

Series: John

Title: The True Vine and the Husbandman

Text: John 15: 1-8

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John 15: 1: I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2: Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. 3: Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4: Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5: I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6: If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. 7: If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8: Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Proposition: The Lord Jesus is instructing, strengthening, and comforting his apostles with his precious promises. The point of all that he says is this: *“Abide in me,...for without me ye can do nothing.”*

SETTING OUR AFFECTION

John 15: 1: I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

The Lord begins this parable by setting our affection where we must abide, *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.”*

“I am the true vine.” The Lord Jesus is the great “I AM.” He is God in human flesh, the holy and righteous Lord and Savior of his people. He has declared himself to be the ‘I AM’ many times and in each he reminds us he is All and in all to his people.

Here he declares *“I am the true vine.”* The vine is the life of its true branches. From the vine all life and nourishment is ministered into the branches making the branches bear fruit. The Lord Jesus Christ is the True Vine: he is our Righteousness, our Life, our Salvation, our All!

“And my Father is the husbandman.” The vineyard, the church belongs to God the Father. He is the Vine planter and the vine dresser. God the Father planted the true Vine. He chose Christ his Son. God the Father sent him into the world to manifest the righteousness of God. He sent him to save his people—his true branches. That is what Christ accomplished by his death on the cross in place of his people and what the Father accomplished through Christ by his gospel which he preached, and continues to preach, into the hearts of his people. God the Father is the Husbandman who cares for his branches, his people, united to Christ the Vine.

Jeremiah 23: 5: Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. 6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THE WORK OF THE HUSBANDMAN

John 15: 2: Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

The Lord Jesus declares what the Father does as the Husbandman. This verse has been preached so as to terrify the Lord’s true saints, his true branches. Some preach it so as to turn the sinner entirely to himself so that he is left thinking he can and must produce fruit in himself. But the Lord Jesus’ purpose in declaring this is to make his children, his true branches, depend upon and joy in the Lord alone.

John 15: 11: These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full.

Here is the joy. Who does the Lord declare does this work? God the Father, the Husbandman. *“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit HE taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, HE purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”*

They had just witnessed Judas Iscariot depart from Christ. Yet, they Lord’s true apostles abode or remained with Christ looking to him alone. Judas Iscariot was not troubled; he was gone to betray the Lord for a few pieces of silver. Yet, these true branches abode with Christ and were suffering great trouble of spirit and would suffer much more tribulation in the world.

So the Lord Jesus declares what God the Father, the Husbandman of his vineyard, was doing—both to Judas Iscariot and to them. This is what he does in his vineyard to this day. *“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit HE taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, HE purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”*

The point is not that God shall take away any of his elect for whom Christ died, who are born of his Spirit, justified by his blood, complete in him. He shall not take away his people. He declares later,

John 15: 16: Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should [shall] go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should [shall] remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

The point is to declare that it is God the Father, the Husbandman, who does this work! To the true apostles Judas appeared to bear fruit. They did not suspect Judas as the betrayer. But they suspected themselves. They each said, *“Lord is it I?”*

So the Lord is lifting a great burden off his true people by declaring God the Father is the Husbandman caring constantly for his vineyard. God the Father knows the true branches that are his and the branches that are in the vine by a profession only, who bear no fruit. He takes away the branches that bear no fruit. And when those who believe him suffer as the apostles were suffering, he teaches us that it is the Father who purges—prunes and chastens—his true branches who bear fruit, that they might bring forth more fruit.

Matthew 13: 24: Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: 25: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. 26: But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 27: So the servants of the HOUSEHOLDER came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? 28: He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? 29: But he said, NAY; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30: Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I WILL say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

What a burden is lifted off God’s true apostles by this promise! They were very few in number in the midst of Israel who professed to be the true vine. All about them were a religious people among who professed to believe God and be true branches. God the Father will unite many more true branches with them in the true Vine. And so will the devil by God’s permission. But our Lord is declaring that the tares shall not harm the wheat; the fruitless branches shall not harm the true. It is because, as Christ declares, *“I am the true Vine and my Father is the Husbandman.”*

Isaiah 27: 2: In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. 3: I THE LORD DO KEEP IT; I will water it every moment: lest *any* hurt it, I will keep it night and day. 4: Fury *is* not in me: who would set the briers *and* thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. 5: Or let him take hold of my strength, *that* he may make peace with me; *and* he shall make peace with me. 6: He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

The true branches must yet be purged, cleansed. By God's grace, we know it because we are yet sinners. But this word is to strengthen the true branches to believe God our Father and his Son and cast all our care into his hand as He gives us strength to mortify our sinful flesh.

