



I AM the True Vine (Jn 15:1-17)

I. INTRO

- A. We are nearing the end of our I AM series from the gospel of John where Jesus has been revealing Himself to be the voice who spoke to Moses at the burning bush.
- a. When Moses is called by God to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, Moses asked, who shall I tell them sent me to lead you? And God replies, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14).
 - b. With the I AM statements in John’s Gospel Jesus is telling His listeners that, not only is He God, but that He is the **embodiment of the different aspects and symbols** of Israel’s history.
 - 1) Bread of Life (Jn 6) = the true manna from heaven
 - 2) Light of the World (Jn 8) = the pillar of fire that provides light and guidance in the dark
 - 3) Door of the Sheep (Jn 10) = the Passover door that when sprinkled with the blood of the lamb spares the first born son
 - 4) Good Shepherd (Jn 10) = He knows His flock intimately
 - 5) Resurrection and the Life (Jn 11) = Whoever believes in Him will never die
 - 6) The Way/Truth/Life (Jn 14) = He is the Messiah God in the flesh
 - 7) And today in Jn 15: I AM the True Vine, or literally, I AM the Vine, the True = He is the One in whom we must abide if we are to bear lasting fruit.
- B. Before I read the text, let’s consider some context for today...

- a. Chapters 13–17 of John’s Gospel are referred to as the Farewell Discourse given by Jesus privately to the eleven disciples/apostles (after Judas excused himself during the Last Supper).
 - b. With His death (and resurrection) on the horizon, “Jesus uses the Farewell Discourse to explain what is to come and why He must go.”¹ And it should bring us some comfort that they really didn’t know what He was talking about – yet.
- C. What’s interesting is there is a gap between the end of chap 14 and the beginning of 15 (see 14:31b & 18:1) Jn 14:31c: *“Get up, let us go from here.”*
1. So, they left the place of the last supper and didn’t cross over into the Garden of Gethsemane until after Jesus had completed His final discourse that includes chap’s 15 and 16 and His long Priestly Prayer that is Jn 17.
 2. So, the question is: Where did they go? And where did Jesus speak the words of Jn 15 about Him being the True Vine?
 3. Here is a possibility...
 - a. Jesus took them from the upper room (s/w corner) through the streets of the city to the temple...It was the time of Passover, so the gates of the Temple would have been left open all night.
 - b. On the gate was the national emblem of Israel – a golden vine. It is possible that Jesus stopped there and spoke Jn 15 to His disciples. And then they began making their way to Gethsemane.
 4. Whatever walking route they took, Jesus is saying something quite monumental in John 15.
 - a. ***He is saying that from now on **THE decisive characteristic** for membership among God’s people is to abide in the life and love of Jesus. Israel thought they were the true vine, but Jesus is saying “You’re not the true vine, I AM.”

¹ Adapted from Edward W Klink III. *John (4) (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, Zondervan Academic 2016: 574.

- b. What Jesus is saying here is that He is starting a new race of people that will gathered out of every ethnic tribe and tongue on earth, that will become a New Israel.
 - c. Gal 6:16: *“And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.”* This newly constituted people of God, whose identifying mark is not circumcision of the flesh but a circumcision of the heart, by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 2).
- D. So, with that backdrop, let’s read the first 17-verses of John 15: 14:31c *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 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. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 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 no-thing. 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. If you abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. **Abide in My love.** 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. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”*

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.”

II. BODY

- A. Jesus, in The Farewell Discourse, was talking about changing His relationship with the disciples.
- B. This Vine and branch metaphor is a perfect illustration to describe the NEW relationship He was going to be having with His disciples – and with us. He would be grafted together by the power of the Holy Spirit and Jesus would be IN us, and we would be IN Him. Jesus is saying, “I’ll still be available/accessible through the power of the Holy Spirit.”
- C. As we move toward celebrating the Lord’s Supper, I’d like us to consider 4 overlapping thoughts on what it means to abide in Christ...
 1. The essential meaning of our active abiding is the act of believing, receiving, and trusting in all that God has done for us in Christ.
 - a. Believing in and receiving Christ are two sides of the same coin, they happen simultaneously at our conversion. If a branch remains or abides attached to the vine in such a way that it is receiving all that the vine has to give, then that is a picture of what John means by abiding.
 - b. Roms 11:17-18: “*...You, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree,¹⁸ do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.*” [Notice a changed metaphor.]
 - c. It is important to acknowledge that abiding requires no effort. You are abiding wherever you are – here in this room or wherever you’re tuning in from. It takes effort to get here, and it will take effort to leave here, but not to stay in your current setting. We don’t have to keep repeating, “I’m sitting in this chair, I’m sitting on this couch, etc.” We just know we’re here. That is abiding.
 - d. Abiding is believing, trusting, savoring, resting, receiving.
 2. Jesus gets very specific about what is flowing between the vine and the branches. He mentions words — His words — His love, and His joy.
 - a. John 15:7 says, “*If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*”

