

A Journey with Christ the Messiah

I AM the True Vine

John 15:1-8

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing a new series that I have entitled *A Journey with Christ the Messiah*. This series, Lord willing, will continue through the Easter season. It is my goal to go both through the Old and the New testaments and discover **Christ the Messiah** that is written there.

Through this journey, our goal will be to fully understand that Jesus WAS Who He claimed to be, the Messiah, the Son of God and the Son of man. During this journey we will also fully understand that the Bible HAS to be the inspired Word of God.

In the last few weeks we have looked at the first six "I AM's" recorded in the gospel of John. This morning we will looking at the last "I AM" declaration of Jesus. "I AM the True Vine".

The first six deal with Christ proclaiming that He is God, the Son of God, the Son of man, and the Messiah of the Old Testament prophecies. They were written so that you could know him personally as your Lord and Savior. The final one has to do with what is expected from us once we have made Him our personal Savior. Produce fruit or be cut off and thrown into the fire!

Let's continue the journey!

All Stand and Read Scripture

John 15:1-8 (NASB)

15 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

As we prepare to continue this journey, let's bow in a word of prayer.

Prayer

BODY:

I. I AM THE TRUE VINE.

Jesus said, “I AM the True Vine” to His closest friends gathered around Him. It was only a short time before Judas would betray Him. In fact, Judas had already left to begin His betrayal. Jesus was preparing the eleven men left for His pending crucifixion, His resurrection, and His subsequent departure for heaven. He had just told them that He would be leaving them. Knowing how disturbed they would feel, He gave them this lovely metaphor of the True Vine as one of His encouragements.

Jesus wanted His friends, not only those eleven, but those of us for all time, to know that He was not going to desert them, even though they would no longer be accompanied His physical presence. His living energy—His spiritual reality—would continue to nourish and sustain them just as the roots and trunk of a grape vine produce the energy that nourishes and sustains its branches while they develop their fruit. Jesus wanted us to know that, even though we cannot see Him, we are as closely connected to Him as the branches of a vine are connected to its stem. Our desire to know and love Him and the energy to serve Him will keep flowing into and through us as long as we “abide” in Him.

Jesus went on to remove any misunderstanding about what He meant in verse 4. He said that no branch can even live, let alone produce leaves and fruit, by itself. Cut off from the trunk, a branch is dead. Just as a vine’s branches rely on being connected to the trunk from which they receive their energy to bear fruit, Jesus’ disciples depend on being connected to Him for their spiritual life and the ability to serve Him effectively. Our source of life and spiritual fruit is not in ourselves; it is outside us, in Christ Jesus. We can live rightly and serve Him effectively only if we are rightly connected to Him in a faith/love relationship.

Then Jesus underscored His point even more strongly by saying in verse 5, “Apart from me you can do nothing”. No believer can achieve anything of spiritual value aside of Christ Jesus. He also reminds us that there are some who are “**in**” Him who bear no fruit. But these are not, as some would suppose, true branches that just happen to be fruitless. All true branches bear fruit. Just as we know a healthy, living tree by the good fruit it produces, so do we recognize fruitful branches that are connected to the True Vine.

Those who do not produce good fruit are cut away and burned. The reference here is of those who profess to know Christ but whose relationship to Him is insincere. He neither called them nor elected them nor saved them nor sustains them. Eventually, the fruitless branches are identified as not belonging to the Vine and are removed for the benefit of the other branches.

II. MY FATHER IS THE VINEDRESSER.

Jesus said in verse 1 “**I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser**”.

If God loves us why is life filled with so much suffering? Why do you suffer, especially if you are a Christian! Why does the world suffer? Why is there war?

That is the most fundamental question that every seeker ever asks. Everyone has to wrestle with that question as they witness death of loved ones, personal problems, or events that seem unnecessary in their lives.

First of all, if our ultimate goal is to grow and learn and discover things about ourselves and things about God, then unfortunately a life of ease is probably not the way to get there. I have learned very little about God when everything is going well.

You know why God allows suffering in our lives? Because He loves us!