God looks on the heart not the outward appearance. That is terror to Judas and those who are branches in name only. But that is great comfort to those who are the true branches. It is comfort because the Lord declares, "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*" This is fruit he produces. When we see him removing branches and when we suffer his pruning we cry, "*Lord is it I? Lord, keep me! Lord, do not let it be me and do not let it be my brethren!*" That is the will of the true branches. God makes our will to be his will. We find it in Psalm 80. This was the cry of the true branches when God did this work in Israel. This is the cry of every true branch in the true Vine who believe that God is our Father and the Husbandman of his vineyard. This is our Father's purpose in purging us, to bring us to cry to him this very cry,

Psalm 80: 14: Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; 15: And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself. 16: *It is* burned with fire, *it is* cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. 17: Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself. 18: So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. 19: Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

It is great comfort to know God the Father is the Husbandman of his vineyard because God our Father knows those who are his. He chose us in his Son. He redeemed us by his Son. He united us to Christ the Vine by the Spirit and he makes us fruitful. And when we suffer, the Spirit bears witness with our spirit making us know it is our loving Father's chastening hand who is purging us so that we bear more fruit.

This work of bringing us to cry out to our Father, casting all into the hand of his mercy, is far different from the branches that begin to strain to try to produce fruit of themselves. That is a rotten blossom, not the fruit God produces. Abraham had two sons: Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael was the fruit of Abraham's will and works. Isaac was the fruit of the Spirit produced by God according to his promise. Which one did God tell Abraham to offer to him? Isaac, the fruit God produced. God the Father only receives the fruit he produced.

THE MAIN POINT—ABIDE IN CHRIST

John 14: 3: Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4: Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5: I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

The main point of our Lord's word here is to teach us to abide in Christ for without Christ we can do nothing. So the true Vine speaks a word of comfort to his true but troubled branches, "*Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*"

Before, when Judas was present, Christ said, "Ye are clean but not all." Since Judas is gone, he says of those who abode in him, "*Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*" Those born of his Spirit are clean through the word which he has spoken unto you. It is by the washing of water by the word, the washing of regeneration through the Spirit. He is not making us more holy. He is growing us in that state of holiness he created when he made us clean in regeneration.

Due to our sin, our triune God continues to purge us. He continues to clean and prune his branches through the word he speaks unto us. It is the renewing of the Holy Ghost by the word. It is why those in Isaiah's day cried, "Turn us again."

The apostles were troubled and full of unbelief, doubts, fears. Peter was overly confident and proud. They all were at first. They were all boasting, "These might forsake thee but I won't!" And there will be much more pruning by the great Husbandmen. But that very night by the word Christ spoke, God the Father was purging his apostles by settling their troubled hearts on Christ the Vine alone so that they would abide in him.

This is the word he speaks by which he makes us abide in him, *“Abide in me, and I in you.”* What does it mean to abide in Christ? It means to remain in Christ, not to depart from Christ, to continue in Christ, to wait upon Christ, to look nowhere but to Christ alone by faith!

How do the branches *begin* abiding in the vine? What do the branches do? They grow out of the vine! The sap of the vine flows into them. How did the apostles begin abiding in Christ and Christ in them? How did we? How do we continue abiding in him. By his word! By the Spirit of Christ. He spoke, commanding, *“Abide in me, and I in you.”* Later, he breathes on them and says *“Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”* What did they do? With his command the Spirit filled them and they received him. It would be like saying, *“Receive the wind.”* How would you receive the wind? By the wind blowing upon you.

Brethren, when our Lord speaks into our hearts, saying, *“Abide in me and I in you”* this precept is a promise by the power of his Voice. Our LORD'S everlasting Covenant with his people is this,

Jeremiah 32: 40: And I will make an everlasting Covenant with them; that I will not turn away from them to do them good: but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. 4: Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

We are made willing by the will of the Lord alone. So all who hear his Voice saying, *“Abide in me and I in you”* do it. We abide in him, remain in him, look to none but him for life and for all because he abides in you.

