Like the branches, believers need to be pruned. There are areas in our lives that take away fruit producing energy; therefore, God will put us through a pruning process so that we can be close to the vine. In this passage, Jesus tells the disciples that they are already clean (v.3) because of the word He has spoken to them. The Greek word used for clean has a connotation of a vine branch that has been pruned and is ready to bear fruit.

For believers, bearing fruit for the Father's glory is something to strive for. However, we may hesitate at the thought of pruning because taking away things from our life that we have added may not be welcomed. Depending on the things that are hurting our fruit production, the pruning might even be a rough or painful process. The good news is that God sees your ability to produce and loves you enough to prune you. For us to be able to glorify God and prove ourselves to be His disciples, we must shed things that are keeping us from producing fruit. In many cases, we cannot see where the problem areas are, but we can rest assured that God does. God will allow things to happen in our life that may be difficult and may lead us to reflect on our current situation that has taken our energy away from God and made us unfruitful. We need to be aware of sin in our lives that separate us from the necessary close proximity to the vine.

Jesus provides additional instruction to His disciples about the manner in which fruit can be produced. Branches cannot produce fruit on their own, they have to be connected to the vine (v.4). Furthermore, the branches not only

produce fruit when they abide, they produce much fruit (v.5). First, the branches must abide in Him. When you consider the word abide, it comes from a Greek word that means remain and it references either a place, a time, or a state or condition in which one would remain. We can understand the exact meaning when we consider that Jesus says the vine is the where the branch would be because the branch can only be connected to the vine. The same Greek word for abide in John 15 is also used over 100 times in the New Testament. The most frequent usage is in reference to a place that Jesus would stay or a place that Paul would stay as he travelled on his missionary journeys. The sense of the verb abide in the text of John 15 is that when we abide, we aren't to depart our current location. Said another way, we are to continue to be present in our location – the presence of Jesus – the True Vine.

It doesn't make sense that a branch could physically separate from the presence of the vine, but in a spiritual sense, our free will permits us to choose to be in the presence of Jesus or to choose to be elsewhere. Jesus is clear that when we choose to be in His presence, He will be in our presence and through Him, we will be much fruit (v.5). Jesus also states very clearly that apart from Him his presence, we cannot bear fruit (v.5).

Another passage for how we can abide in the presence of Christ says - "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." (John 15:8) There are many ways that we can bear fruit, but the primary way that God would receive glory is if we were to reproduce and make new disciples by witnessing to others. When we choose to be obedient to the command to make disciples, we are abiding in Christ's presence as we also participate in the kingdom work that he gave for us to do – go and make disciples (Matt. 28: 19-20).

APPLICATION // ...have life in His name.

Answer the following questions as a group to help directly apply today's lesson to our lives.

What are some examples of ways that you can be in the Word?

How do you show your love for your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ?

We may have a desire to share our faith with others but we find it difficult. What are some ways that sharing faith is difficult? What are some steps you can take to make it easier?

What energy draining things in our lives are keeping us from bearing fruit?

PRAYER

Prayer Prompts:

Here are some practical ways that Jesus would lead you to pray where you could realize the promise of answered prayer. The essence of prayer is to acknowledge John 15:5 before you pray. Without Jesus, nothing is possible. Jesus is the power that can sustain you as a committed, reproducing disciple:

- 1.) You want to abide in Him and make time to read the word daily but you can't wake up in the morning. Maybe the Spirit prompts you to say a prayer before you go to bed asking God to help you wake up in the morning. Because it is God's will that you spend time in the Word and if it is something that we truly wish, God will surely answer that prayer.
- 2.) If there is a brother or sister in Christ that God has laid on your heart to encourage but that person is difficult to want to spend time around, pray for God to help you.
- 3.) If there is a situation at work that is challenging and could easily lead you to compromise the standards God has set for you, pray that God will give you victory over that situation.
- 4.) If there is a sin or an unhealthy activity that you are doing, pray that God will give you the desire to end that behavior and to replace it with something that produces fruit.

In any situation, that you need God's power to overcome, when your heart's desire is to abide in Jesus, when you pray according to His word that is in you, then trust God and He will help you.

COMMENTARY / RESOURCES

RESOURCES

The Song My Jesus by Annie Wilson is full of ways that Jesus can sustain us when we are abiding in Him.

My Jesus - Annie Wilson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FW5o2uBeMWQ>

Are you past the point of weary?
Is your burden weighin' heavy?
Is it all too much to carry?
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus
Do you feel that empty feeling?
'Cause shame's done all its stealin'
And you're desperate for some healin'
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus
He makes a way where there ain't no way
Rises up from an empty grave
Ain't no sinner that He can't save
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus
His love is strong and His grace is free
And the good news is I know that He
Can do for you what He's done for me
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus
And let my Jesus change your life

Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Amen
Amen

Who can wipe away the tears
From broken dreams and wasted years
And tell the past to disappear? Oh
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus
And all the wrong turns that you would
Go and undo if you could

Who can work it all for your good
Let me tell you about my Jesus
He makes a way where there ain't no way
Rises up from an empty grave
Ain't no sinner that He can't save
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus
His love is strong and His grace is free
And the good news is I know that He
Can do for you what He's done for me
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus
And let my Jesus change your life

Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Hallelujah, Amen
Amen, Amen

Who would take my cross to Calvary?
Pay the price for all my guilty?
Who would care that much about me?
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus, oh
He makes a way where there ain't no way
Rises up from an empty grave
Ain't no sinner that He can't save
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus
His love is strong and His grace is free
And the good news is I know that He
Can do for you what He's done for me
Let me tell you 'bout my Jesus
And let my Jesus change your life

Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Hallelujah, amen
Amen
Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Hallelujah
Let my Jesus change your life