The world looks on and says, "If God truly loved us there would be no suffering. If I love my kids, I will never make it rough on them. If somebody loves me they will just forgive and forget.

But Jesus says, because God loves us He prunes us so we can produce more fruit.

I would suggest, that because we love our kids, we make it tough on them. Good professors make it tough on their students. It is love that drives that toughness. It teaches a very valuable lesson on submitting to authority and hard work. No one has ever learned anything when life is easy.

We have a confused attitude about the love of God in our world. We have a confused attitude about what that is.

The world thinks that if God loves us everything should go well. No conditions. He just gives us everything we want when we want it and life is good and life goes well.

But the scriptures remind us that that is not the way it is going to be.

We can know about God's love. We can understand God's love. We can appreciate God's love. BUT...What does it take to abide in His love? That is a whole new level.

Jesus provides keys to abiding in His love starting in verse 9.

John 15:9 (NASB)

9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

You know how God the Father loved His Son? You read about it in the Gospel accounts. **"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!"** God says that three times in the Gospels. He consistently calls Him His beloved Son. God the Father fully loved His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. **(Pause) AND HE SENT HIM TO THE CROSS!**

God fully loved His Son and He allowed Him to die on the Cross! That is not supposed to happen. People who love people do not do that!

But here is what Jesus says. If you can understand My Father's love for Me then you can understand My love for you.

If you can understand what it took for Me to abide in His Father's love then you can understand how you can abide in Me.

ILLUSTRATION:

Maybe you can look at it this way. When you were a kid what did it take for you to "**ABIDE IN**" your parents love? Now, I know that my dad always loved me and my mom always love me. They always will love me. No matter I did, they always loved me. But there is a different thing between **knowing that they love me** and **abiding in their love**.

What would it take to remain abiding in their love? Here it is in verse 10.

"Keep My commandments"!

OUCH! That is a painful new thought. I thought His love was guaranteed!

In fact Romans 8:39 says that "**nothing can separate us from His love**".

I thought that I did not have to do anything to earn His love! And you know that is right. You do not have to one thing to earn His love. **He will always love you!**

John 3:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

It is not about **earning** His love. It is about **abiding** in His love.

Remember when you were a kid and you did something wrong. (This requires a long memory for some of us!) You no doubt had a day when you did not live up to your dad's expectations. When your dad walked into the house after a long day's work you weren't exactly abiding in his love at that moment. You no doubt received the IMPACT of his love, at least you would if you were raised in my house. Understand that in order to abide in your parent's love, to fully benefit from it, to enjoy it, to allow it to flow through your life, you had better keep their commandments!

You remember the day you did everything your dad told you to do and he walked in and put his arm around you and said, "**Son, that was wonderful!**" You just kind of soaked it in as a kid. You abided **IN** his love! You appreciated his love. It flowed into your life and it felt really, really good that your dad put his arm around you and said "**You did well today!**"

Here's what Christ said again in verse 10.

John 15:10a (NASB)

¹⁰ 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.

Do you know why Christ abided in God's love? He **ALWAYS** did the will of the Father, those things that His Father had commanded of Him.

John 6:38 (NASB)

³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

AND...

John 10:17-18 (NASB)

¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. ¹⁸ No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have

authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. (Then listen to His next statement.) **This commandment I received from My Father.**"

Christ did what He did because it was His Father's will that He would do it. And Christ obeyed all of his commandments. That allowed Him to maintain a relationship with His Father where He was always abiding in His love.

His Father consistently said "**This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased**".

It was because He was willing to do everything that His Father had commanded despite the personal pain and agony that that obedience required. If you and I want to abide in Christ's love then we had better keep His commandments.

To whatever extent that you violated any of His commandments this week, you are breaking up that love relationship. Somehow He always will love you, but to abide in His love is a whole different ballgame.

You might ask, "Why even bring this up? Look at verse 11.

