

I Am the True Vine

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John 15:1-10

Jesus is the light. He is not any light, but the LIGHT that gives life. Jesus is the GOOD Shepherd. He is not any shepherd, like a hired one, but Jesus is a real, a good, a genuine Shepherd, THE SHEPHERD.

Today we move on to another image. Jesus is the vine. He is not any vine, but the TRUE VINE.

-Jesus gave examples from the daily life of the people of the 1st Century. His audience could definitely identify with these examples. **The light:** they needed it every day. They used to fill their lamps with oil and put them on a stand. **The Shepherd:** they all knew shepherds, and some of them were standing right there in the audience when they heard Jesus teaching. **The Vine:** all over the Middle East one could find vineyards, because the climate (sun, moisture, tough soil) was ideal for them.

-All of the metaphors Jesus used are taken from the **Old Testament**. We already studied two metaphors, Light and Shepherd. (See sermons of 12/03/17 and 12/10/17).

Today we will look at the metaphor of the vine.

1. Jesus is the True vine.

God is the great Gardener. He plants the seeds and watches over the crop to see it grow and give the right kind of fruit.

The image of a vineyard was used in the Old Testament to describe Israel.

You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its

branches. It sent out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the River.
(Psalm 80:8-11 ESV)

Israel was told she was like a vineyard. Yet, Isaiah warns his people: “Watch out! The vineyard is producing sour wild grapes!”

Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. (Isaiah 5:1-2 ESV)

Jeremiah adds:

"I planted you, a choice vine, entirely of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine?" (Jeremiah 2:21 ESV)

The old vineyard (Israel) did not yield good grapes. Jesus declares he is the new vine.

Illustration: I asked my friend Richard Matoian about vineyard secrets. He told me if the vine owner does not take care of the vine, it has high probability that it will not mature properly. Therefore, one will have a wild vine, which will have worthless fruit (wild grapes). Wild grapes means: rotten, tasteless, insect-infected.

Here let us be careful with the metaphor of vine. God did take care of them as a vinedresser. The people refused to obey God.

Israel was chosen to be the vineyard of God. The vineyard grew wild without “obedience” to its Gardener. **All vineyards can easily go wild.** They need a lot of help to grow in the right direction. The Israelites disobeyed God. The vineyard did not give the right fruit. Jesus declares here saying: “Listen all, **I AM the TRUE Vine.**” Jesus’ **vine will give life, real life, everlasting life, abundant life.** The same theme is recurring again as we saw earlier regarding the light that gives life.

2. Jesus is the True Vine because the FATHER is the Vinedresser

Not only Jesus is the vine, but **his relationship** with his Father is the key in this passage. **Jesus is the vine and his Father is the Vinedresser.** God the Father's hand is on the vineyard.

Illustration: Richard adds saying: The study of the vine is called **viticulture**. The person who runs the vineyard is called **vineyard owner** or **vineyard manager**, or in another professional name: **viticulturist**.²

God the Father is the viticulturist. He is the owner, the manager and the keeper.

Listen to the Word of God:

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. (John 15:2 ESV)

Jesus wants to make sure that we understand that God the Father is the Gardener. He will cut the fruitless branches (**God' judgment**) and will prune branches that bear fruit (**God's discipline**).

Why does the vine need pruning?

One of the reasons the gardener prunes the vine is to stop wasting energy and being unproductive. "You cut out, particularly, the parts of the plant that are growing inwards and getting tangled up. You encourage the shoots that are growing outwards, toward the light."¹

Let me clarify one thing. All of us are invited to bear fruit and be fruitful branches. If you feel this is a harsh judgment, I disagree. Just read the Word of God and see how many **chances God gives** to humanity to be fruitful. If the branches are cut and destroyed, that is a result of our choice not to bear fruit.

Without pruning nothing will grow. It hurts when we are pruned. In Hebrews we read:

The Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” . . (Hebrews 12:6)

but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:10A, 11 ESV)

We will face difficulties whether it persecution, a loss, or a difficult experience. Pruning means discipline, a word no one likes to hear, yet it is important for our faith to grow.