- b. [John 15:9](#) states, *“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.”*
 - c. [John 15:11](#) says, *“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”*
 - d. Abiding in the Vine means that...
 - 1) Our prayer life is being transformed from praying for what we want to praying for what God wants.
 - 2) Positioning ourselves to receive and walk in God’s love. This reminds me of one of the great quotes of Tim Keller: "The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."
 - 3) Abiding in Jesus well grow a joy from the inside out that can be real and present even in the darkest of circumstances.
3. Nothing of any spiritual or eternal significance is possible apart from our abiding in the True Vine.
 - a. John says, *“Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing”* ([John 15:5](#)).
 - b. Sadly, some people have head knowledge without heart knowledge and without heart knowledge of the gospel nothing of any lasting value will come from us. In fact, church goers who have head knowledge without heart knowledge are some of the most miserable people on the planet.
 4. Finally, the overarching goal of us abiding in the Vine is the glory of God.
 - a. [John 15:8](#) says, *“By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”*
 - b. The whole purpose of our not being the vine, but being utterly dependent branches grafted into the vine, is to give glory to God.
 - c. What does it mean to bring glory to God?

- 1) Simply put, it means to enhance God's reputation around the world.
- 2) Here's how Tim Keller has said it in *The Reason for God*:
"To glorify is not only to praise and enjoy, but to defer to and to serve. Your joy is to see joy in the person glorified. This is the opposite of self-centeredness."

D. We would do well to remember that God the Father is the Vinedresser, and He is shaping of our lives through seasons of trimming and pruning and sometimes that is painful. Our invitation is to receive and rest in, and trust and savor, and relax into the The Vine, the True.

Communion

A. For our communion meditation let's take what we've learned in the series and go back into the John 13 – The Lord's Supper.

1. Jesus moves around the room and washes the disciples' feet.
2. When He gets to Peter, Peter initially refuses to let Jesus wash his feet. To which Jesus replies, *"If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."* (Jn 13:8).
3. Do you remember Peter's response? He said, *"Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head"* (Jn 13:9)

E. We can learn something very helpful regarding abiding from Peter's words. Peter is asking for clean feet, clean hands, and a clean head.

F. Here are three questions to consider as we prepare our hearts to receive the Lord's Supper...

1. Are my feet clean? Or, does our walk reflect the abiding presence of Jesus Christ in our lives?
2. Are my hands clean? Does what we put our hands to reflect the abiding presence of Jesus Christ in our lives?
3. Is my head clean? Does what we think about and dream about reflect the abiding presence of Jesus Christ in our lives?

B. There is no doubt that all of us fall short in all three areas. Can we take a few moments of quiet meditation to acknowledge that we do fall short and confess those areas?

- C. And if you are realizing this morning that you have resisted being grafted into The Vine, the True, I would invite you to surrender yourself in the loving care of the Vinedresser...
- D. Let's partake together...

Community Group // Personal Reflection Questions

1. Why is it important for Jesus to declare that He was the One who spoke to Moses at the burning bush? (Do you suppose that would have angered the scribes and Pharisees?)
2. Is it gratifying that His disciples didn't really grasp what was going on even as it's happening in real time? If so, why?
3. What does it mean for us to abide in Christ?
4. Does it make sense that we have even greater access to Jesus now than if He were present in person? What are some implications of our present access to Him?
5. What do we have to do to receive from the Vine?
6. What does it mean that apart from Jesus we can do no-thing?
7. How do we bear eternal fruit?
8. Where do you need to be washed afresh by Jesus – Head? Hands? Feet?