

Jesus: I Am the True Vine

Introduction:

- I. If you have your Bibles, open them please to Jn. 15 and we want to begin by reading a few verses out of that text (**Jn. 15:1-4**). Never have there been more fitting words than these. Jesus truly does for His disciples that which a vine does for its branches. As we shall see later on in our text, Jesus gives life and strength to those who connect themselves to Him.
- II. Well, what kind of lessons can we learn from this overall text? I want to suggest three things to you this morning.

Lesson:

I. **We Learn Of The Absolute Essentiality Of Bearing Fruit (Ver. 2).**

These words from Jesus make it clear that spiritual success depends on fruit bearing. If one doesn't bear fruit he is useless and must be taken away, i.e., he must be cut off from the Vine. Listen, the only purpose for branches in a vine is to bear fruit. The purpose of the branch is not aesthetic in nature. Its job is not to just hang there and look pretty. Its purpose is to bear fruit, period! Some branches are pretty and some branches are ugly, but that makes no difference to its value whatsoever. A branch might be full of dark green leaves that are hearty and healthy in appearance but if it doesn't bear any fruit, guess what the vinedresser is going to do? That's right! He is going to cut it off. Why? He is going to cut it off because it is not doing what it is meant to do, that is, bear fruit.

Now let me ask you, what kind of branch are you? Are you a fruit bearing branch, or a fruitless branch? **A fruitless branch is a child of God whose life consists of profession without practice, words without works. A branch that is all leaves and no fruit, and please be advised that a branch like that is useless.** You see, as branches of the Vine, what we do is reflective of the Vine. If nothing else, the words of Jesus here point to the intimate association that we have with Christ. We are a part of Him. Even Jesus recognized this in his words to Saul as He met him on the road to Damascus. Jesus said to Saul, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? When Saul persecuted disciples, he was guilty of persecuting Christ because they were a part of Him -- they were branches of the vine. And notice, branches are not glued to the vine; they are not artificially positioned on the vine, they grow from within the vine so that the branch and the vine are one. **So, how productive the branch is, will reflect in the minds of those passing by the overall strength of the vine.** If one saw an apple tree that had a plurality of branches that were not bearing fruit, he would not say, "look at all those bad branches." No, he would say, "look at this bad tree." It is the same thing with a vine that is not producing grapes. Those who pass by do not restrict their

derogatory remarks to the branches of the vine; instead they remark upon the lack of vitality and vivacity of the vine itself. Now, God, the Vine-dresser over this spiritual Vine that we are considering, will not tolerate such a thing with His Vine. Therefore, any fruitless branch attached to His Vine must go. It must be cut off and deposited of. Are we starting to get a picture of the importance of bearing fruit?

Eight times in this context the word “fruit” is mentioned, and notice the progression: **Jesus speaks of fruit, and then more fruit, and then much fruit.** This is how it should be in our life. We should constantly be moving forward in the business of fruit-bearing. It is not something we do once; we should be bearing fruit regularly. **The word “bear” in our text is a present participle which refers to continuous action.** Fruit bearing is a recurrent theme in the life of one who is a healthy branch in **Christ.** And what kind of fruit are we to bear. They are the fruits found throughout the New Testament.

- **Fruit of Christ Likeness (1 Pet. 2:21, 22; Phil. 2:5)**
- **Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23)**
- **Fruit of Soul-winning**

A part of what Jesus is talking about specifically in this context is the winning of souls (**ver. 16**). The grape has seeds within it. Those seeds ultimately result in more branches. Likewise, the most important fruit that we can bear are more branches in the vineyard of God. The exciting thing about this is that God has promised us success (**ver. 5**). You see the power is in the Word of God and in God Himself, not in us. We can't add anyone to the church. God does that (**Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 3:4-7**).

II. Fruitful Christians must be pruned from time to time (Ver. 2).

“...every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

To prune is to cut back the branches on the vine and its purpose is to keep the branches healthy. You see, sometimes a branch is so healthy that it actually becomes too long and leafy. The branch is bearing good fruit but if the vinedresser ignores it, the branches will get so leafy that it will put itself in danger, not only of ceasing to bear fruit, but might even begin to break off the vine. So we learn that even good, healthy, fruit-bearing branches need attention from time to time

Now listen: God knows this more than any earthly vine-dresser. **He knows that even good, faithful Christians that are bearing some fruit, need some attention, that is, they need some pruning from time to time.** You see, there are things in all of our lives that aren't particularly fruitful; **things that occupy too much of our time.**

They may not be things that are inherently bad, but just not very conducive to the business of bearing fruit for the Lord. There are things lying around us and connected with us that engross us too much and chain us to the world. God wants to cut those things out of our lives so that we may spend more time doing that which will bring glory to the Vine. And let's not miss the extent of this: "every branch" Jesus said. If you bear fruit, you are going to be cut on from time to time. The vine-dresser looks at each individual branch and sooner or later says, "Aw ah, this one needs some pruning. If you are a faithful branch, you may as well prepare for it. Get ready for! It's inevitable. We all need work in our lives from time to time.

