

Our Life in the Vine

John 15:1-17

John Little

Demonstration

In the demonstration we saw two branches. Both of these branches were part of the plant yesterday.

The first branch was hard and would not bend. It was brittle. The inside of the branch was as hard as the outside because there was no moisture inside the branch, all the tissue inside the branch had become hard wood. It couldn't even accept water. When we tried to remove a smaller branch from this large branch, it broke off with a snap. There was no fruit on the branch and there was no possibility of fruit ever growing on this branch. All the life providing nutrients in the plant were going to other branches. The plant couldn't push life into this branch if it wanted to. It was hard wood. It was dead.

The second branch was easy to bend without breaking it. There were lots of green leaves on the branch and on all the little branches coming out of it. The little branches won't break off they just bend. We could prune the branch by cutting little branches off. We could even see many places where someone had already pruned this branch a long time ago, but the branch is still really healthy even though some large parts of it were cut away. We could also see berries (fruit) on this plant. It was alive and healthy.

Jesus was a master at using parables and illustrations to teach the truth. On the night he was betrayed just after eating the Last Supper with his disciples, He uses the example of a vine and its branches to describe the relationship between Himself and His disciples. This lesson was not only for his 12 disciples. It is also for all of us who believe on Jesus and consider ourselves to be his disciples. In his simple illustration of "vine and branches", Jesus reveals something that is not only true and important, but miraculous and wonderful as well.

This morning I'd like us to consider three questions:

1. What does it mean to remain in the vine and why this is essential
2. What can we do to remain in the vine as healthy branches
3. What are the results (fruit) when we remain in the vine

Let's pray.

The lesson Jesus is teaching is: Branches remain in the vine! But this is not where this started.

To understand this lesson we need to understand one of the most basic truths about God:

Your Heavenly Father wants to be with you and He wants you to be with Him.

If we look over the expanse of human history we see God dwelling with us.

- God Himself was there in the Garden.
- God was present in Israel – He was revealed through His glory in the tabernacle and through His acts and His words through the prophets of Israel.
- God came to earth in the person of Jesus, who revealed God in His teaching, His miracles, and in taking our punishment. He said, "If you have seen me you have seen the Father." [John 14:9]
- God is now present in the church, the Body of Christ.– revealing Himself to the world through the love we show to one another.
- Finally John, describes the end of history in Revelation 21:1-4
"I saw a new heaven and new earth and... the tabernacle of God is among men and He shall dwell among them and they shall be his people and God Himself shall be among them."

So we see God working throughout human history to bring us back to a setting where God Himself is dwelling with humankind.

So you see: Your Heavenly Father wants to be with you and He wants you to be with Him.

Why does He want to be with you? Because He loves you and that's what He is like.

What does He expect to get out of it? Just being with you.

What does He expect you to get out of it? Just being with Him.

So keeping in mind that God wants to be with us, let's explore our three questions.

1. What does it mean to remain in the vine and why this is essential?

- a. One of the most striking things about this illustration is that there are two kinds of branches: one type of branch has life and is pruned so that it will bear fruit and stay healthy the other type has no life, cannot produce fruit and so is removed, discarded and burned.

We would like to think that all people everywhere are branches on God's vine, "members of God's family" we might say. I personally like that idea. It feels safe and cozy. But here, whether I like it or not, Jesus clearly says there are two types of branch: ones that are part of the vine and ones that are not. Ones that can be pruned and bear fruit and ones that can no longer bear fruit. I believe Judas was an example of a branch that did not remain in the vine.

- b. To be "In the Vine" (or In Jesus) means that we who believe have been brought into the Divine Life. A branch is part of the vine in such a way that their tissue and fibers are interwoven. You can't really tell exactly where the vine ends and the branch begins. The branch gets life -water and nutrients- from the vine. We could say that the branch "shares the life" of the vine.

Jesus used this example because he wanted to tell us that we share his life.

This is astounding and nothing short of miraculous.

We read in God's word that those who believe on Jesus have been given eternal life and we very often think this means that our life goes on forever without end after we die. This is true in a sense, but it is not the whole story.

It does not mean that the life I began when I was born is now going to last forever. Rather it means that when I believe on Jesus and what he did for me on the cross, I actually receive a different type of life: a life with an eternal quality or a divine quality When Jesus told this to the Pharisee, Nicodemus, he referred to it as being born a second time. [John 3] In Chapter 1:12-13 John says that "all those who received Christ were given the right to become children of God, ... born of God's will."

