

The True Vine

John 15: 1-5

We have come to the last of the I Am statements recorded in John's gospel. Along with the previous statement when Jesus declared He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life, these comments followed their intimate time within the Upper Room. Jesus and the disciples are at this moment making their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. In a very short time Jesus will be arrested and taken to stand before the high priest and Sanhedrin.

While we cannot know for certain, many scholars think Jesus and the disciples likely passed a vineyard as they made their way to Gethsemane. Seeing another moment to teach the disciples an eternal lesson, Jesus used the vineyard as an object lesson. I can imagine Jesus stopping beside a well-kept vine, full of promise for the coming harvest, as He spoke these words.

We are some two thousand years removed from the words Jesus spoke on that faithful night, and yet they remain as powerful today as they were then. There is eternal truth that we must consider and embrace as we consider these words. I want to discuss these [eternal truths](#) as we consider Jesus' declaration of: [The True Vine](#).

I. The Authenticity of the Vine (1) – [I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman](#). Consider:

A. The Vine's Character – [I am the true vine](#). Jesus declared that He was the true vine. We must consider the context of this statement and the events that had recently taken place. Jesus had lived and ministered in and around Jerusalem for some three and a half years, revealing Himself as the Christ. He and the disciples were in the epicenter of religious life for the Jews. Israel had often been referred to in Scripture as a vine. The Jews were zealous in their adherence to the Law and felt as if they were doing what was required to be found acceptable to God. Jesus in essence declared to the disciples that the other approaches, and all who had come before Him were inadequate to secure acceptance to God. He alone was the True Vine, the sole means of salvation and reconciliation to God.

- The world would have us believe that all religions are the same, that we all serve the same God, and we are all going to the same heaven – we are just heading that way on different paths. That may be popular philosophy, but it certainly isn't consistent with the teaching of Jesus or biblical doctrine. Jesus is the True Vine. He alone is the source of salvation and reconciliation to God. If we are to be acceptable to the Father, having assurance of eternal life in heaven, we must abide in the True Vine!

B. The Vine's Caretaker (1) – *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.* Jesus also declared that His Father was the husbandman, the gardener, the one who oversaw the vineyard. He had sent His only begotten Son as the True Vine to secure salvation for the entire vineyard. The Father watched over and cared for the well-being of the vineyard. He is involved in every aspect of the vineyard and cares for every detail of the vine.

- Isn't that a comforting thought? If you are in Christ, the Vine, you are part of the vineyard. The heavenly Father watches over and provides for the needs of the vineyard. We are kept by the Sovereign of the Ages!

II. The Attention to the Vineyard (2-3) – Jesus went on to describe the attentive detail given to the vineyard by the Gardner. He revealed this involved:

A. Pruning the Vine (2a) – *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away.* First Jesus revealed the delicate care given to the branches that were not bearing fruit. Keep in mind, these branches are attached to the vine. They are responsible for bearing fruit and expected to do so. Jesus declared the Father "takes away" those branches that do not bear fruit. This does not refer to removing the entire branch, as some would assume. The root of this word has the idea of "*lifting up or raising.*" This makes great sense when we pause to consider it. Often branches grow too long and get encumbered in the dirt of the ground. The Gardner comes along and lifts those branches out of the dirt and filth, removing them from the hindrance, in order to promote fruit production. (I am thankful the Lord lovingly lifts me up at times!)

- In the context of this passage, "taking away" literally has the idea of "*pruning.*" The Gardner does not remove the entire branch, but he prunes away the areas in the branch that have become diseased and are no longer productive. By removing the diseased portion of the branch, it allows the branch to heal and become stronger, thus becoming productive again. (We don't enjoy the pruning process, but it is necessary at times. The Lord must tenderly remove those areas from our lives that hinder our production.)

B. Purging the Vine (2b) – *and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* This careful action by the gardener is similar to the first, but this actually involves branches that are producing fruit. The gardener carefully purges the branch in order to allow it to produce more fruit. This also includes pruning at times, removing particular portions of the branch in order to make it more productive. It also speaks of cleansing, literally purging the vine. This may include removing a portion of its blooms or particular shoots growing out from the branch. These

may eventually produce fruit, but the fruit will be small and less desirable. By purging the vine, the gardener assures there will be an ample harvest, and the fruit will be full and desirable.

