

The Vinedresser
John 15:1-2, 6, 8
Abiding in Christ (Dr. James Rosscup)
Reading: Matthew 7:13-29

Bethany Baptist Church (p.m.)
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Summer is here and I know many people have already invested a lot of time and expectation in a *garden*!

Tomatoes & peppers & carrots & watermelon & sweetcorn.

Gardens are hard work – sometimes you get a big yield for your efforts, occasionally the results are pretty disappointing.

People have all kinds of ideas about how to make their backyard plots more fruitful: favorite strains of tomatoes or corn, watering systems, and almanacs.

Pulling weeds and watching out for deer & raccoons.

Gardens are a labor of love!

Jesus told a powerful story that pictured God as a gardener.

Let's read John 15:1-11.

God appears (implied in vv.1 & 2, 6, & 8) as a gardener, or more particularly as a vinedresser. We'll come back to that, which is the focus of this evening's message, but first let's review:

Jesus' Upper Room story is an allegory – a true to life story that teaches an important principle (sometimes a pretty involved story).

You have to be careful not to find too many details & symbols in an allegory – the story has a main point and you have to focus on that.

Jesus began by identifying Himself as the *True Vine*. Both terms are important.

The *vine* (vineyards) was an important **OT** symbol. It pictured *Israel* and God's *care* for Israel. It also pictured Israel's *reluctance* to produce good fruit for God (e.g. Isa 5:1-7).

Jesus' claim to be *the true vine* could also be translated *the ultimate vine*. Keeping w/ the idea of the *vine* as Israel, Jesus is probably telling His disciples that He is the *ultimate fulfillment* of everything God promised through Israel. *Kingdom, Davidic king, peace, favor with God.* God intended all of Israel's hopes to be *fulfilled* in & through Jesus.

Jesus identifies the Heavenly Father's role in His story.

1. **V.1** – *My Father is the vinedresser.*
2. The Greek term is **γε ορ γος** (Gr) –compound word from *earth* + *work*...
 - a. ...the word can be understood generally of a *farmer*;
 - b. ...or more *specifically* of the *farmer of a vineyard*. (E.g., It also appears that way in **Matt 21**.)
3. Another nuance of *vinedresser* is to understand it as the vineyard's *proprietor*; as such he can have *others* do the work or *do it himself*.
4. One of the responsibilities of the *vinedresser* is to **evaluate the fruitfulness of the vineyard and to respond accordingly**. That idea, of course, is an *important aspect* of Jesus' story here in John 15.

Let's think about the vinedresser & the vine; or to be more exact God & His Son, the Lord Jesus.

1. The main focus of the text boils down to the *life of the believer*. However, we can still learn a few things about God's relationship to *Jesus* here.
2. Directly from the text we are immediately reminded that Jesus asserts that God is His *Father*.
 - a. Consistent with similar statements in the **NT**, in which Jesus claims that *God is His Father*...
 - b. ... or in which the Bible states that *Jesus is God's Son* (John 3:16, 1 John 3:3 (etc))...
 - c. The Bible teaches a special relationship between Jesus & God (Jn 3:16 – **only begotten** Son) & ultimately indicates the **deity** of Jesus.
 - d. For example, Jesus *identified* with this special relationship, *claimed* to be eternal (I *came to*, I *return to*), *received* worship and *claimed* privileges & authority associated traditionally with Jehovah. Thus Jesus claimed to *be God in human flesh*.

3. Jesus' claim to be the *true vine* (Israel) and for the Father to be the *vinedresser* implies that God "*planted*" Christ, as He *planted Israel*.
4. And it's God who *gives the vine its branches* thus picturing that He *gives Christ His disciples*.
 - a. One of my fav texts for this is John 6:37 – ***All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will not turn away.***
 - b. Another would be John 17 where Jesus stated that He had *not* lost any of the true disciples *that God had given to Him*.
5. And in all of this, as the *ultimate vine* before the *vinedresser*, Jesus was always *in submission & in harmony* with His Father's will.
 - a. Dr. James Rosscup suggests that Jesus is the *perfect realization* of **Psalm 1:3** – *He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, which bears its fruit in its season, and its leave does not wither and in whatever he does, he prospers.*

But the real “*vinedresser*” lessons in John 15 deal with the vinedresser & *branches* (→ believers).