As we read the surrounding chapters here in John (and I suggest you read through chapters 12-17) we can see that Jesus continually makes the point that He is *in the Father* and *the Father is in Him*. He says that if we have seen Jesus then we have seen the Father. Jesus says that everything He speaks is from the Father *who is abiding in Him*. He exhorts his disciples saying "believe me that *I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.*"

He is describing the divine life, the trinity - the relationship of God the Father and God the Son.

Then Jesus tells them that when He has returned to the Father He will send them the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. Jesus says "in that day, you will know that *I am in My Father and you in me and I in you.* [John 14:20]

- c. This means that we who believe Jesus have been brought into the Divine Life. John 17 is the prayer Jesus made before he was crucified. As He prayed He asked His Father that all his disciples through out time would be included in the “Divine Life.”

John 17:20-23: *“My prayer is not for them [11 disciples] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*”

- d. So then, to remain in the vine means
- i. we have been given the Divine Life and we need to continue to depend on the source of Divine Life which is Jesus, as our source of this Life.
- e. Why is it essential to remain in Jesus?
- i. Just as the branch receives life from the vine, we receive our life-nourishment and power from Christ as His life is growing in us
 - ii. It is the only way we can grow and bear fruit [v15:4-5] apart from me you can do nothing.
 - iii. Bearing this fruit glorifies God [v15:8]
 - iv. When we are in Christ and He is in us and we love one another, then God is revealed to others to show His love and convince them that Jesus is the Son of God.

2. What can we do to remain in the vine as healthy branches?

- a. In verse 4 Jesus says “Remain in me” or “Abide in me” command means do something
- b. Read v7 Jesus clarifies that He abides in us when “[his] words abide in [us].
What can we do to be sure that the words of Jesus stay in us?
 - i. Spend time reading and thinking about God’s word
 - ii. Not just in our heads but in our hearts, in our lives
 - iii. If we take His words to heart, then we will live according to those words.
This helps to grow the life of Christ in us.
 - iv. Spend time with others who know these words.
 - v. Spend time with God. Ask for His help.
- c. Read v9-10 Jesus says “abide in my love” and then says we abide in His love by keeping His commandments and obeying Him just as Jesus has kept the Father’s commandments and remained in His Love. This is the Trinitarian Life or Divine Life. Jesus says that it works between Him and us just the way it works between His Father and Him.
Back in John 5:19 Jesus told them that the Son can do nothing except what He sees the Father doing.
Now He is telling his disciples and us that we should do what we see Jesus doing – in other words -obey His commandments. In v12 He says his commandment is to love one another. How do we love? Jesus tells us in v13: we lay down our lives for one another.

3. What are the results when we remain in the vine?

- a. We bear fruit
- b. The fruit we bear will be lasting. [v16]
- c. Jn 17:21 We become one with Christ and one with each other because we become part of the divine life that unites God the Son with God the Father. This convinces those not yet in the vine that Jesus was sent from God and they come into the vine.
- d. Paul writes about the fruits of the Spirit-life in his letter to the Galatians.
Read Galatians 5:19-26

Conclusion

If you are not in the vine this morning there is no need to remain outside. God has laid His own life down for you. He welcomes you with open arms and requires nothing but a humble admission that you need His grace and forgiveness. If you want to talk more about this please come see me after the service.

If you are in the vine, that is, if you have life in Jesus, then be sure that you are letting the words of Jesus sink into your head and into your heart. Put them into practice. Rejoice that you have the Divine Life. And do what you see Jesus doing- just as Jesus did what He saw His Father do. And what did Jesus do? He gave His life for His friends. Let the love of Jesus remain in you. Are you ready to lay your life down for a friend? What would you give up today for the good of someone else?

The interesting thing about a thriving branch is that it doesn't produce branch fruit it produces vine fruit. The good branch is the one that allows the life of the vine to flow through it and produce fruit. All the branch does is "bear" the fruit. It doesn't create it. Fruit is the natural result of a branch that carries the life of the vine.

Don't be guilt ridden about what you are producing. It isn't our job to produce the fruit. We are branches.

All we have to do is remain in the vine, listening and living the words of Jesus, loving Him and others. If we do the fruit will come: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

This will glorify our Heavenly Father and will demonstrate that the God of the universe, our Heavenly Father does indeed dwell among us.

Remember, **Your Heavenly Father wants to be with you and He wants you to be with Him.**