

“Jesus: The True Vine”

The Vine Series... John 15:5

SCRIPTURE

John 15: 1-11 (NIV)

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ⁹ “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Subject Question: What are the four lessons Jesus teaches those who wish to become healthy and vibrant Christians concerning the needed growth and maturing process?

Compliment answer: Growth is a Purifying Process, Growth is Perplexingly Provisionary, Growth is Properly Productive, and Growth Provides a Pleasing Perspective.

Big Idea: The four lessons that Jesus teaches those who wish to become healthy and vibrant Christians concerning the needed growth and maturing process are: Growth is a Purifying Process, Growth is Perplexingly Provisionary, Growth is Properly Productive, and Growth Provides a Pleasing Perspective.

Homiletical Idea: “God is Purifying”

Purpose: I want the congregation to see and understand that becoming a healthy and vibrant Christian is not only a possibility, but a joyful discovery to be made and grasped by all who claim the name: Christian.

Introduction: In this lesson, John portrays Jesus as the True Vine: a vine that we are to be ever attached to and dependent upon. Our lives as children of God are meant to bring glory to God and we only do so when we understand the growth and maturation process that God has for every one of His dear children. The end result is joy and perspective. The beginning is painful pruning. All in all, these lessons help us as modern day disciples to not only understand the Father's great work in us, but also to finally get serious in our commitment and walk with Him. Let's face it, we need to get busy in the business of being and becoming holy. We need a growing commitment to not be so inclined to be compromising. And we need to experience the precious and wondrous presence of Jesus himself as we learn to worship Him in spirit and truth. What a challenge! What a Privilege!

(Are you and I willing to be more like Him?)

- A. Growth is a Purifying Process. (vs.1-3) *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.*
- B. To be a healthy and vibrant Christian has always been God's ideal and desire for every one of His children. Jesus said:
1. John 10:9-11 *I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. ^[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (FULL LIFE)*
 2. John 17:13 *"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of **my joy** within them.(JOY)*
 3. John 14:27 **Peace** I leave with you; **my peace** I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (PEACE)
 4. John 8:12 *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the **light of the world**. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the **light of life**." (WISDOM)*

5. John 14:26 *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*
(COMFORT, CONFIDENCE, DIRECTION, GOD'S VERY PRESENCE)

C. In other words, God has gone completely out of His way to chase you, claim you, convince you and convert you. His offer is to know Him, walk with Him, delight in Him and someday be with Him forever. Why? Sheer grace on His part. Sheer goodness on His part. Sheer love on His part. And our part? What does He expect in return? For us to be graceful and grace-filled. For us to be good in what we do and more in who we are. For us to be loving to the unlovable and the lovable. And more to live Fruitfully in 2 ways:

1. To live in such a way that God can use us to draw people to Himself that they may come to know Him, have their eternal destinies changed and live life with purpose and meaning and a true hope of Heaven. In other words, bearing Fruit for His Kingdom!
2. To live out our Christian faith in God's family, finding developing, using our spiritual gifts, time, talents and treasure, to build up and support His Body, His church, so that the people can grow and mature in their Christian faith. In other words, being Fruit in His Kingdom.

D. God's covenant is simple this: if you want to grow and be fruitful for me, then I will indeed prune your life of all the things that keep you from being fully mine; areas of sin, areas of character, areas, of weakness. So that you will be more fruitful for me and happier with yourself. However, if you refuse to grow, I still won't completely forsake you—you're still mine. But it will "feel" like you have been cut off, forsaken; no peace, no joy, only a growing bitter complaining attitude, constant guilt and shame, stingy in your giving, worry will be your constant partner, no faith, no prayer life and so far away from me that if I'd show up in your life you'd have a heart attack. Growth is a Purifying Process... it will either draw us to Him or convince us to draw away from Him. Let's let it draw us to Him!

(Are you and I willing to be more like Him?)

A. Growth is Perplexingly Provisionary (vs.4-5) *⁴Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear*

fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

B. The two questions that these verses imply are; 1) How can we “abide” as the scriptures say, in Christ. And, 2) What does it mean that apart from me (Jesus) you can do nothing?

