

FEASTING ON THE FAITHFULNESS OF *JESUS*

“I AM the True Vine”

John 15:1-11

INTRODUCTION: WELCOME! I'm continuing to pray for God's righteousness and justice in our land. I pray we can come back to a measure of it. If not, "Come Lord Jesus!"

My message this morning is the final one of this series. I have preached on the faithfulness of God and more recently on the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ, since March of this year when the consequences of the pandemic of COVID-19 were just beginning to be realized by most of us.

I finish today with a sense of incompleteness because I am very much aware that I have not exhausted the texts that proclaim and illustrate this truth. But Thanksgiving approaches and Christmas follows soon after, and I believe that spending the next four to five weeks remembering the beauty and majesty of God sending His Son to earth as a man is one that will greatly benefit us to recall and meditate upon it.

In John 15, we hear the last of **eight** magnificent “**I AM**” **declarations of Jesus**.

- **Before Abraham was, I AM**, taking the personal name of God, YHWH, upon Himself.
- **I am the Bread of Life.**
- **I am the Light of the World.**
- **I am the door**, and I am the door for the sheep.
- **I am the Good Shepherd.**
- **I am the Resurrection and the Life.**
- **I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.** And finally today we read
- Jesus said, “**I am the true vine.**”

The context of Jesus' final I AM proclamation was that He was in His final hours before for the cross.

- He had washed the feet of His disciples.
- He had eaten His final Passover with them, transforming the memorial meal into the Lord's Supper.

- He had told them plainly about His impending death.
- He had comforted them with the promise of the Holy Spirit who would enter them and guide them.
- Now He tells them how they will be able to live a life
 - That is forgiven and clean.
 - That is filled with answered prayer.
 - That is characterized by love, God-like love, for others.

Let us listen and consider carefully these instructions of Jesus.

John 15:1-11 NKJV 1 "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, 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, 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, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 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.

11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.

To help His disciples understand how to live this new life in Himself, Jesus used an illustration with which they would have been very familiar. He talked to them about the grapevine. They all knew how grapes grow on a grapevine. The disciples knew that

- **No branch of the vine could produce grapes unless it was connected to the vine.**
- **Any branch that did not grow grapes would be cut off by the vinedresser.**

- **Even producing branches would often be pruned in order to increase their fruitfulness.**

But Jesus wasn't teaching the disciples how to be farmers. He was teaching them how to be disciples, followers of Christ. So we need to ask four questions.

Who is Jesus talking about in this analogy?

Jesus does not leave us guessing.

John 15:1, 5 NKJV 1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ...5 "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. ..."

- **The vine is Jesus.**
- **The vinedresser is God the Father.**
- **The branches are believers, followers of Christ.**

Now, what does Jesus, the True Vine, expect of His branches? That they bear fruit.

Of which branches does He expect this?

- Does Jesus expect this me? of Bro. Mark? All the pastors of the church?
- Does the Lord expect this of the deacons, that they be fruitful?
- Does He expect this of other leaders in the church?
- Who else does Christ expect to be a fruitful follower?
- All of us who are saved. All of us who are born again!

Are you born again? Are you going to heaven when you die?

Then Jesus expects you, as a believer, as His follower, to bear fruit.

Now understand, bearing fruit does not make you a follower.

- We cannot earn our way to heaven by trying to bear fruit.
- We are saved by trusting Christ and what He did upon the cross, and by faith inviting Him to be the Lord of our lives.
- But after we are saved, Jesus expects us as saved followers to bear fruit in our day to day lives.

That leads to my second question:

What does it mean to bear fruit?

Galatians 5:22–23 NKJV But the fruit of the Spirit is

- love,
- joy,
- peace,
- longsuffering,
- kindness,
- goodness,
- faithfulness,
- gentleness,
- self-control.

However, we also need to read Romans 1:13. Which calls people won to Christ a fruit, The fruit of evangelism.

- people led to faith in Christ

So, how does Jesus expect us to live our lives as His followers?

How in the world can we live like that? And that is the next question.

How does a person bear fruit?

John 15:5 NKJV "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

We bear fruit by abiding in Christ. What does the word abide mean?

- To stay
- To reside
- To remain
- To continue
- To keep on keeping on

Can a person bear fruit simply by trying to bear fruit? No, apart from Christ, we can do nothing.

What does it mean to “abide in Christ?” Again, Jesus tells us.

John 15:3 NKJV **You are already clean** because of the word which I have spoken to you.

- **living the cleansed life**

John 15:7 NKJV If you abide in Me, and **My words abide in you**, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

- **live in His Word**

John 15:7 NKJV If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, **you will ask** what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

- **pray, “ask”**

John 15:10 NKJV 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.

- **obey His commandments**

What happens to those who do not bear fruit?

John 15:6 NKJV If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.

- **If a person bears NO fruit**
 - **That person is not in Christ.**

2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV ... if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

- **That person is lost.**
- Their name is not in the Book of Life.
- They will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 20:15 says And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

The evidence of genuine salvation is a changed life! Not a perfect life, but a life made different than it was – a changed life.

My friend, if this is you, no fruit, no change, you need to put your faith in Christ today!

But Christ does not just want some fruit.

John 15:8 NKJV By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

- **What about those who just bear a little fruit?**
 - **There is change in their lives that gives evidence of salvation,**
 - **but they are far from fruitful.**

Paul speaks of people like this in his letter of 1 Cor. 3:10-15 NKJV 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. 11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. What happens to the man whose works are burned up?

- **He suffers loss but is still saved.**

Oh dear family of faith at St. Andrew Baptist Church, I love you! You are dear and precious to me.

- And there are many of you for whom the Day of the Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be a glorious day, for you have borne much fruit since you have been saved by God's grace through faith in Christ. You are loving, kind, good, and faithful servants of the Lord who lead others also to faith in Christ, and you are spending your life and labor on things that will endure, that will count in eternity, and great will be your reward!
- But to others of you I must say, I do love you, and because I love you I must tell you the truth. Although you have been saved by grace through faith in our dear Savior, you are spending your life on things that will be burned up! Now I'm not going to make a list. But you look at where you spend your time and where you spend your money. Of each item ask this question: When I stand before Christ, will it matter to Him that I did this? Did this time spent, this money spent, did it matter?

Some of you are going to stand there on that day, saved, but suffering terrible loss as the things you spent your life on are burned up before your eyes.

CONCLUSION: It does not have to be that way. You could determine to make it different beginning today.

Here is what Jesus is saying.

I am the vine

You are the branch

If you will abide in Me, remain, continue, stay in Me,

- **By keeping yourself cleansed like I cleansed you when you were saved,**
- **By reading and studying My Word,**
- **By talking to Me through prayer,**
- **By doing what I tell you to do,**
 - **I will make you fruitful.**
 - **I will transform you and fill you with love, joy, peace, patient endurance, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.**
 - **I will make the testimony you share about Me and the times you tell the gospel to others fruitful as well, and you will see others come to Me.**

And Jesus ended with this

John 15:11 NKJV "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full.