

## *Vines, Branches, and Fruit*

John 15-16  
March 12, 2023

Please open your Bibles today to John 15. We've got a little catch up to do. When I planned this sermon series, I had not counted on Bro Tim speaking last week and had scheduled sermons right on through the resurrection. So today, we'll do some combination of John 15 and 16 to get caught up.

We've been following Jesus during His final week in John's Gospel. A few weeks ago, we saw Him on Palm Sunday and then on Maundy Thursday at the Love Feast table sharing the Last Supper with His disciples and washing their feet. The last time we were in John we examined Jesus' precious promise of sending the Holy Spirit, the comforter, counselor, Strengthener, Standby, Helper, Spirit of Truth, and Teacher. We also talked about His promise of peace that He left behind with and for His followers. During Bible Study the last two weeks, we looked at some of the rest of John 14 that I didn't get to preach about so if you really want your money's worth, you'll have to watch those on YouTube.

At the end of John 14, Jesus tells His Disciples, "Come now; let us leave." So up until this point, they've still been around the table in the Upper Room. What follows in John 15-16 likely took place as they traveled to the Garden of Gethsemane perhaps along this route. It seems that even John 17 also occurred somewhere along the way. Although I'd like to place it in the Garden, it's not until John 18 that they cross the Kidron Valley onto the Mt. of Olives.

At any rate, on the way from the Upper Room to the Garden, Jesus tells His disciples what we find today. If you are able, please stand as we read it from John 15:1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will 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. 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, **that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves** to be my disciples.

What a beautiful picture Jesus paints. Say grapes. What does a grape say if you step on it? Nothing. It just lets out a little wine. What do you say when a grape falls off the vine and dries up? Everything happens for a raisin. Sorry. Jesus' disciples were very

familiar with Old Testament symbolism of Israel being God's vineyard in Israel. Here Jesus makes it more personal. He Himself, growing in God's vineyard, is the true vine. As opposed to the false ones. The Greek word means truthful so He is the truthful vine and I would say the Vine of Truth. There are over 10,000 varieties of grapes: ConCORDS, Niagaras, Chardonnays, etc. Just as there are many varieties of teaching and living today. But Jesus is the only one that's true. His is the true vine you want to be a part of.<sup>2</sup>

We find in vs 5 that His followers are the branches. If you're saved, say, "I'm a branch." If you're not saved, you're not a branch. But you can be. Jesus wants you to be. The Vine of Jesus' has grown to extend all over the earth. He invites us and allows us to be grafted in that we might be a part of **His** Vine. Once we are, He provides our nourishment and our sustenance through the sap of His Holy Spirit flowing into and through us that we might bear His fruit.

What kind of fruit is He talking about. Vs 8 says we bring the Father **much glory** when we bear **His fruit**. So what is His fruit? The kind that Jesus had been producing Himself and teaching about His whole life. There's the fruit of holiness and righteousness. Paul lists 9 types of Spirit fruit in Galatians 5. Love, joy, etc. There's the fruit of sanctification and edification or building up the church. There's fruit of salvation when we help others accept Jesus as Savior. There's fruit of glorification, glorifying God which our theme verse encourages us to do. Jesus' fruit looks like Jesus Himself who embodied all of these characteristics. These are all types of fruit that God wants to see on His Jesus Vine. That's why we've been grafted in. The whole purpose of a grapevine is to produce grapes. I had three grapevines in my backyard for several years. Because they bore so very little fruit, I finally cut them down. Grapes are not planted for their looks. They are not cultivated for their pretty flowers or fragrant blossoms. They are not grown so we can have plenty of leaves or firewood from their trunks. Grapes are planted, grown, and cultivated for their fruit. Jesus wants us to bear His fruit.

Vs 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. So He wants us to bear MUCH fruit and when we do that, it brings glory to God. When we show much love, much joy, much patience, much kindness, much generosity, we glorify God. AND it does something else. Say proves. It proves we're His disciples. How can you tell an apple tree from a persimmon tree? By the fruit they produce! How can you tell a believer from a non-believer? Same way. Look at their fruit. Jesus said, "By their fruit you'll know them." Do you want to look like a grape vine or a persimmon tree? An apple or a lemon? Even the world can tell which vine we're connected to by the type of fruit we produce.

And if we're not glorifying God, growing more like Jesus in righteousness and holiness, helping to build up His church, showing love, joy, peace, etc. we'd better get started. Or be ready for the Father's pruning shears. In vs 2, Jesus said His Father is the

Gardener, the heavenly Horticulturalist who takes His shears and works on the Vine as needed. I've pruned a few grapevines. The easiest decisions to make are to get rid of the dead branches. It's obvious they're not going to yield any fruit. Something has cut them off from the vine, their source. Which Jesus warns **us** of. He says we **must** remain in Him! Connected to Him, abiding in Him. We get disconnected so easily. We can neglect our connection and fall away. Failing to realize how important our Vine is, our Source. Several times in this chapter Jesus emphasizes **remaining** in Him, **abiding** in Him, staying with Him. Because **apart** from Him, we can do what? Not only do we do nothing, we die. He is our source and our life.

In verses 4-7 Jesus emphasizes remaining in Him no less than 7 times. In one way or the other, He commands us to stay connected to Him, that we might bear much fruit for the Father's glory. Whenever we fail to remain in Him or separate ourselves from Him, we become fruitless. Barren. Useless. Apart from Him you can do very little? No! No thing! Not one true, good, eternal thing! Imagine a grape branch trying to bear fruit on its own apart from its root and trunk! Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Jesus, the Vine! If we remain in Him, He'll remain in us. His life, His sap, His vitality, His Spirit, His fruitbearing energy will remain in us and work through us. But disconnect from Him and you got nothing.