John 15:11 (NASB)

¹¹ These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

You may wonder why does Christ keep **pounding** on us? **Keep His commandments! Keep His commandments! Keep His commandments!**

You and I might think that He is just trying to make this Christian life a **duty** thing! I am always supposed to keep His commandments. I don't like legalism. I don't like all these rules. I don't like all of these commandments. I like to have freedom and liberty in Christ and I want to believe that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. It doesn't matter what I did or failed to do.

Jesus says, "No, No, No, No, No!" Salvation is that way for sure. You are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ not depending upon your works lest any man should boast.

But if you want to abide in His love you must obey His commands.

John 14:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

If you want Him to put His arm around you and say on judgment day "**Well done My good and faithful servant**", you must abide in His love. Jesus says you must abide in His love and His joy will be in you and your joy will be made full.

There is a connection between love and obedience.

And there is a connection between love and obedience and joy.

You know who are the happiest kids? It is **not** the kids who disobey their mom and dad! It is the kids who have learned what their mom and dad want them to do and they do it. Therefore they abide in their parent's love and therefore they have their dad put his arm around you and say "You did well today, Son"! And the little son wells up with joy.

The reason we do not have full joy is because we fail to continually seek and do God's will in our lives. I knew when my dad was not happy with me. I knew I had done wrong and there was no joy in my heart.

You want to abide in God's love? Keep His commandments. Understand that apparent setbacks in your life may just be God pruning us so we can produce more fruit.

III. YOU ARE THE BRANCHES.

John 15:4-5 (NASB)

⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

How can we become a living grafted branch to the True Vine?

Notice that in order for us to bear fruit we must be grafted to the true vine. This is accomplished when we accept Christ as our Savior. In order to be grafted to the vine, Christ must attach us to the living vine and make us alive in Christ. This is a spiritual event that cannot be accomplished by man.

In our sinful condition, we are spiritually dead. Jesus made the way by which we can be spiritually alive again by dying on the cross for our sins. Jesus took on our sins that we had committed and replaced our sins with His righteousness so we can once again be made spiritually alive.

How is this done?

You understand that you are a sinner and need Christ's salvation. You repent of our sins to God and accept His free gift of salvation by believing that Jesus was the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy and obey His command to be baptized for the remission of sins and for the promise of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our life.

Romans 6:3-13 (NASB)

³ Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin.

⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. ¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, ¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those **alive** from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.

It is through God's plan of salvation that we are grafted into the True Vine and we become spiritually alive before God. Thus we become one of Christ's living branches.

Notice that Jesus said in verse 5, "...for apart from Me you can do nothing.

There is nothing that we can do to attach ourselves to the vine. We can nail a board or wire another branch to the vine, but it will never have life. That requires intervention by our Savior, Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION:

Are you connected to the Son?

If you are not connected you will never have fruit and spiritual vitality.

Are you being cultivated by the Father?

As you look at all of the events that are going on in your life right now, instead of blaming God for allowing this to happen to you, you should consider that God must be pruning me in order that I can produce more fruit in my life.

Sometimes God may have to remove a lot from our life in order to bring us back to Him. Many times God has to prune us until we come crawling back to Him.

Are you continuing maintaining that intimate relationship with Christ? If you do not you will drift and become unfruitful. You will be of very little value to God with virtually no fruit in your life. Therefore being worthless and cast out into the fire and burned.

Jesus says, "I want you to abide in My love. Stay connected to My love. Keep My commandments. Love My church. Maintain My closeness and communication. Fulfill My commission. Just do what I ask you to do".

And I will just put My arm around you and say "Child, you are doing very well."

You know the greatest joy of your life is not what the world has to offer you. Most of you have found that out already. It is to know that our Heavenly Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, really see that you have done well. That you have kept His commandments and loved His church. That you are always maintaining your communication and closeness with Him. That you are just doing what He told you to do. And thus you have fruit in your life and an abundance of joy.

Are you **abiding** in God's love?

John 15:5 (NASB)

⁵I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

If you do not know Christ as your Lord and Savior, I invite you to come forward this morning and place your faith in Christ and be immersed in the waters of baptism for the forgiveness of your sins and become a living branch for God.

He is Lord!