1. Abiding in Christ: Barnes Notes:

I. **Abide in me** - Remain united to me by a living faith. Live a life of dependence on me, and obey my doctrines, imitate my example, and constantly exercise faith in me. **And I in you** - That is, if you remain attached to me, I will remain with you, and will teach, guide, and comfort you. This he proceeds to illustrate by a reference to the vine. If the branch should be cut off an instant, it would die and be fruitless. As long as it is in the vine, "from the nature of the case," the parent stock imparts its juices, and furnishes a constant circulation of sap adapted to the growth and fruitfulness of the branch. So our piety, if we should be separate from Christ, or if we cease to feel our union to him and dependence on him, withers and droops. While we are united to him by a living faith, from the nature of the case, strength flows from him to us, and we receive help as we need. Piety then, manifested in good works, in love, and self-denial, is as natural, as easy, as unconstrained. and as lovely as the vine covered with fruitful branches is at once useful and enticing.

2. Can Do Nothing: Pulpit Commentary:

II. **me ye can do nothing**. The ὅτι suggests the question - Can the negative result justify the positive assertion? It does in this way. There are two premises: the first is, "I am the Vine, and ye are the branches," and the second is, "Severed from me a branch can effect nothing," having no independent fruitfulness or stability. All its powers are derived from this supernatural source, and depend on Christ's faithfulness to his own nature and functions; therefore, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, bringeth forth much fruit." The language here does not repress the endeavor of the human will after righteousness, nor pronounce a judgment on the great controversy between Augustinians and Pelagians. These words are not addressed to unconverted men, but to disciples, who have to learn their constant need of spiritual contact with their invisible Lord. Let a believer, let an apostle, sever himself from Christ, and live on his own past reputation or his supposed strength, on the clearness of his intellect, the vigor of his body, the eminence of his position, he can and will do nothing.

C. Such comes the reality of James 4:6 **God is opposed to the Proud but gives grace to the Humble**. In a sense this pericope is about role positions. Jesus is our Savior and Lord. God has allowed us to call Him our “Father.” That’s their place and their role in our lives. Thus, we are to serve Christ not the other way around. Thus, we are to acknowledge that it was Christ’s efforts that afforded our salvation, and we are simply the recipients of His unmerited

grace. And more, in considering God's role as heavenly Father we as His children, ever dependent, ever satisfied, ever growing in our faith, but never to the point where we begin to take up the parental role of telling God what to do, how to do, and when to do... believing that He in childlike obedience, going to do what we ask or say, or demand.

- D. Growth is Perplexingly Provisionary in the sense that if we are going to be vibrant and Healthy Christians, it's us that determines if we care to abide in Christ. It's us who determines how close we choose to grow close to God. It's us who decides if we are willing to be dependent on God and not on ourselves. It's us who determines that His ways are best and our part is to trust and obey. It's us who determines that with God we can do anything, and without Him, even if its good church work or social causes, if He is not in it, we really have accomplished nothing.

(Are you and I willing to be more like Him?)

- A. Growth is Properly Productive (vs.5-7) *⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*
- B. One of the great perks of coming to the point of actually being a Healthy and vibrant Christian is understanding the content of what Jesus meant when he said, *ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.* First, it is not a carte blanche statement about granting every request that we have. But it is about our place in being able to actually ask knowing that God is more than willing to answer. Let me explain:
- C. **Holy Dance:** In the first chapter of John's gospel, Jesus is described as living from all eternity in the bosom of the Father... this is an ancient metaphor for love and intimacy. In our reading today from John 16, Jesus states that the Spirit will glorify the Son. Later in the book of John, Jesus says he glorifies the Father (17:4) and the Father glorifies the Son (17:5). But what does this really mean? All of this glorifying each other? In brief it means to enjoy and delight in the other.

Pastor and New York Times Bestselling author Tim Keller describes this dynamic beautifully, "When we delight and serve someone else, we enter into a dynamic orbit around him or her, we center on the interests and desires of the other. That creates a dance, particularly if there are three persons, each of whom moves around the other two. So it is, the Bible tells us. Each of the divine persons centers upon the others. Each voluntarily circles the other two, pouring love, delight, and adoration into them. That creates a dynamic, pulsating dance of joy and love."

This idea of the dance of the Trinity is not new. The early church fathers coined the phrase perichoresis [Ancient Greek περί (peri, “around”) + χορεύω (khoreuō, “dance”)] describing the Trinity in a “holy dance.”