1. The lessons are *challenging*, even *sobering*. Let’s **reread the particular vss. that apply: v.1-2, 6, 8.**
2. Jesus’ emphasis for the Father is on *inspecting, pruning, removing, burning*.
3. In this, Jesus sees **two** types of *branches* & thus two kinds of *professing Christians: unfruitful & fruitful*.
 - a. *The **unfruitful** branch.* God inspects them for *fruit*. Other parables indicate He would look more than just once.
 - i. We’ll look at the *fruit* more closely in a future study, as we look at the *branches*, but...
 - ii. Here is the *bottom line*: the *unfruitful* Christian *professes faith*, but he/she is **not** really saved.
 - iii. *Why would we say that?* Can we say that someone who claims to be a Christian *isn’t*? On what *basis*? Because (2) Jesus indicates there is *no fruit* at all (present tense → *current & continuous condition = never any fruit*).
 - iv. So the Father *takes them away*, in **judgment** (6).

- b. There is the *fruitful branch*! The vinedresser *watches* and patiently *waits* for fruit (**James 5:7** – *Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit.*).
- i. This branch is **both** *professor* and a *possessor* (she/he *professes* faith & really *possesses* saving faith)!
 - ii. Again, Dr. Rosscup remarks: *In the life of the person saved by grace there is at least some fruit showing for the fact that God's grace has truly touched him.*
 - iii. A fruitful branch is *tended to – pruned*. The basic idea is *cleansing &* again is in the *present tense – now & all the time*.
 1. Pruning removes *rotten wood* to avoid disease, & *runners* that draw away nutrients. The point is a *healthier* branch and a *more fruitful* branch.
 2. This is a picture of the lifelong process we refer to (theologically) as *progressive sanctification*.
 3. Remember that the chief concern of a *vinedresser* is always the *yield of his vineyard*!
 - iv. We will say more on this later, but for now we just need to point out the important role of the *Word of God* (**note v.3 & 7; Jn 14:21; 17:17**).
5. Where do we go to learn more about *fruit & fruit-growing*? (*Not Gurney's!*) ***God's Word***.
- a. For example, God's word tells us about the *fruit of the Spirit* (Gal 5) and the *characteristics of genuine love* (1 Cor 13) and the *results of a surrendered life* (Rom 12) and the *steps to the gospel worthy walk* (Eph 4).

6. Does the entire Bible teach such a *straightforward & strict* understanding on the relationship between *fruitfulness & salvation*? **Yes!**
- a. *“Therefore bear fruit in keeping w/ repentance.”* John the Baptist, John 3:8
 - b. *“Every plant that My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted.”* Mt 15:13
 - c. *“If you love Me you will keep My commandments.”* Jesus, John 14:15
 - d. *...you are God’s field...* 1 Cor 3:9 (i.e. He owns you; you are accountable to Him).
 - e. *By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.* 1 John 2:5b-6
 - f. And this clear & logical teaching by Jesus: *“You will know the by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, not can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit I cut down and throw it in the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.”* Matthew 7:16-20

To summarize, the lesson about the vinedresser is that God is always *inspecting us for fruit* (that's just what a *vinedresser* does!). If we *bear fruit*, God works in our life to help us *bear even more fruit*. If we *don't bear fruit*, we are *not* really a Christian. ... If we won't *repent*, we will be *judged*.

1. Let's take away a few lessons to help **us bear fruit**.
2. **#1 - Take this truth seriously:** God is *inspecting your life* for fruit! Many people who claim to be Christian don't take fruitfulness seriously.
 - a. Christian, do you have things in your life that are *keeping* you from being fruitful! You know...*deadwood & distractions!*
 - b. ...from being *holy!* *Growing!* *Evangelistic!* *Serving!*
 - c. ...consider carefully – *God trims!* And if God *isn't pruning you* – *that's even worse!*
3. **#2 – So draw near to Christ** (→ He promises to *draw near to you*). After all, He is the *vine* & the source of *nourishment & life*. Here's how to begin to draw near:
 - a. **Pray** daily – spec. *tell Him you want to be closer* (**Eph 3** – *in the Christ Jesus our we have boldness & confident access through faith in Him*).
 - b. **Read** your Bible daily (**Psa 1:2-3** – *His delight is in the Law of the Lord & in His Law He meditates both day & night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not with & in whatever he does, he prospers*).
 - c. **Hang out** with Christians daily (church). **Heb 3:13** – *But encourage one another day after day as long as it is still called “today” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*
4. Let's close with one last look at **v.8:** “*My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples.*”

...pray...