

Lighthouse Bible Church

June 8th, 2014

John 15: 1 – 11 *Scripture Reading: Matthew 21: 33 - 46*

'If you Abide in Christ'

Since it has been a while since we have been in the book of John, I want to take just a minute to review where we have been that will bring us to our passage in Chapter 15.

Jesus had been spending some time with His disciples in the upper room on the night before His death and He had been teaching them some valuable lessons before His departure.

In Chapter 13 we see Jesus washing the disciples feet because there was no slave to do that and the disciples were too busy worrying about who is the greatest. So Jesus washes their feet and Peter says not just my feet but all of me. And Jesus said **you are clean, but not all of you.**

We saw during our study of that passage that Jesus was talking about their permanent salvation from sin and their daily need for sanctification from sin and the fact that, although they were all with Jesus, they were not all clean, not all saved. And of course we know that he was referring to Judas, because we read later in chapter 13 that Jesus points to Judas as the betrayer, the unclean one.

Jesus told the disciples that He was going away, referring to His own death, and that through His death God the Father would be glorified and He would be glorified. And He also told them that Peter would deny Him 3 times.

Then in Chapter 14, Jesus tells them not to let their hearts be troubled, because when He leaves, He would send another Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

Jesus tells them; I am telling you these things ahead of time so that when they come to pass you may believe and not be afraid or troubled in heart. He then says, I'm not going to talk much with you now because Satan's plan of betrayal through Judas is about to take place and then the Jews will accuse Me and then the Romans will crucify Me.

But I am willing to go through all of this because this is God's plan for the redemption of sinful mankind and because this is My demonstration of love for you and also the testimony to the world of My love for My Father. And that is where we ended chapter 14 and want to begin looking at Chapter 15.

Remember, Jesus is still talking with His, now 11 disciples, as they have left the upper room and are heading to the Garden of Gethsemane. He begins Chapter 15 by sharing an analogy with them that contains a very important truth. He talks with them in the metaphor of a Vine, Vinedresser and branches of the vine. Something the disciples would have been very familiar with.

Vines were planted all over Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. They would be planted on hillsides and sometimes on the plains. They needed constant care so they had to have a vinedresser to water and tend to the fruit and to prune the withered fruitless branches.

They would sometimes build a lookout place connected by walls that run throughout the vines so they could protect the vines and fruit from animals and people. They would crush the grapes in the fields and dry others and even make grape honey with some of the grapes. All of the withered branches and fruitless branches would be collected and burned in a fire nearby.

So Jesus uses this analogy familiar to them to share an important truth and this truth hinges on and revolves around one word: **abide**. In this passage the theme is 'abiding in Christ'.

That word abide, or similar, is used at least 10 times in this passage and the basic premise of this passage is whether or not you abide in Christ and what happens if you do and what happens if you don't. If you abide in Christ you are saved and will bear the fruit of that, if you do not abide in Christ then you are not saved because you bear no fruit, just like the withered fruitless branch.

So first of all we need to ask the question; what does it mean to **abide** in something? Verses 4 - 7 say that we are to 'abide in Christ' and that He will 'abide in us'. Verse 4 says a 'branch must abide in the vine'. Verse 7 says 'if My words abide in you'. Verses 9 - 10 say we are to 'abide in His love'. Verse 10 says that Christ 'abides in the Father's love'. Verse 11 says 'Christ's joy may abide or remain (the same word) in you'.

So what does it mean to abide in something? Well, the word 'abide' in the Greek is the word *meno* and it means to stay (in a certain state of being or place or relation), to continue, to remain, or to endure in. And so it has the idea of permanence, and of course in this case, it is the permanent, continuing, remaining relationship with Jesus Christ.

And that is why I think Jesus says what He says here about the vine and the vine dresser and the branches. He is talking about the permanence of a relationship with Him and uses the analogy of vines and branches that they would have known very well. He uses this because one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, did not abide in Him like the other 11 did.

Jesus doesn't just pull this analogy out of thin air; it fits perfectly with what had happened with Judas and 11 in the upper room. One was unclean and betrayed Him and bore no fruit and the 11 were bathed clean, followed Him and are bearing fruit. *Use example of 'I am the light' and 'the living water that whoever drinks will never thirst, He is the 'bread of life', the 'Good Shepherd' ... maybe they are walking in a place where these vines are growing...*

What you have here is two groups of people represented in this analogy or metaphor of vines and branches. You have the true disciples, fruitful branches and followers of Christ, the **11 represented here**, and by extension all true believers of Christ because of the fruit they bear in their love for Christ and obedience to His word, and you have those withered fruitless branches who profess to follow Christ but do not abide in Him and do not love Him and follow His word and there is no fruit in them because they are not saved, **Judas represented here** and by extension all false converts and religious unbelievers.