- You may have a problem with time management. **God needs to do some cutting!**
- You may have a problem with procrastination. **God needs to do some cutting!**
- Maybe you have developed a spirit of fear in your life. **God needs to do some cutting!**
- Perhaps you worry too much. **God needs to do some cutting!**
- Maybe you talk too much. **God needs to do some cutting!**
- Perhaps a little selfishness creeps into your life from time to time. **God needs to do some cutting!**
- You may have a problem with serving others. **God needs to do some cutting!**

Listen: you might be bearing fruit, but God wants you to bear fruit, not only right now, but in the future too. God wants you to bear fruit, not only today, but also tomorrow. God wants us to reach our full potential when it comes to bearing fruit. Now the question may be raised, "How does God do this pruning?" Jesus tells us. God uses His Word to prune and cleanse us (**ver. 3**). This is the same way that God prunes and purifies us. The Word of God is God's pruning tool (**Eph. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:22, 2:2**). Through the Word God removes anything that hinders us from bearing fruit. But we have a part in the process. Also, God prunes us by allowing trials and tribulations to come into our lives. In fact, sometimes God uses these things to discipline us (**Heb. 12:5-7**).

III. The Importance of Abiding In Christ (Ver. 4).

To abide means "to continue in a permanent state." It means simply "to stay." And this is the key to fruit-bearing. The word abide appears nine times in the first ten verses of John 15. The life and strength and fruit-bearing ability of the branch comes from the vine. If the branch is severed from the vine, death is the unavoidable end. The branch has no life in itself. Nothing could be more emblematic of our relationship to Christ than this illustration. Our spiritual vitality and fruit-bearing ability comes from Jesus, who is the source of our spiritual

strength and apart from Him we cannot live (vers. 4-5). There are too many “on-again, off again” Christians. To abide in Christ denotes consistency and if there is one problem that plagues too many of God’s children, and for that matter too many local churches as a whole, it is that of being inconsistent.

Now what do we get for abiding in Christ. Listen to Jesus: “**Abide in me, and I in you...**” In **ver. 5** Jesus says, “**He that abideth in me, and I in him.**” What a wonderful thought! If we are what we should be, not only are we in Christ, but He is in us. Think about that! Jesus, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead, dwells in us. **Do you think there is some power there? I think so.** What is it that John said: “*...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*” No wonder Paul said we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. He who loved us is in us, and the devil doesn’t stand a chance against us as long as that union we have with Christ exist. Listen to Paul (**Eph. 3:14-21**). And how does Jesus dwell in us? We have a hint from Paul and a direct statement from Jesus. Paul said that Jesus dwells in our hearts by faith. How does faith come? In another place Paul said, “*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God*” (**Rom. 10:17**). So then, Jesus dwells in us through His word. Now listen to Jesus (**Jn. 15:7**). It is clear isn’t it? Jesus dwells in us the same way the other members of the Godhead dwell in us - by the medium of His word. And what is the result of word dwelling in us? First, we will refrain from willful sin (**1 Jn. 3:9; Psa. 119:11**). Second, we will be faithful adherents of that word (**Jn. 8:31** - “*...If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed*”). This is what produces the proper fruit in our lives. If the word is in us, we will give God the respect and reverence He deserves. We will control our tongues so that our speech will be seasoned properly. Our appearance will be such that becomes a Christian, i.e., we will dress modestly. We will be faithful in our attendance to the assemblies of the saints. The list goes on, but I think you get the point. If the word is in us, i.e., if we are in Christ and He is in us, our lives will be in complete harmony with the Word. Keeping the commandments of Christ becomes second nature to us (**vers. 8-10**). Now, are you abiding in Christ? Does your life bear it out or not?

Conclusion:

So, what do we learn from Jn. 15? 1. Fruitless Christians must be taken out of the way. 2. Fruitful Christians must be pruned from time to time. 3. The importance of abiding in Christ. Let’s learn these lessons well.