3. We are called to be fruitful branches

In the Bible, we read lot about bearing fruit:

- created in Christ Jesus for good works ... Eph. 2:10
- faith without works is dead... James 2:26
- every good tree bears good fruit... Matt. 7:17

Jesus 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 ESV)

Everything has an order. When Jesus said, **“I am the vine”** he immediately added, **“my Father is the gardener.”** He wanted to teach us that his relationship with his Father is the essence of everything. In fact, we learn a lot from the Trinity: God the Father the Creator, God the Son the Redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit the Sustainer.

Now Jesus moves on to us saying, **“We are the branches.”** We are not any branches; ***we are fruitful branches.***

He also gives the key to become fruitful branches.

“Whoever abides in me and I in him” bears fruit.

ABIDING in Jesus

What does it mean?

Lately Dorcas Guild is studying a book I recommend you to read: **Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World.**

It is very clear from the title that we will be busy (Martha World), especially in this season. Yet, we should take priorities first. We will not grow or be fruitful if we keep serving without being at the feet of Jesus. Abiding in JESUS.

To book simplifies abiding in Jesus:

Prayer + the Word (reading, meditating, memorizing...) + Time = Intimacy with God (abiding in God)

Therefore examine yourself:

Where are you?

Maybe you are not a branch; you are not on the vine. Don't expect anything to happen when you are not connected. I pray that God's Spirit will lead you to take the most important decision in your life, accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior to be your light, Shepherd, and your vine and you will be the fruitful branch.

If you are connected to the vine, you are in the vineyard...are you a fruitful branch? **Do you produce what is pleasing to God?** Or are **you an unfruitful branch?**

Only a branch that receives life-giving sap from the vine will live and bear fruit.

Fruit of the Spirit:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; (Galatians 5:22, 23 ESV)

Do you see the Advent candles representation?

Love, Joy, Peace.

-We will abide in His Love:

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. (John 15:9 ESV)

This means His love will help me love God and love others.

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. (John 15:10 ESV)

And what is the commandment of the Father?

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.
(John 15:12 ESV)

The best way we can enjoy the fruits that we bear is when we share together God's love. EDIFY the BODY

-Our Joy will be complete:

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:11 ESV)

Jesus is saying: "The reason that your joy will be full, complete, because you are in me, you are abiding in me, you are walking with me. My joy is in you."

The reason that we will have inner peace is because we are abiding in HIM, He is the vine and we are fruitful branches.

Illustration: I was talking with a friend from Aleppo who locked the door of his house and his store and left with his family to immigrate to Australia (because of the civil war). He and his family are waiting for their immigration papers in Lebanon. I was on the phone with him. He feels bad that he left Aleppo, especially the Nahadagatz (Martyrs') church where I grew up. He had served there for over 20 years. He feels bad that he had to leave the pastor alone. Yet, today he found out on Facebook that the children of the church were taken to a shoe store and were given Christmas gifts. His joy was enormous. He was in misery, out of his home, few resources to survive, worries about tomorrow, yet when he saw the news of his church his JOY was unbelievable. He told me: "Thank God the mission

is continuing without me... that is Good news." The vineyard exists; God is in charge; the focus in abiding, remaining, attached to vine. God will give the fruit...

Sunday Funday is an outreach program started by three young people, Tiffany, Pari and Katarina. Now they are gone to their colleges for their education. Yet, the outreach did not stop. The new generation under the leadership of Badveli Kevin continues serving the neighborhood. Here is a letter from two weeks ago from a child from the neighborhood:

Check:

1. Are you abiding in him? Are you and Christ united? Are you IN Christ?
2. Is His Word on your mind, is it a light to your path?
3. The Fruit of Spirit comes only from the Spirit of God, from God the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Check if you are missing some of those fruits.

In this advent season may the fruit of PEACE be in you.

Amen

Therefore, on behalf of Christ, I urge you, abide in him. That is, keep on enjoying him and his joy — as your joy. Keep on enjoying him and his peace — as your peace. Keep on enjoying him and his love — as your love. And ask him — and the vinedresser — to cause you to grow in this experience of being filled with all the fullness of God ([Ephesians 3:19](#)).(John piper)

1 NT Wright, John for Everyone p69

2 A.J. Winkler, James Cook, W.M. Kliewer, Loyd Lider, General Viticulture