You even see the outcome of both branches represented, both groups of people represented; The genuine, true branch that bears fruit is pruned to bear more fruit and the fruitless, withered branch is taken away and burned in the fire.

What this passage boils down to is believers that bear fruit and unbelievers who do not; and the destiny of both. This is not **just** about Christians or believers in this passage, it is a contrast between believers and unbelievers. If you look at verses 1 – 11 as just relating to Christians then what these verses are saying is that if you don't bear fruit as a Christian you will be cast into the fire, which as we shall see, represents hell. You are saying they can lose their salvation and go to hell and that nullifies the finished work of Christ on the cross.

What this is, is a contrast between the true followers of Christ and the false converts of salvation that attach themselves to Christ and His church, like a branch to a vine, but bears no fruit because it is not a true vine. One writer said this "People outwardly attach to Jesus Christ, but have no inward life, and they have all different reasons for doing it. Maybe they like the fellowship of the people, good, moral people. Maybe they want to fool themselves into thinking they're religious. Maybe they want to pacify a wife or husband or maybe they want to seem like some kind of a goody-good that they're not, and they cover up their own guilt by certain behavior that appears to them to be religious. Maybe they're afraid of God, and they want God's salvation on their terms, not His terms, and they think if they behave themselves in a religious fashion that God could never X them out, ultimately. For whatever their reason, there are still Judas' today". Look at ver 1.

Verse One: I am the true vine

Jesus identifies Himself as the **true vine** in the analogy. The only One where true life and growth and fruit can come from. In the Old Testament, God looked at the nation of Israel as a vine of blessing and the means to know and come to God for the rest of the world because they were given the law of God. In **Jeremiah 2: 20 – 22** it says **for of old I have broken your yoke and burst your bonds and you said ‘I will not transgress’. When on every high hill and under every green tree you lay down playing the harlot. Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest quality.** Then it goes on to say **how then have you turned before Me into the degenerate plant of an alien vine? See Ezekiel 15**

Israel was God’s vine of blessing until they chose to reject their Messiah and King and then they became a fruitless, unfruitful vine. That is the whole parable of Matthew 21 that was read earlier and Jesus said there **I will lease the vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.**

Jesus is now the **true vine** to know and come to God in salvation and because of Israel apostasy, they lost the blessing of God and now blessings can come only through a union, an abiding with the true vine Jesus Christ. Then Jesus says

And My Father is the vinedresser That word vinedresser or husbandmen, as some versions say it, is used in **2nd Timothy 2: 6** and **James 5: 7** of a **farmer**. The one who prepares the soil, tills the soil, plants the seeds, waters the crops and reaps the harvest. Verse 2 tells us what part of the vinedressers responsibility is.

Verse 2: every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away and every branch that bears fruit He prunes that it may bear more fruit.

Jesus says **every branch IN ME** not every branch on a vine, because this is a spiritual truth He is sharing. Every **branch**, every person that attaches Himself to Me **that does not bear fruit, He takes away**. Like a vinedresser removes the withered fruitless branch, so God removes the fruitless unbelieving person.

Where does every branch that does not bear fruit go? He says **He takes away** and **Verse 6** tells us where; **he is cast out as a branch and is withered and they gather them and throw them into the fire and they are burned**.

The fire He is talking about is the same fire mention that every unbeliever will be thrown into someday at God's final judgment. In **Matthew 13: 49 – 50** it says **the angels will come forth and separate the wicked from among the just and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth**. In **Matthew 3: 10** every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **Matthew 7: 18 - 20** a good tree cannot bear bad fruit nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. **Mark 9: 43** describes this place as hell, where the fire is never quenched.

We know this analogy is a reference to unbelievers, false converts, the religious lost, false teachers who have somehow identified with Christ, because no true believer will ever be cast out right? Isn't that what **John 6: 37** says **all the Father gives Me will come to Me and the one who comes to Me I will by no means CAST OUT**.

