

Jesus – Our Only Desire

As we come to the end of our Big Old Tangent Sermon Series, we are reminded that it is all focused on the concept that the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Christ and His church. We have already seen how Christ is the fulfiller of the feasts, the Temple, the Sabbath and both the ceremonial and moral laws.

Today we take one last look at how Jesus fulfills. He is the fulfiller of the metaphor. To set the stage we have to look at this morning's gospel John 15 and we have to look at the chapters immediately before it and after it. What we find is that John 15 is smack dab in the middle of a very busy night. Chapter 13 of John focuses on Jesus celebrating the Passover meal with His disciples. In that chapter we see Jesus giving us an example of how we are supposed to be. He, our Lord and savior took off his outer robe put on the gown or the apron of a servant got down on His hands and knees and washed His disciples' feet. Then He told them if I your master and Lord have become your servant and washed your feet then you need to become the servants of all. After that He identified Judas as his betrayer. After that He gives us that new commandment to love one another just as I have loved you; you also ought to love one another. He also foretells Peter's denial. That leads us to chapter 14 and they're still in that upper room, still following the Passover meal. This is when He makes his sixth of the I AM statements. Those statements where He begins using the very name of God from the Old Testament (the "ego eime" the I am). He says 'I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through Me.' He picks up on the new commandment that He had given a little earlier that night about love and He says, 'if you love me you will keep my commandments.' He then gives the promise of the Holy Spirit telling His disciples when the Holy Spirit comes that He would teach you all things and bring to your Remembrance all that I have said to you. He then says to them; 'peace I leave with you My peace I give to you. Not as the world, do I give; peace I leave with you.

He then ends chapter 14 by saying, 'Rise let us go from here.' You would think that that means OK, we're done here. Now it's time to go for a walk out of Jerusalem, across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of olives and the Garden of Gethsemane. But it appears that, that's not what happened. They rose undoubtedly, they got up out of their seats from reclining at the table. They

either stayed in the upper room cleaning up, which is most likely what they did; or they began to walk, because when we look at John 16, we see that He continues with teaching. John 16 is the chapter where He warns His disciples of the persecution that was going to come on them. He makes His 2nd promise to send the Holy Spirit. Then He makes that big statement of, 'I have overcome the world.' In John 17, we read of Christ's high priestly prayer. All of John 17 is Jesus praying. He begins by praying for Himself and what was lying before Him. He then prays for His disciples, that God would spare them, empower them, and use them. Then He prays for you and me, for us, for everyone who would come to faith as a result of the answer to His prayer, for those disciples that the disciples would go out share the word and over generations there would be those who would come to believe. And so, He prayed for us. And then we come to John 18 where in the very first word of the verse, we hear that Jesus and His disciples went across the Kidron Valley. So, it's at John 18 that they actually leave Jerusalem to head over to the garden of Gethsemane to the Mount of Olives. It's a busy night!

So, here we have John 15, it's right in the middle of the finishing of the Passover meal and moving towards His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane; and it's in John 15 that Jesus gives us His final I am statement. He says, 'I am the true Vine and my Father is the vinedresser.' A little bit later He repeats Himself and says 'I am the Vine and 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 nothing.' He then goes on to describe about how serious He is about this abiding in Him. I'd like you to think of what that abiding means. Abiding is to have faith in Him, and to walk with Him, or to walk in His words; to abide stay with Him. He says that if you don't abide in Him, you'll be thrown into the Lake of fire. But if you do abide in Him, it comes with the benefits package. He says, 'ask whatever you will in My name, and you will receive it.' Now again we have to remember that just as Jesus prayed to His Father later that night by saying 'Father if it be your will let this cup pass from me;' so also when we pray in the name of Jesus we also pray not our will, but your will be done. We have that guarantee that when we pray in that way our prayer will be answered. God's will, will be done. God's good and gracious will, will be done; and He also tells us that if we abide in Him and abide in His love, that our joy will be full.

I want you to think about that for a moment. Last week we talked about what it would be like if everybody just followed the Ten Commandments; that it would be a little bit of heaven on earth. Now I want you to think about what it would be like if every one of us truly loved one another with that agape love of Jesus. What would it be like to be in a church where everyone always put everyone else first? Every person here would know that the person sitting next to you, behind you, in front of you, to the side of you; every one of them would be willing to give of themselves to help you to take care of you to make your joy complete. If we were all doing that, I would contend this would be the most joyful congregation in the world.