So how do we remain in Jesus? By doing what you're doing today! Joining with others in worship. Attending Sunday School and Bible Study. By constant regular prayer as well as regular time in the Word with daily devotions. Like Christian radio or television. Stay connected to your vine or die! Jesus says His Father cuts off every branch that bears no fruit. Say ouch. Friend if you're not bearing fruit for Jesus, you'd better get started! Or be ready to get cut off. If you're just living for self, pleasure, money, etc, brace yourself for His sharp shears. In vs 6 Jesus warns us that branches that either fall away or are cut off get burned up. It doesn't take a lot of imagination to realize what He's talking about. We should avoid both of these at all costs by remaining in Jesus and by bearing His fruit!

In vs 9 Jesus again reminds us to remain in Him and His love and He tells us in Vs 10 that we do that by obeying Him. Say obey. As we obey, vs 11 makes it clear that this will bring us complete joy! How many of you want joy? Abide in Him! Obey Him! Love each other as He loves you! Love your spouse that way. Love your kids and your parents that way. Love your brothers and sisters in the church that way. And then Jesus gives us the measuring stick for that love. How did He love us? By laying down His life which He would do the next morning. And Jesus commands us to love each other that way too.

The other thing the Father does is prune. Say prune. Pruning is different than cutting off dead branches. It's cutting back live ones that bear fruit. Why would He do

that? To get more fruit! The Amp Bible says the Father prunes the vine “to make it bear more and richer and more excellent fruit.” Pruning stimulates a vine. It causes it to put its energy and sap into producing grapes instead of growing more leaves and twigs. The purpose of a grapevine is to produce grapes, not twigs and leaves. A vine will grow crazy. All kinds of foliage and growth will grow if left alone. And we are the same. We can be involved in a lot of activity without really bearing good fruit. Sometimes God has to cut us back so we can concentrate on what’s really important in life. And in His kingdom. Pruning hurts. When the sap rises in the spring, the vines often weep sap where they’ve been pruned until they scab over. Pruning hurts the vine and it hurts us. But it’s vitally necessary to produce the Father’s fruit and to do so in abundance. We have to trust the Gardener and not run from His shears.

We discover in vs 3 one of God’s chief pruning tools. Say the Word. The word for clean in vs 3 is the adjective form of the same verb up in vs 2, to prune. Jesus says they were already pruned because of the word He spoke to them. As we read and hear God’s Word, it prunes and cleans us enabling us to be more fruitful. So read the word. Hear the word. Obey the Word.

Vs 16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.” Jesus circles back to highlight two things He’d been talking about. Bear fruit that will last! And love each other. Remember He started this evening by washing their feet to show them His love? Later in chapter 13, He gave us a new command to love each other as He has loved us, and here again, He keeps hammering at this. I really think He wants us to love each other and to bear fruit. As we love each other, we are bearing His fruit! Eternal fruit that will last. That will endure judgment’s fire.

Jesus goes on in this chapter and in the next to warn His followers about tough sledding ahead. John 16:1-4 "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. 2 They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. 3 They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. 4 I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.

Say ouch. They will be persecuted, kicked out, ridiculed, mocked, made fun of and killed. Don’t be surprised when all this happens, He says. And it did happen. And it’s still happening. And it will happen until He returns. Three times in the Gospels Jesus promised the world would hate us. Promised. So when the godless world system pours out its venom, its hatred, its rage and anger, its worst against Christians and the church, Jesus says don’t be surprised. His prophecies are coming true.

In Vs 33, He says, “In this world **you will have trouble.**” Say trouble. We often quote Jesus’ promises but we don’t usually claim this one do we? Faithfulness and obedience to Jesus will bring persecution. Don’t seek it. Some people are just stupid and blame their problems on persecution. No. This trouble comes from faithful obedience. But that’s just part of what Jesus said. “In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world!” How did He do that? When He returned love for hate, good for evil, He overcame the world. When He rose from the dead He conquered the worst of their persecution. Jesus vs the World. And Jesus won! I want to be on the winning side! The world sprays Roundup to kill the Vine, but Jesus has developed resistance! So when these bad things happen to you for His sake, know that He is with you. When you hear a friend going on and on about how bad the world is, and it is and getting worse, quote the end of this verse. Take heart! I have overcome the world! We need to remind each other that our Master has overcome the world! The world’s evil today is not the end of the story! God is! Jesus is! He has overcome the world!

Which brings us back to something else Jesus tells us in this passage, something He’s already told them about and that we talked about two weeks ago. Say Holy Spirit. John 16:7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your **good** that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:” The Holy Spirit even now is convicting this world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment.

12 "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” The Holy Spirit is guiding us into all truth in this age of lies and untruth. He’s like a hunting guide taking us to the best places to be successful. Like a tour guide showing us the most important sites. He’s a truth guide. Leading us up to the high ground, the mountain peaks of God’s truth and beauty if we’re willing to follow Him. Leading us into all truth and speaking on behalf of the Father. To prune the Vine and keep us clean so that we can bear much fruit.

Jesus was taking them and us into the Holy of Holies that night. He washed their feet at the doorway with the laver and now He was drawing them and us ever closer, revealing Himself and His Father and their will. That we might remain in Him. That we might stay in the Holy of Holies and live there with Him 24/7. That He will remain in us, and as we enjoy His sweet presence, His Holy Spirit will grow through us to produce His fruit.

Are you connected to the vine? Are you remaining in Him? Are you bearing His fruit? If you're not connected, come be grafted in today that you might get started in bearing eternal fruit. And if you are in the Vine but your connection is spotty, strengthen it! And if your connection is good, bear His fruit and enjoy His presence and His smile and blessing upon you as you glorify Him. Invite the Gardener to do whatever work on your branch needs to be done while we pray.