

John 15

From a Max Lucado video regarding the crisis in Ukraine: “What are we as Christians do? “First we need to remember that our battle is not against “flesh and blood”. Our battle is against the Devil...it is a spiritual war. Satan is vicious, ... but he is never victorious. He can not stand against the weapons you have as a believer. We have the weapons of prayer & worship. And so, dear believer, take them up & pray for the people of Ukraine. Pray for the people of Russia... for believers across the globe. Take time to pray & take a stand for truth...”

Even though we are studying tonight chapter 15 of John, we need to remember these words & events are during the last day of Jesus’ earthly life & ministry... before the crucifixion & resurrection. In 13:1, Jesus says, “... (He) knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father...”. He ate the Passover meal... washed his disciples feet... predicted His betrayal... & Peter’s denial... & in chapter 14, comforted His disciples... revealed Himself to be “the way the truth & the life”... AND, promised to send the Comforter (the Holy Spirit). All this during his last day.

The Broadman Bible Commentary reports, “Jesus now (chapter 15 through 16) described the nature of discipleship during the era ushered in by his departure and return.”

Chapter 14 ends (later part of v. 31) with, “Rise, let us go from here.” The next 2 chapters were probably spoken on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus being a “master teacher” possibly took advantage of passing a vineyard to begin His parable on the “vine & the branches”.

- I. The Parable, vs.1-11, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.”
 - A. This is the last of the 7 “I am” statements of Jesus in John.
 1. The bread of life, 6:35; the light of the world, 8:12 & 9:5; the door of the sheep, 10:7; the the good shepherd, 10:11; the resurrection and the life, 11:25; the way, the truth, and the life, 14:6; the true vine, 15:1.
 2. When Jesus spoke of Himself as the “true” vine, there were implications of Israel’s failure as God’s vine/vineyard.

3. The OT often referred to the nation Israel as His vine-vineyard.
 - a. But Israel failed to bear fruit.
 4. By contrast, Jesus was “**the true vine**”.
 5. Referring to the Father as the “**vinedresser**”, refers back to Isaiah’s “vineyard song”, Isa. 5, & Ps. 80.
 - a. At that time, God was tending His vineyard (Israel), but was rewarded with “**wild grapes**”.
 - b. Their “**fruitlessness**” is contrasted with the “**fruitfulness**” of believers in Jesus Christ who (by faith) abide in Him.
 6. For this reason, we should pay attention to these verses & strive by faith to be **fruitful** branches!
- B. v.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.**”
1. In v. 5, Jesus will identify us (believers) as these branches.
 2. Now I ask you, what is the purpose of a grapevine? ... to bear fruit (grapes).
 3. Therefore if a branch is not bearing fruit, “**he**” (the vinedresser—the Father) “**takes it away**”.
 - a. It would appear that “**taking away**” a branch involves “**removing it, & throwing it away**”, v.6.
 - b. These branches were not properly abiding, bore no fruit, and probably represent those who are not really born again.
 4. In v.6, “**If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.**”
 - a. That seems pretty clear, but there is another possible interpretation.
 5. **James Montgomery Boice (among others)** believes that the ancient Greek verb *airo*, translated, **takes away** is more accurately translated “**lifts up**”. The idea is that the Father lifts up unproductive vines off of the ground (as was common in the ancient practices of vineyard care). Those caring for ancient grape vines made sure to lift them up off the ground that they might get more sun and bear fruit better.
 - a. This interpretation speaks of a “corrective action”.

6. **Either way** it's incumbent upon us to **"bear fruit"**...it's expected!!
 - a. That's what a **"branch"** does!
7. Jesus also (v. 2) speaks of **"pruning"** the branches that do bear fruit... so they will be **"more fruitful"**.

C. v.3, **"Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you."**

1. This verse seems a bit out of place, but when you think of the context of **"the Father—vinedresser" cleaning up His vineyard**, it fits.
2. The idea of **"already clean"** brings to memory what **Jesus said to Peter in Jn. 13**, when he asked Jesus not to stop at washing his feet—give me a bath!
3. Eph. 5:25, 26,, **"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her (the church), having cleansed her by the washing of water with **the word**"**
4. **A commentator named Tenney says**, "The means by which pruning or cleaning is done is by the Word of God. It condemns sin; it inspires holiness; it promotes growth. As Jesus applied the words God gave him to the lives of the disciples, they underwent a **pruning** process that removed evil from them and conditioned them for further service."
5. Instead of running **from**... or neglecting the Word of God (& thus his cleansing and pruning)... we should **run to** Him.