Likewise, what does the branch do to produce fruit? He said, *“As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”* The vine gives sap into the branch producing fruit in the branch.

Our Lord is teaching us to look to none but Him! The true branches in the true Vine derive all from the Vine. Without Christ we can do nothing. That means we need him for everything: life, faith, love, joy, faithfulness, mortification of sinful lusts, patience, endurance, hope, repentance, godly sorrow for sin, prayer, worship and spiritual praise. All fruitfulness comes from CHRIST.

Hosea 14: 8: From me is thy fruit found.

In a vine or fruit tree, the branches are varied sizes and bear different amounts of fruit. The fruit Christ promises is not fully produced all at once nor is it in equal degree in all his branches. Yet according to the measure of grace he imparts, Christ our Vine shall keep us abiding in him and he shall produce fruit in every believer united to him.

Now, purging is painful. But why does he purge us? He cleanses us because sin makes us dirty and defiled. But every true believer shall abide in him, patiently enduring his chastening. This patience is the fruit of him as well.

The branches which grow from the Pharisee's—from the bad tree—bring forth fruit like the bad tree. They and their fruit is produced by the bad seed, the false gospel of man's glory. It produces confidence in self. They are their own vine, their own rain, their own sun, their own husbandman, their own fruit producers. So they boast with confidence in their fruit, one branch comparing himself with another and boasting himself as more fruitful.

But in nature, when a branch bears fruit, it hangs lower. So it is in grace. The fruit of the Spirit makes us see our inability and that all is of Christ. So grace humbles his child and makes us more dependent upon Christ so that we glory only in the Lord. Humility and utter dependence upon Christ is the essence of all true fruit.

So the branch that has its little cluster of grapes does not look at the branch loaded down and conclude, *“I am not a branch in the vine because I do not have that amount of grapes.”* Nor does the fruitful look upon the branch with its little cluster and conclude, *“He is not a branch like me.”*

The fruit of the Spirit makes us esteem other better!

The fruit of the Spirit makes you look to the Vine and be grateful for the measure of grace he has imparted in you and in your brethren, overlooking one another's blights. And the covering of one another's is also the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit he creates makes us depend entirely upon him, desiring to increase—not by our increase—but with the increase of God. The fruit of the Spirit makes us thankful for the grace that he has given and thankful that out of the true Vine, he gives more grace.

Nor should one branch think less of another when God is pruning one of his branches. When we do it is a sure indication we need pruning our own selves. And if we are his branch, we can be sure he will prune us.

One writer said, “When the Holy Ghost hath brought the soul into this sweet, inseparable union with the Lord Jesus, there is constant life, constant receiving out of his fulness. By God the Holy Ghost continually exercising our senses, showing us our sin and need of Christ, revealing to us the Redeemer's fulness, he keeps us constantly living upon him.” That is the true fruit!

HIS FINAL WORD

John 15: 6: If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned. 7: If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8: Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

True branches hear his word and call upon him. We cast all our care on him, asking him to make us abide and make us fruitful. Why do we do this? Because by his word he makes us know we are sinners. The fruit he creates is to make his child know, “Without Christ we can do nothing!” By his word we know that it is of God that we are in Christ, that Christ is our All and it is of God that we are purged and kept abiding in Christ.

By his word we know Christ is our only Righteousness by which God accepts us. By his word we know it is Christ who Sanctified us by the Spirit and not we ourselves. So we depend upon him to keep us separated and living upon him. By his word we know it is Christ who redeemed us and set us free to cast all our care on him and we believe that Christ is our Life and we utterly depend upon him for all!

And this is his sure promise: “*so shall ye be my disciples.*” The Spirit of God used the apostle John to repeat our Lord's sure promise.

1 John 2: 24: Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. 25: And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. 26: These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. 27: But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. 28: And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

Paul said that I may be found in Christ not having mine own righteousness but only that which is of Christ. That is in who all his true branches have confidence and shall not be ashamed before him at his coming. Abide in Christ!

Amen!