

The Gospel of John

I AM the True Vine

John 15:1-6

INTRODUCTION:

I would like to start our message this morning by asking this question...

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could sit face to face with God and have Him directly tell us where we are falling short in serving Him and what we must know and do in order to be prepared for heaven?

We cannot talk to God face to face but we can hear His words. They are all contained in this Bible. I once told our youth group that, when we read from the Bible, it is just as though God is sitting just behind the wall in front of us and is personally speaking to us. By spending much time in God's word and prayer, we can hear the truths of God which will guide and direct us in our walk with Him.

When we come together, we don't come together to hear **men** speak, we come to hear **God** speak. The responsibility then of the preacher is to take the message from God and bring it to the people. My role as a pastor is not as a chef, but as a waiter. My responsibility is not to create the meal, but to try to serve that meal to those who are dining without messing it up. God has prepared a very elaborate meal in our passage this morning. My goal as a waiter is to deliver it properly to those of you who are hungry to eat (or hear) from God's word. Once you have eaten from God's word then the Holy Spirit is responsible for supplying the nourishment and growth in your life.

John 14:31 tells us that Jesus and the Disciples have just left the upper room, where they have shared the Passover meal. Now they are going to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus will pray His great High Priestly prayer and will later be arrested by the mob led by Judas. We are now going to be able to hear the words that Jesus spoke while they walk to the garden in chapters 15 and 16.

As they walked toward the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus began to talk to His eleven disciples about vines, vine dressers, and fruit. He tells them that He is **The True Vine**.

What prompted this teaching? There are several possibilities:

- Knowing how troubled they were concerning what is about to happen to Him, He may have given them this lovely metaphor of the True Vine as one of His encouragements.
- He may have been prompted as they passed near the temple which had great vines carved into its doors.
- He may have been prompted as they passed through the Golden Gate which also had gorgeous vines carved into it.

- It was April. The grape vines would be beginning to blossom with the promise of a fresh harvest. As Jesus walked with his disciples, perhaps He reached out and took a vine in His hands and used it to teach this object lesson to them.

We might ask ourselves, "**Why did Jesus give them this teaching now?**"

The answer is simple: These men have just been informed that Jesus is going away, but that His work is going to continue, and that it is to continue through them and their lives.

John 14:12 (NASB)

¹² Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.

If they were to carry on the work of the Lord, then they needed to know how to produce that kind of fruit in their lives. He wants them to know that the only way they can be fruitful for the glory of God is to abide in Him, the True Vine.

Stand and Read Scripture

John 15:1-6 (NASB)

¹⁵ "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

Prayer

Let us first see the anatomy of this vineyard.

BODY:

I. THE ANATOMY OF GOD'S VINEYARD.

A. The Vine.

John 15:1a (NASB)

¹⁵ "I am the true vine,..."

Jesus tells the disciples in this object lesson that "**I AM the True Vine**".

"I am the True Vine" is the last of seven "I AM" declarations of Jesus recorded only in John's Gospel. As we have discussed before, These "I am" proclamations are proclaiming that He is God! A message that was fully understood by all of the Jews.

If there is a true vine, then there must be a false vine as well. Right?

The symbol for the nation of Israel in the Old Testament was a vine, but they did not live up to their intended purpose. Israel, through disobedience, had become the false vine.

Therefore, God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus, into this world as “**The True Vine**”. What Israel had failed to do, He would accomplish!

We do not know what prompted this teaching that night. But it is clear that His desire was to teach them about the most vital relationship they will have in their lives, the one with Jesus and His Father.

B. The Vinedresser.

John 15:1b (NASB)

...My Father is the vinedresser.

Jesus tells the disciples in this object lesson that "**My Father is the Vinedresser**".

So we know the vine is Christ, and the farmer who planted the vine and cares for the vine is the Father. But the question here is, “Who are the branches?”

C. The Branches.

John 15:5a (NASB)

⁵I am the vine, you are the branches;...

There are two different types of branches attached to the vine that represents Jesus Christ. Some of the branches are bearing fruit and some of them do not bear fruit.

Let me remind you of the context. This all begins back in chapter 13 in the upper room, and it is pretty clear that there are two types of disciples in that upper room.

So who are they?

I don't really think there is a lot of mystery about the two branches. While they were in the upper room Jesus told his disciples that “One of you will betray Me,” they said, “Is it I? Is it I? Is it I?” which is to say they had no idea that it was Judas.

There was nothing that stood out in the character and behavior of Judas that would have distinguished him as a false disciple. He was visibly attached. And for all intents and purposes, he looked like everybody else and did what everybody else did. But, clearly, there were two kinds of people in that room that night. There were those who bore fruit and there was that one who did not.

II. TRUE DISCIPLES BEAR FRUIT.

John 15:2b-3 (NASB)

...and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. ³You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

First Jesus describes those branches that bear fruit. These, of course, would be the true disciples of Jesus. All together they make up the true church of God, the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God.

Those who remain in the Vine and bear fruit need pruning.