Fourth Century Bishop and Doctor of the Church, Hilary of Poitiers, captures this concept poetically as he writes that each person of the Trinity, “reciprocally contains the others, so that one permanently envelopes and is permanently enveloped by, the others whom he yet envelopes.”

So, what does this mean for us... this dance of the Trinity? It means the nature of the universe, the center of all creation, is a divine celebration of love and joy. The doctrine of the Trinity declares that love is, in the words of Anglican author CS Lewis, “the great fountain of energy and beauty spurting up at the very center of reality.” And, Scripture teaches, that you were created in the image of God. You were designed to be right in the middle of the dance of the Trinity, constantly growing in awareness of this endless celebration splashing all around you and within you. We all have within us deep longings which nothing in this world seems to satisfy. No matter how much money, power, or popularity we amass, our souls are still hungry. That is because we are designed to find soul rest within the unconditional love of God... within the dance of the Trinity. It is what we are designed for... it is the proper medium for our souls. (Selah.org)

- D. Growth is Properly Productive in the sense that as we delight in the Lord, He delights in us... as our hearts grow fond of Him, His heart grows fond of us. As we delight and believe in Him, He delights and believes in us. As we seek His heart, He opens His hands.
- E. As a healthy and Vibrant Christian Growth is Properly Productive in the sense that it’s an invitation to step into the dance... And finally,

(Are you and I willing to be more like Him?)

- A. Growth Provides a Pleasing Perspective. (vs.8-11) ⁸ *This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.* ⁹ *“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.* ¹⁰ *If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.* ¹¹ *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

- B. Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

From the moment Alexander wakes up things just do not go his way. As he gets up, the chewing gum that was in his mouth the night before ends up in his hair. He spills milk on the floor and Philip Parker has arranged for a birthday party the same evening as Alexander but things start to go his way.

In the carpool on the way to school, he doesn't get a window seat. His teacher, Mrs. Dickens, doesn't like his picture of the invisible castle (which is actually just a blank sheet of paper), criticizes him for singing too loud, and publicly scolds him for skipping the number 16 at counting time. His friend, Paul, deserts him for his third best friend and there is no dessert in his lunch bag. The dentist tells him he has a cavity (and thus Alexander is the only one who had one) and he has to come back next week so it can be fixed; the elevator door closes on his foot; Anthony pushes him into a mud puddle; Nick says he is a crybaby; he punches Nick in response, and their mother punishes him for being muddy and for trying to punch Nick.

At the shoe store, they're out of Alexander's choice of sneakers (blue ones with red stripes), so his mother has to buy him plain white ones, which he refuses to wear. At his father's office, he makes a mess of things when he fools around with everything there (the copying machine, the books, and the telephone), getting to the point where his dad tells the family not to pick him up anymore.

At home, they have lima beans for dinner (which he hates); there is kissing on TV (which he also hates); bath time becomes a nightmare (the water being too hot, getting soap in his eyes, and his marble going down the drain); and he has to wear his railroad train pajamas (which he also hates). At bedtime, his night light burns out; he bites his tongue; Nick takes back a pillow he said he could keep; and the cat chooses to sleep with Anthony.

A running gag throughout the book is Alexander repeating several times that he wants to move to Australia because he thinks it's better there. It ends with his mother's assurance that everybody has bad days, even those who live there.^[1] In the Australian and New Zealand versions, he wants to move to Timbuktu instead (presumably because he already lives in Australia).

- C. Even healthy and vibrant Christians have bad days, unproductive months and even poor years. So much so that many good people have forgotten to give themselves permission to be happy again, and to know and discover the wonder of joy. In the end Jesus simply states, *This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*⁹ *“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.*¹⁰ *If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.*¹¹ *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*
- D. if you are truly mine, you will be my fruit-bearing healthy and vibrant disciple; you will know that I am ever proud of you, have loved you with a love that has no bounds, that walking with me, acting like me, learning from me isn't just a part of life, but is indeed life in itself! And obeying my commands... isn't so much a struggle but a real privilege. And joy? Well, you just can't help yourself; the treasure has been found, the lost has

finally come home, the wayward is finally at peace, and the downtrodden has had his face lifted by the hand of the king.