Then He says **every branch that bears fruit He prunes** (*kathero = to cleanse*) **that it may bear more fruit**. This is every person who identifies with Christ and bears fruit that shows evidence of salvation and regeneration because of their love for Christ and obedience to Him and His word. These are the ones He **prunes** so they **may bear more fruit**.

A vinedresser takes a good branch and sometimes has to prune or remove those things that attach itself to it that would hinder its growth, that saps the strength of the plant; and God does the same with us with those **weights and sins so easily beset us** and sap our spiritual strength. Look at **Hebrews 12: 6 – 11** and sometimes that pruning comes in the form of trials and tests as **James 1: 2 – 4**. Another way that this pruning take place is seen in Verse 3.

Verse 3: you are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

It is through the word of God. For the disciples it is the actual words of Christ, **the words He had spoken to them**, that they believed and were saved by and obeyed. For us today it is the word of God, the Bible, the word of Christ as **Colossians 3: 16** says **dwelling in us richly**.

God uses the sharpest tool He has to prune those areas of our lives to mold us and shape us into the image of Christ. **Hebrews 4: 12** says **the word of God is living and powerful and (what) sharper than any two edged sword**.

The trials expose the problem and prepares us for the word that can cure it. **Psalm 119: 67** says **before I was afflicted I went astray but now I keep Your word**. He goes on to say in **Verse 71** **it is good for me that I have been afflicted that I may learn Your statutes**. Then He says in Verse 4 of our text in Chapter 15.

Verses 4 - 5: abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine and you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in Him bears much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.

Jesus, again uses the analogy of vine and branches to show how someone abides or remains in Christ and is fruitful as opposed to a branch that has no vine or source for life or growth.

As a born again believer, we are attached to the vine of Christ, the lifeline for our spiritual life is because of Christ **abiding in us**. We grow together through Him, we get our strength from Him, we are filled with His life, just like a branch is to a vine. That is the closeness and intimacy we have with Christ as a born again believer.

We are the branches through which Christ bears fruit in our lives. No branch can bear fruit **of itself** just like no person can bear fruit **unless you abide in Christ**. He wants true disciples, true followers that bear fruit, not those that just hang on that are fruitless, superficial, non-abiding branches.

He says twice in Verses 4 and 5 that this abiding is both you abiding in Him and more importantly Him abiding in you. A lot of people may attach themselves to Jesus, but, unless He is abiding in you, your life is fruitless and destined for eternal fire. It is like what Jesus said in **Matthew 7: 21 – 23 *Read or quote not everyone who says to Me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven...***

True followers of Christ may have times where they fail and don't produce fruit, much like Peter when He denied Jesus 3 times, but if they are abiding in **and** attached to the lifeline of Christ, then they will never wither or fail to produce some kind of fruit, and some more than others as the Parable of the Sower says in **Matthew 13: 23 he who hears and understand the word indeed bears fruit and produces some a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty**. But they produce fruit.

Sometimes we seem to be the last ones to know that we are really bearing fruit. We look at others around us and compare ourselves with the fruit they are bearing and question whether we are even bearing fruit at all. The problem with that is, is that we are equating external behavior with fruit. And there is some of that, but the Bible equates real fruit, not so much on a physical external level, but on a spiritual, internal level that shows itself in external fruit. Only God knows the heart.

Galatians 5: 22 – 23 says what **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.**

In **Ephesians 5: 9** it says **the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness and truth.** Those things that may or may not be readily seen by you, but the results of them are experienced by those with whom you share them.

Hebrews 13: 15 says the **sacrifice of praise is fruit.**

Romans 15: 28 and **Philippians 4: 17** calls sacrificial giving fruit. *Other verses listed talk about spiritual fruit that we can bear: Matthew 3: 8, Ephesians 5: 9*

And might I add, every Christian is a fruit bearer of some kind, that will show itself in some way. **Ephesians 2: 10** says that **we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared BEFORE HAND that we should walk in them.**

Titus 2: 14 says we were redeemed from every lawless deed ... His special people, zealous for good works.

What did James say about faith in **James 2: 17, 26** **faith without works is (what) dead.**

John the Baptist told the Pharisees and Sadducees in **Matthew 3: 8** **to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance,** that evidences itself that you have turned from your sin. Then he goes on to say in **Verse 12** **the winnowing fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**

Those who are not abiding in Christ and His word will be evidenced by their eventual falling away as **1st John 2: 19** says **they went out from us but they were not of us for if they had been of us they would have continued with us but they went out that they might be made manifest that none of them were of us.**

The real fruit bearers and abiders in Christ will abide always and it will show through their obedience to His Word. **John 8: 31 if you abide in My word you are My disciples indeed** and that is exactly what He is going to say in Verse 7.