ILLUSTRATION:

One expert grape pruner by the name of Michael McCartney noted that vines will produce branches called "Sucker shoots." These shoots never bear fruit, they just suck away nutrients. All they produce are leaves. And so the gardener cuts them off because they are unproductive and they rob the vine of its life giving source.

And not only do gardeners prune those sucker shoots, but they also cut away any dead wood. Because the dead wood can harbor insects and disease and can cause the vine to rot.

In addition, they prune the live wood (the good stuff) in order to prevent the lifeblood of the vine from going into the wood instead of into the fruit. In the early spring, the vineyards look like a collection of barren, bleeding stumps; but in the fall they are filled with grapes because they have been pruned.

You've already been saved, and you were saved through the Word, right? "**Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God**". You were saved by believing the Word. It was the Word that did its work in you. And you will be pruned by the Word.

In the final analysis, it's not the afflictions themselves that are the knife, it's the Word of God that is the knife. Now let me explain that. It is not the affliction itself that is the knife, it is the Word of God that is the knife.

Hebrews 4:12 (NASB)

¹² For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The word, the truth of God, is a two-edged knife and it cuts every direction.

So here's the idea. The Father is the pruner. The Father is the one who brings about the trials and troubles that cause us concern. The Word becomes, however, the actual cutting instrument, because when the trial comes and we react wrongly, the Word convicts us. The Word cuts into our disrespect for God's purposes. The Word cuts into our hostility. The Word cuts into our anger. The Word cuts into our questioning, and it indicts us. The Father brings the trial, and the blade is the Word of God.

John 15:4-5 (NASB)

⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Jesus uses the phrase "**in Me.**" six times in the first seven verses. He is telling us that He is speaking here to people who are in a vital, life-giving relationship to Himself. He is speaking to those who are saved.

No one can be considered a branch in the Lord's Vine unless there is a vital connection to Him. No one can bear fruit for the glory of the Lord unless they are attached to the Vine and receiving his life-giving nourishment. This is an absolute necessity for life and fruit bearing.

How does one get to be “**in**” Jesus? The only way this can happen is for the “**new birth**” to take place. We must be born again and we must continue to walk a new life in Him. I believe all of us here understand that process.

A vine has one distinct purpose: bearing fruit. But, if you will notice, **the vine itself does not bear the fruit**. It delegates the fruit bearing to the branches. The fruit of the vine are the branches. The fruit of branches are the grapes.

So it is with Jesus Christ. He came to this world to die on the cross for the sins of fallen men. His fruit is the **souls** saved by His grace. His fruit are those branches that have been grafted into Him by grace. His fruit is us, and He has delegated the bearing of fruit to you and me.

The fruit we produce is that of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Then Jesus continued by saying, “**Apart from me you can do nothing**”. No believer can achieve anything of spiritual value independently of Christ Jesus. He also reminds us that there are some who are “in” Him who bear no fruit. But these are not, as some would suppose, true branches that just happen to be fruitless. All true branches bear fruit.

This is why Jesus tells us,

Matthew 7:16a (NASB)

¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits...

III. FALSE DISCIPLES ARE CAST AWAY.

John 15:2a (NASB)

² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away;...

We have already identified Judas as one of the false disciples.

We read of other false disciples earlier in John.

John 6:64-66 (NASB)

⁶⁴ But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. ⁶⁵ And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”

⁶⁶ As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

So it appears that there are followers of Christ who fall away and they are “**taken away**”. The NIV actually says “**He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit**”.

Listen to this very carefully! It is critical to understand.

One of the things that has always troubled me was that it appears, at first glance, that there are believers and unbelievers in the Kingdom of God. The branches that do not produce fruit are attached to the vine. Right? We know from other scripture, however, that only believers can enter the kingdom of heaven. So how can the false disciples be attached to the vine?

The parable of the wheat and the tares give a good understanding. Jesus was told that there were tares (or weeds) that had been planted among the wheat. The slaves of the landowner ask if they should go and remove them. Here was the landowners reply.

Matthew 13:29-30 (NASB)

²⁹ But he *said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

Then Jesus explained the parable to the disciples.

Matthew 13:37-39 (NASB)

³⁷ And He said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, ³⁸ and the **field is the world**; and *as for* the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil *one*; ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.

You will notice that although the wheat and the tares are growing together, there is still a definite distinction between the two. One is wheat and the other a weed. We are both in the field but we are not the same. Remember what Jesus said...We are **in** the world, but we are not **of** the world. **If we are wheat we will be in the kingdom bearing fruit!**

John 15:6 (NASB)

⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

Those who do not bear fruit are not in the kingdom of heaven. Although they may profess to know Christ, He knows that their relationship to Him is insincere. They will be cut away from the vine, gathered up, and cast into the fire to be burned.

CONCLUSION:

Let me conclude with this verse. May we all hear these words when Christ comes again.

Matthew 25:21 (NASB)

²¹ ...'Well done, good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your master.'

He is Lord.