Our joy will be full but it goes a step beyond that; that would be again experiencing a little bit of heaven on earth. It is what is promised to us when we abide in the love of Jesus. By loving each other as He has loved us by being faithful to Him and having our faith in Him when we are in heaven, we will see it not just in a congregation but in the entire community of heaven. Our joy will be full.

Here comes now the metaphor; and I'd like to remind you of what a metaphor is we oftentimes get metaphors and similes mixed up. A metaphor states that one thing is another. A simile states that something is like another. The metaphor that why I want to focus on here is one that Jesus used. It's one of the primary metaphors of the Old Testament. Throughout the Old Testament, Israel's rootedness as a nation, as a people is rooted in the Promised Land. It's that of a vineyard Israel is a vineyard rooted in the Promised Land that God gave to them. We see it in Hosea 10 verse one. Israel is a luxuriant Vine that yields its fruit. In Jeremiah 22:1 we read God speaking, "Yet I planted you a choice Vine, holy of pure seed. How then have you turned and become degenerate and become a wild Vine?" Jeremiah continues with this theme again in chapter 5:10 and in chapter 12:11. We find this in Ezekiel. We find this in Isaiah, and we find it in our Old Testament reading today, Psalm 80:7-11 where the psalmist Asaph, points out that God brought a Vine out of Egypt. That's the children of Israel. They're the Vine. They had been planted in Egypt, but now they've been picked up in they're being moved. It took 40 years to be moved, but in that 40 years he purified that Vine. The naysayers, the ones who wanted to hold on to the gods of Egypt in the ways of Egypt; they had all died out. What was left was a new generation of people a new generation of people that had been the children who had witnessed the crossing of the Red Sea, had witnessed the giving of the Ten Commandments,

had witnessed the giving of water and the manna and the quail, had witnessed the pillar of fire in the pillar of cloud at night; had witnessed the earth opening and swallowing Korah and those in the rebellion; had witnessed the parting of the Jordan River and crossing into the Promised Land. Then they witnessed that God drove out the nations before them that this was a conquest of the Holy Land, but it was God who delivered it. It was God who planted it and cleared the ground for it and then this Vine, it took deep root and it filled the land from sea to the river to the mountains to Egypt. It's a picture of a vineyard growing and taking over; which now brings us to the crux of John 15.

When Jesus says, 'I am the true Vine and My Father is the vinedresser,' He is now changing the place of rootedness and He's changing the whole dynamic. Whereas in the Old Testament Israel is the Vine that is planted in the Holy Land and then spreads and becomes a vineyard from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, to Syria and Lebanon to the North in Egypt to the South; it now changes from a vineyard to a single vine, Jesus. No longer are the people vines. No longer are they planted in a land. No God's people are grafted into Christ. It's what gives us so much hope. It's in Romans 11:13-24 where Paul speaks of us; that we the gentiles, are grafted into Christ. Along with the Jews who believe in Christ, they also are grafted into Christ. Just like the temple, Jesus takes the physical earthbound object and he now connects it to Himself. So just like the temple, Jesus becomes the temple who we go to for forgiveness, who we go to worship. He now is the Vine. We're not vines anymore. He is the one that is rooted in God Himself. It is through Him, the life-giving waters flow to us the branches. He is the identity. Through him we have spiritual benefits. All the blessings of the land that were talked about in the Old Testament, that would come to the people of Israel; all those benefits and blessings come to us through Him. It's a dynamic change; in the Old Testament it was very much territorial, based on land. The way to God now is not territorial, it is spiritual. The vineyard, the land is no longer an object of religious desire. Let me restate that the vineyard, the land, the country of Israel or the country of United States or Costa Rica or whatever. The land is no longer an object of religious desire, only Jesus is. Jesus is our only desire. We are grafted into Him and all of the life-saving nutrients that we need come through Him, the root, the trunk, the vine to us the branches. Jesus our only desire, because it is only through Him that we are saved.

In our Savior's Name Amen