Verse 7: If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you.

Jesus says, an added blessing of abiding in Me and Me and My **words** abiding in you, is that you will experience answered prayer. As we saw back in Chapter 14: 13 that it is not a blanket asking for anything and receiving. When we pray, we pray in His name; which is prayer consistent with His will, His person and for His glory.

We will experience answered prayer if we are abiding in Him AND if His **words abide in us**. You see, the promise of answered prayer is to those who are abiding in Christ and controlled by the words of Christ. That is why **Colossians 3: 16** says **let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding**. The Psalmist wrote in **Psalms 37: 4 – 5** **delight yourself in the Lord and He shall (what) give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass.**

Verse 8: by this My Father is glorified that you bear much fruit, so you will be My disciples.

Only when we abide in Christ and His word abides in us are we able to glorify Him through the lives that we live and through the prayers that He answers that bring glory to Himself, as He said earlier in John 14: 13.

Verses 9 – 10: as the Father loved Me, I also have 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.

Think about the perfect love that God the Father had for His Son and now Jesus says **I have loved you** the same way. Then Jesus tells them not only to abide in Him and bear much fruit, and not only to let His word abide in you but now Jesus says **abide in My love**.

Jesus says to stay, remain, continue, endure, **abide in My love**. That is the evidence of a true believer in Christ, one who remains in love with Jesus no matter what. How do we continue and remain in love with Jesus? He tells us in **Verse 10. If you keep My commandments you will abide in My love**. That is what he has said over and over again, consistent, not perfect, obedience is the greatest evidence of love. A true born again believer abides, bears fruit, continues in love and obeys from a heart of love.

Then Jesus says **just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love**. Jesus says I am the example for you to follow. You have seen how I have loved My Father and obeyed His word and did His will.... That is what I want from you. I don't want any more Judas', no more hypocrites, I want real genuine followers who abide in Me, and My word in them and they are fruit bearers and love Me and one another and believe and obey the word of God.

Verse 11: these things I have spoken to you that My joy may remain in you and that your joy may be full.

Jesus says to them that He wants them to have the joy that He has. Think about that; He is about to be arrested, falsely accused, beaten, scourged, crucified and die, and yet He says 'you can have My joy'.

As we have seen before, your joy does not depend on your circumstances, because circumstances change. Your joy, true fullness of joy, depends on your relationship with Christ.

You remember in **Hebrews 12: 2** it says **looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the JOY that was set before Him, endured the cross...**

Jesus looked beyond His circumstances, beyond the cross, to the glory that awaited Him after His resurrection and glorification into heaven. That is why the Psalmist wrote in **Psalm 16: 8 – 11** **I have set the Lord always before me because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption you will show me the path of life and in Your presence is fullness of joy**

By the way Jesus say **that My joy REMAIN in you.** That word remain is the same exact word in the Greek as abide is in this passage the other 10 times. So the bottom line is this: Only when a true born again believer abides in Christ continually, bears fruit, continues in love and obeys from a heart of love, can they experience true fullness of joy. What about you

Gospel here

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Introduction and Review:

Verse 1:

Jeremiah 2: 20 – 22, 2nd Timothy 2: 6
James 5: 7, *Ezekiel 15*

Verse 2, 6:

Matthew 13: 49 – 50, Matthew 3: 8, 10, 12
Matthew 7: 18 – 20, Mark 9: 43, James 2: 17
John 6: 37, Hebrews 12: 6 – 11, James 1: 2 – 4

Verse 3:

Colossians 3: 16, Hebrews 4: 12, Psalm 119: 67
Psalm 119: 71

Verses 4 – 5:

Matthew 7: 21 – 23, Matthew 13: 23, 3: 8, 12
Galatians 5: 22 – 23, Ephesians 5: 9, 2: 10
Hebrews 13: 15, Romans 15: 28, 1st John 2: 19
Philippians 4: 17, Titus 2: 14, James 2: 17, 26
John 8: 31

Verse 7:

Colossians 3: 16, Psalm 37: 4 – 5

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