D. vs. 4-6, **"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. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears **much** fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.**

1. Jesus speaks in v.4, of a **"mutual relationship"** (us in Him & He in us).
2. **A beautiful picture** of this is found in **Song of Solomon 6:3**, **"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."** (Believers abiding in Jesus)
3. There is an **"element of choice"** when Jesus says, v. 4, **"Abide in me"**.
4. In **Jn. 17**, we will see Jesus praying for unity among us (believers) and with Him & the Father, v. 22, **"...that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, ..."**

- a. In other words, Jesus has committed to “abide in us” (v. 4), through the in-dwelling Holy Spirit,
 - b. And commands us to “abide in Him (v. 4).
5. James Boice, “When our Lord says: *Abide in me* he is talking about the **will**, about the choices, the decisions we make. We must decide to do things which expose ourselves to him and keep ourselves in contact with him. This is what it means to abide in him.”
6. Also, **“Bearing fruit”** is not a “work” we do to gain or maintain our salvation... it’s a natural consequence of the Holy Spirit living in us... & us abiding in Christ.
7. Jesus spoke (Mt. 7) of those who would come to Him one day & say, **“Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?”** And then (He) will say to them, **“I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness”**
- a. Those are some amazing / impressive **“works”**.
 - b. But they were done **“in the flesh”**... without God’s blessing or enablement.
8. So, what’s the difference?
- a. Coming to Jesus for salvation.
 - b. Abiding in Him as obedient believers.
 - c. Humbling ourselves as God’s servants.
 - d. **Mic. 6:8, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”**

II. Several **Benefits** of Abiding.

- A. Answered Prayer, v. 7, **“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”**
- 1. There are several requirements for our prayers to be pleasing to God.
 - 2. But the first & foremost is **“abiding in Him”**.
 - 3. **“Abiding”** in Christ involves **“His words”** abiding in us.
 - a. Reading... studying... meditating... obeying His Word.
 - 4. As we **“abide”**, our minds and hearts are transformed to be in line with God’s mind & heart... His desires become our desires.

5. (Tenney) “The connection (& abiding) is maintained by obedience and prayer. To remain in Christ and to allow his words to remain in oneself means a conscious acceptance of the authority of his word and a constant contact with him by prayer.”

6. We will find ourselves praying for lost souls... & the needs of others... instead of a more comfortable life.

7. (Spurgeon) “It becomes safe for God to say to the sanctified soul, ‘Ask what thou wilt, and it shall be done unto thee.’

B. God Is Glorified, v.8, “By this my Father is glorified,

1. Our abiding... our faithful lives... will glorify God.

2. Answers to prayer will glorify Him.

C. We Will “bear much fruit”, v. 8,b, “... that you bear much fruit...”

1. One commentator says, “Fruit bearing is inevitable with abiding. The quality and quantity of the fruit may differ, but the presence of fruit will be inevitable.”

a. “fruit represents Christian character (such as the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5). Fruit also implies inherent reproduction. Virtually every piece of fruit has seeds within it, seeds that are meant to reproduce more fruit.

D. We will show evidence of salvation, v. 8,c, “...and so prove to be my disciples.”

1. We shouldn't have to “tell someone” we are a believer.

2. They should be able to see that we live differently.

III. The Love Factor, v.9, 10, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.”

A. Notice the comparison Jesus uses.

1. He **doesn't** say, “As a mother loves her child”... or “As a husband loves his wife.”

2. He says, “As **the Father** has loved me...”

3. Can you imagine the quality of that love !!

4. One commentator says, The Father loved the Son with a love That has no beginning..That has no end...That is close and personal ... That is without measure... That is unchanging.

5. And Jesus says, “In that same way... I love you ! “

- B. And **then** Jesus says, “Abide in my love”.
1. To use a phrase from a local car dealership’s advertisement, “Why in the world would you not !”
- C. How do we “abide in His love”? Jhn 15:10, “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.”
1. By “keeping His commandments”.
 2. 1Jn. 5:3, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.”
 3. **Jesus** “fulfilled this” (being obedient) toward the Father...
 4. ... **and we** are to fulfill it as well (obedience to “keep Jesus’ commandments”)
- D. The Joy Jesus Wants For Us, v. 11, “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”
1. Someone has said, “No one is more miserable than the Christian who for a time hedges in his obedience. He does not love sin enough to enjoy its pleasures, and does not love Christ enough to relish holiness... He is a man most to be pitied; and he **cannot** forever remain ambivalent.”
 2. Jesus, Jn. 10:10, “I am come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly.”
 3. The world and sadly even many in the church “equate obedience with drudgery”. They focus on “what I have to give up” instead of the “**abundant life**” God offers us !
 4. I hope & pray that you are not of that mindset... I pray that you seek the “abundant... joyful” life God offers us in Christ Jesus !!

Next Wednesday, “Lord willing” we will look at:

- A. The eleventh commandment, 15:12-17.
- B. A Warning, 15:18-27.
- C. And perhaps the work of the Holy Spirit, chapter 16.