

Theme: Jesus is the True Vine, bearing fruit where Israel failed, and those who remain in vital union with Him are fruitful to the glory of God.

I. Intro - Visiting Napa and Sonoma Valley

- A. We did this last year - and loved it
- B. Very interesting learning about the wine culture
- C. Humans have cultivated grapes for wine for millennia
- D. Common & important practice in Israel
- E. Jesus builds on this practice - He is the True Vine
- F. What is He saying? Why does it matter today?

II. Jesus Is the True Vine

- A. I AM the true vine
 - “I am the true vine.. John 15:1
 - 1. Jesus is building a vineyard metaphor
 - 2. The TRUE vine - the Old Testament background
 - 3. Israel was often referred to as a vine in the OT
 - a. Hosea 10:1-2; Isaiah 5:1-7; 27:2-6 (before exile)
 - b. Jeremiah 2:21; 6:9; 12:10-13 - as exile approached
 - c. Ezekiel 15; Psalm 80:8-19 - after the exile
 - d. Judaism of the time often referred to Israel as a vine
 - e. Temple had with golden vine w/ huge grape clusters
 - f. Israel was the vine of Yahweh, his vineyard
 - 4. But in OT Israel is always depicted as corrupt vine

I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. ² He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit.

³ “Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? ⁵ Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled.

⁶ I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briars and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.” ⁷ The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress. Is 5:1–7

- a. Israel planted as a choice vine, cared for (vv1-2; 4)
- b. Israel became corrupt (vv2, 3; 7)
- c. Israel will be punished with exile (vv5-6)

I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine? Jeremiah 2:21

- a. Israel a choice vine when planted but became bad
- b. Word for ‘reliable’ is same as ‘true’ vine in John 15:1

Your vine is cut down, it is burned with fire; at your rebuke your people perish. ¹⁷ Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself. ¹⁸ Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name. ¹⁹ Restore us, O Lord God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved. Psalms 80:16–19

- a. The vine has been destroyed for unfruitfulness
 - b. Let the son of man come and restore us
 - c. Then we will become faithful and fruitful!
5. Furthermore Jesus had told parables where Israel did not give good vineyard fruit to God but instead killed the son and tried to steal the vineyard (see Mark 12:1-12)
 6. Against this Old Testament background of Israel always being depicted as a false vine producing only bad fruit, Jesus says “I AM the True Vine.”
 7. Jesus, the son of man at God’s right hand, has come as the True Vine, that God’s people might be restored and become fruitful for God!

III. The Vine, The Gardener, and the Branches

A. A two part metaphor

1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener...

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. John 15:1, 5

1. Jesus is the vine in both sayings
2. V1 - Jesus the vine, Father the Gardener/vinedresser
3. V5 - Jesus the vine, people the branches of the vine
4. We will look briefly at each of these

B. I AM the True Vine, My Father the Gardener

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. John 15:1–3

1. Vineyard metaphor - Jesus vine, Father Gardener
2. Father’s actions those of vinedresser
 - a. He works to make the vine fruitful
 - b. He cuts away dead branches to make room for fruitful ones
 - c. He prunes fruitful branches so they produce more
3. The pruning work of God

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He **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. John 15:1–3

- a. Like in the OT God cuts away dead, false branches
- b. Play on words with cuts off/prunes/clean
 1. Cuts off - αἴρω - cleans away
 2. Prunes - καθαίρω - trims clean - not usual word for pruning; is used for that, but mainly to clean/purify
 3. Clean - καθρός - clean - noun form of verb in v2
 4. “clean” also used of Jesus washing disciples feet in John 13 - and of Judas not being clean
- c. All of this is done so that the true branches can bountifully bear good fruit for the Vinedresser

- d. The process of pruning/trimming clean can be painful, but it produces fruit!
- e. This is why **fruit** is so central in this passage - John uses it 8 times in John 15:1-16 - out of 12 in all of his writings combined!
- f. Highest concentration of 'fruit' in the whole NT!
- g. God the Master Vinedresser is making sure everything is set for us to produce bountiful fruit - the True Vine and His expert care do not fail!

