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# Sermon Notes

July 5, 2015

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

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## The Heart of Jesus: The Abiding Heart

John 15:1-17

<sup>1</sup> I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

<sup>5</sup> I am the vine; 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. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

<sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

<sup>12</sup> "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

<sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

<sup>17</sup> These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

## A Metaphor

- ❖ A comparison made without using the words *like* or *as*
- ❖ Four primary actors or groups of actors in Jesus' metaphor
  - Jesus = the true vine
  - Jesus' Father = the vinedresser
  - Judas = unfruitful branches that are taken away and burned
  - 11 faithful disciples = fruit-bearing branches whose lives are pruned so they can bear even more fruit
- ❖ Understanding Jesus' metaphor in its context prevents us from making interpretive errors and mistakes
  - the branches that are taken away and burned cannot represent people who once "believed" and who have "walked away" from Christ (John 13:10, 10:28)
  - "Judas branches" appear to be united to Christ but are faking it (like suckers on a vine)

## The True Vine

- ❖ If there is a "true" vine, then there must be a "false" vine
  - OT picture of Israel as a vine (Isaiah 5:1-7)
  - despite all God does for Israel, she comes up barren and unproductive

- ❖ Israel was an imperfect vine, Christ is the perfect vine
  - the full revelation of God in human form
  - the true bread, living water, sustainer of life

### The Vinedresser

- ❖ The Father and the Son have two distinctly different roles
  - the Son is the source and sustainer of life
  - the Father cares for the Son and all who are joined to the Son by faith
- ❖ Two functions of the Vinedresser
  - cuts off fruitless branches
  - prunes the fruit-bearing branches
- ❖ The heartbeat of the Christian life is fruit-bearing (Eph 2:10, Matt 7:20)
- ❖ Pruning and cutting involve pain and leave us feeling sore
  - oftentimes mysterious
  - we can trust that our heavenly vinedresser never makes a false cut or wastes anything

### Abiding in the Vine

- ❖ How do we know if we are abiding in the vine?
  - we will be nourished by the Word (Col 3:16, 1 Th 2:13)

- we will hunger and thirst for the Word and not be satisfied with an *hors d'oeuvres*
- we will understand and value our connection with the other branches
- we will earnestly desire to produce good fruit

### ❖ Good spiritual fruit

- marked by the presence of love among us (vv. 8-13, 16-17)
- marked by believing prayer in Jesus' name (v. 7)
- marked by a fullness of joy (vv. 10-14)
- marked by living an abundant life (John 10:10)
- marked by an assurance of salvation (John 6:37)
- marked by the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)

### Personal Application

1. What evidence do you display that you are a fruit-bearing branch which is attached to the true vine of Jesus Christ?
2. In what ways have you most recently noticed the Father "pruning you" so you will bear more fruit? How do you respond to that pruning? With resentment, bitterness, complaining, gratitude?
3. Look at the six things above that characterize good spiritual fruit. Which of these are most apparent in your life? Are you willing to ask God to prune you as necessary so you can be more fruitful in those areas which are still underdeveloped in your spiritual life?