- This may be the most difficult process for the branch to endure. It has the potential to produce a measure of fruit, but the gardener seeks abundant fruit. The Lord at times purges our lives, removing things we may consider desirable to produce more fruit. This purging may not involve areas of life that are sinful or rebellious, but in fact hinder us from bearing much fruit.

C. Purifying the Vine (3) – *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.* Jesus declared the disciples had been cleansed through the words He had spoken. These had heard His word and believed He was the Christ. They had been attached to the Vine and were cleansed in Him. Their hope was not in adherence to the Law or specific traditions, but faith in Christ.

- This process has not changed and it never will. In order to be cleansed from our sin, being attached to the Vine, and bearing fruit for Him, we must abide in Christ. He is the sole means of our salvation. Paul declared that we are saved by grace through faith; not of our works, lest any should boast. He also declared that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Hearing and receiving the Gospel is essential to salvation and being attached to the Vine.
- Following salvation, the Word serves to keep our hearts clean before the Lord. The Word searches our hearts, revealing the sin and compels us to repent and seek restoration. The mirror of the Word reveals what is actually there. We must heed the Word and follow its direction.

III. The Attachment to the Vine (4-5) – Here Jesus spoke of those who abide in Him, being attached to the Vine. Consider:

A. The Admonition (4a) – *Abide in me, and I in you.* Jesus admonished the disciples to abide in Him, to continually depend on the Lord and strive to serve Him, so that He would be revealed mighty and providential in their lives. If these were to endure, they must abide in Christ!

- Jesus did not speak of our ability to ensure our salvation through works that we perform. He is speaking of continual, unhindered fellowship as we abide in Him. Our only hope to endure the adversity we face while bearing fruit for the Lord is to abide in Him.

B. The Expectation (4b) – *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.* Jesus declared the impossibility of bearing fruit apart from Him. If their lives were to be productive, they must continue to abide in Him.

- We must not miss the expectation Jesus revealed here. He admonished them to abide in the Vine so they would be able to produce fruit. That is the expectation for every believer. If we are in Christ, we are expected to bear fruit, without exception. If we are in Christ and not bearing fruit, we can expect the Lord to prune us, to remove the areas that have become dead in order to enhance production. If you aren't producing, you might as well expect pruning!

C. The Production (5a) – *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.* After declaring His position in relation to theirs, Jesus declared all who abide in Him will bring forth much fruit. We must not forget the position He rehearsed. He is the Vine, we are the branches. He is the source and we are the servant. If we abide in Him, drawing from His wisdom, strength, and grace through the Spirit, we will bring forth much fruit. He has promised fruit production for those who abide in Him.

- If you are born again in Christ, being saved by His grace, and not currently experiencing fruit production, check your fellowship with Christ. Are you abiding in Him? Is there sin in your life that is hindering your walk with the Lord? Those abiding in Him will be fruitful, without exception!

D. The Limitation (5b) – *for without me ye can do nothing.* I have said many times that I do not like this statement by Jesus. I say that with all due respect. I believe what He said; but in my flesh, I do not like it. Jesus declared we could do nothing apart from Him. We cannot produce fruit. The branch has no ability to produce; it simply reveals what is produced by the vine. If there is any fruit in any of our lives, it is there because the Lord produced it!

- We have nothing to boast in ourselves. He provided the means of our salvation. It was given and received freely. If our lives bear any fruit of eternal value, it was produced by the Lord. He alone is worthy of recognition and praise!

Conclusion: This is a powerful and convicting passage of Scripture. Are you abiding in the Vine today? Have you been saved by grace and grafted into the Vine? If so, is your life producing fruit? Maybe the Spirit has revealed some areas in your life that need to be dealt with. Bring those before the Lord and allow Him to tenderly prune them away, enabling you to be productive again. If you have never been saved, you are not attached to the Vine. Come to Christ today as He leads you in salvation!