C. I AM the Vine - you are the branches

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. John 15:5

1. Jesus now shifts from the Father to us
2. There are two main points: fruit & remain/abide
3. The branches are called to bear fruit
 - a. Already seen this in the Father as the Gardener
 - b. It is reiterated here that branches connected to the good vine will bear good fruit
 - c. This is God's call for us

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. John 15:16

 1. Disciples chose their master - but our chose us!
 2. He chose us so we would be fruitful for Him
 - d. This is how we glorify God

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit... John 15:8
 - e. This is how we are seen to be the disciples of Jesus

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. Jo 15:8

1. It doesn't make us disciples; it shows we are disciples
2. Disciples become like their Master - and ours is the Fruitful True Vine!

f. Unfruitful branches are cut off, thrown away & burned

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit....

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. John 15:2, 6

1. No fruit shows we are not connected to the vine
2. Such false branches will be cut off by God
3. This primarily refers to Judas and to unbelieving Israel (Note use of clean in v3 and in John 13:10-11)
4. Same warning as in other passages (Matthew 3:10; 7:19; Hebrews 6:8)
5. But it is meant to be a sober warning to all
6. For more information on this text and 'perseverance of the saints'/'eternal security' listen to the special podcast this week

- g. Fruit includes all of our sanctification & mission - growth in character, obedience, & reaching the lost
- h. In short, fruit is the life of Jesus the True Vine being expressed through the lives of His disciples, the true branches

4. We bear fruit by remaining/abiding in the Vine

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.** John 15:5

- a. We are not commanded to produce fruit - we are commanded to remain/abide in the Vine
- b. We do not stress and strain to produce fruit - we remain in the Vine and fruit naturally comes forth
- c. This is a major teaching in John's writings
 - 1. Remain/abide occurs 68x in John's writings
 - 2. It occurs 40x in the Gospel, 24x in 1 John
 - 3. It occurs 10x in John 15:4-10 - only the book of Acts has it as many times as these 7 verses!
 - 4. This is highest concentration of 'remain' in the NT!
- d. We abide in the Vine by regular communion with Him and His people
 - 1. We abide as we commune with Christ through His Word & prayer

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you...⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. John 15:7, 9-10
 - 2. We also abide as we come to His Table - the Vine imagery naturally alludes to this
 - 3. We abide as we love our brothers & sisters in Christ

If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love... ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Jo 15:10, 12
 - 4. It occurs 10x in John 15:4-10 - only the book of Acts has it as many times as these 7 verses!
- e. As disciples we naturally long to abide with our Master, and thus with His other disciples. As we do this, we become like Him.

- f. As branches, we draw our life as we abide in the Vine along with all of the other branches. As we do this the natural result is abundant fruit.

IV. Applying the Word of Jesus the True Vine

A. Do we see Jesus is the True Vine?

- 1. Apart from Him there is no life - we can do nothing
- 2. Those who refuse to draw life from Him will perish
- 3. Have you been grafted into the True Vine?

B. Do we abide in the Vine daily?

- 1. The focus for us is abiding in the Vine
- 2. We do this by communing with God via the means of grace and with His people
- 3. Am I in communion with Christ regularly, drawing life from Him?
- 4. Am I in His Word, and talking with Him in prayer?
- 5. Am I in regular fellowship, displaying Christ's love to other disciples?
- 6. Without daily abiding we will never be fruitful as God intends

C. A prayer to abide in the Vine

Jesus Is the True Vine

John 15:1-8

March 20, 2016

Prayer

Psalms 115:14-15

Teaching keywords: name of God; union with Christ; character; correction; discipleship; word of God; love; Israel; judgment: perseverance; Lent

May the Lord make you increase and be fruitful, both you and your children. ¹⁵ May you be blessed by the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. Psalms 115:14–15

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. John 15:1–8