

Rev. Janet Doyle  
Sunday, May 2, 2021  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Easter  
Scripture: John 15:1-8

## **Sermon: What Are You Connected To?**

Well, Spring has sprung! Tender leaves now fill the trees. The Azaleas are in bloom, the flowers of spring and summer are upon us. Soon the vineyards that I drive past on the way here will have leaves and grapes. Amidst the pandemic and thoughts of vaccinations, the world has come back to life again, and the beauty of spring puts the cold and darkness of winter behind us.

Our scripture lesson today from John 15 brings us to the vineyards. Vineyards are familiar to Jesus' disciples. People pass vineyards as they walk from place to place. While we lived in Central Asia we had grapes growing in our yard and many people had grape vines growing as well. I had never watched grapes grow on a vine before. In this passage of John 15, Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches.

After Jesus was with his disciples at the Last Supper, he walked with them toward the Garden of Gethsemane, and Jesus began to talk to His men about vines, branches and fruit. Jesus was teaching them about the most vital relationship they have in their lives, the one with Jesus and His Father.

Jesus had told the disciples that he was going away, but that His work is going to continue, and that it is going to continue through them. If they were to carry on the work of the Lord, then they needed to know how to produce that kind of fruit in their lives. He wanted them to know that the only way they can be fruitful for the glory of God is to abide in Him, the True Vine.

The work of the Lord continues more than 2000 years later. God is still working through the followers of Jesus Christ to accomplish His work and we are a part of it when you believe in Jesus.

No one can be a fruitful branch for the glory of God until you have a vital, life-giving connection to the Vine. Without that vital connection, the “Sap of life” cannot flow in and through you.

Many people do not have that connection with God. What are you connected to? Many in our country have their lives connected to sports, to their work, to their house, to their boat, to alcohol, to drugs, to things of the flesh, to money, to fame, to politics. Some of those things aren't bad in themselves, but when God is not your connection daily, then those things become your God.

Many people will not even think about God as their source of strength and power and life giving energy. Satan, the great liar and deceiver will convince people they don't need God in their life. They can make it fine on their own.

Many times it takes a tragedy in someone's life for them to call upon the name of the Lord to help them. It is then that one realizes that the vine is the only source of life. Everything else is just a façade.

Jesus' comments in this passage are so obvious. In verse 4 he says, “No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”

The picture is so simple. Cut a branch off of a tree and it will die. Maybe you have spent time picking up those dead branches that have fallen on your yard during the winter. A branch needs to be attached and draw life from the vine and root if it is to bear fruit.

As his disciples, we cannot bear fruit unless we are closely connected to him. We must remain in him.

God the Father is the loving vinedresser and is more than just a farmer. He knows all about grapes, how they grow, what they need, and when they need it. God, as the vinedresser, has only one vine to tend. The main part of tending the vine is taking care of the branches.

John 15:2 says, “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.”

I love driving to the church, passing the fields and orchards and the vineyard. The vineyards and orchards have recently been pruned. The pruning makes the branches healthier and more fruitful.

In Hampton Court Palace in London, there is a grapevine under a glass roof that is one of the oldest grapevines in the world. It is over 250 years old and it was started in 1768. The longest branch is 120 feet long. It is amazing to see. You can see it online if you look it up. It is still producing grapes each year. Even though some of the smaller branches are two hundred feet from the main vine, they bear much fruit because they allow the life of the vine to flow through them.

God wants us to bear fruit. But what kind of fruit are we called to bear? We are called to bear the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian character. Galatians 5:22-23 says, “ the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

We are to “lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him as we bear fruit in every good work.” Living a life of Christian conduct or being more Christ-like in our walk through this life. People should see a difference in us compared to the world.

We should also bear the fruit of others coming to know Jesus as their Savior. Christian converts believing in the power of being rooted in The True Vine, the true source of life.

Nothing in this world can compare to being rooted in the love of Jesus, the vine.

To produce fruit, we must abide in Christ. We must abide in the vine. You only produce fruit if you abide in Jesus. Abiding is not automatic. If it was automatic Peter would not have denied Christ or fled from Christ when things got difficult. The disciples turned their backs on Jesus for a time, and that is why Jesus commands us to abide in him to remain alive. Jesus knows what is good for us.

In John 10:10 Jesus says that He came so that we might have life and might have it abundantly. The Gospel of John is the Gospel of belief. It tells you to believe in Jesus for eternal life and to have abundant life. It will be a life of fruitfulness and a life of joy in Christ. Abiding in Christ will

help us with the difficult times of life for we will know we are not walking through life alone.

The Apostle Paul says, “Just as you received Christ Jesus, so also continue to live in him.” (Colossians 2:6)

The branch’s job is not to produce fruit. The branch’s job is to continually receive life from the vine—to abide. The fruit is a by-product of abiding.

Some Christians never really abide and so never really produce fruit. But the issue isn’t whether they produce fruit or not, the issue is whether they are abiding in Christ. If we refuse to stay connected to the vine, we will wither up and die.

During this past year, with the pandemic, it may have been difficult to stay connected to the vine because one important element of abiding in Christ is being in Christian fellowship, to worship together and working together as believers.

We have tried our best by offering Live Streaming every Sunday and having Zoom Bible Studies, but this is an important aspect of abiding in Christ by studying the Word together, and praying together, worshiping together and having fellowship together. We long for fellowship as believers to encourage one another along our journey of faith. Belonging to a church family and growing in your faith is very important to abiding in Christ.

The grapes won’t grow on the branches unless the branches are connected to the vine.

What are you connected to? Are you connected to the vine? Are you abiding in Christ?

Don’t be like the world, connected to the things that are temporary. Be connected to The True Vine and the things that are eternal.

As you come to the Lord’s Table today- come wanting to be connected with Jesus and to abide in Him.

Jesus offers you eternal life when you are connected to him.

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

Be joined to the vine, abide in the vine, know the vinedresser and you will bear much fruit.