**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 10-23-2022
I Am the Vine**

The other day, my family was blessed with Charlie Darr stopping by to drop off some vegetables for us. And we truly appreciate your kindness to us in that gesture, Charlie, as well as the kindness of others from Chestnut Grove who have done things like that as well.

And the response that we receive when we show our appreciation is typically that they are just thankful that the vegetables get eaten instead of going to waste. They’re not patting themselves on the back.

You know, it seems like there are certain times of the year when the fruit and vegetables are just ready to be eaten and it is just a job to keep up with what is being produced.

A while back I spoke with Leota, who has blessed so many of us with things from her garden. And she shared with me a few keys to a successful garden. A lot of this involved her planting at the right time and using the right soil. Just getting things prepared properly was so important. And once things are established, the focus is just on maintaining it. The fruit and vegetables will come in their proper time, as long as it is maintained. There will be a plentiful harvest.

You may have to do some weeding from time to time. It may need some additional water, if it becomes dry, and then you need patience for what God does in enabling growth.

It’s important to remember that during Jesus’ visit to earth, He taught so often through metaphors and people could easily grasp. Things such as soil and fish and harvests and various other things that people could relate to. That is a sign of a great teacher. And Jesus is the best teacher. His examples and metaphors were not so abstract that they were impossible to grasp. No. There was a deep simplicity to His teachings.

Over the last few weeks, we have been taking a closer look at the “I Am” sayings of Jesus. These sayings are largely metaphors. “I am the bread of life.” “I am the Good Shepherd.” “I am the Gate.”

Jesus was not a literal shepherd herding sheep. But it was a metaphor of how He seeks to shepherd humanity. So while He is a true shepherd, it is not in the typical sense with animals.

Today’s “I Am” saying is a powerful example of a metaphor as well. And interestingly, in John’s Gospel, this chapter is the very literary center. John chapter 15. With it being the center, John is giving this passage very high significance. This is one of the most important things that John wants to convey in his gospel.

To help set the state for today’s passage, we find ourselves on the night that Jesus would later be arrested. The next day, Jesus would be on the cross, suffering and dying for all of our sins. Jesus had been speaking about His soon departure and how He would send the Holy Spirit to help His followers in the days ahead.

And then, in chapter 15, we read these words. We will be looking at verses 1-11

**1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15%3A1-11&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26702a)**] so that it will be even more fruitful. 3You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 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. 6If 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. 7If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8This 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. 10If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.**

Wow! Amazing! There is so much in here.

So here we find Jesus speaking about gardening. Perhaps that is fitting, as Jesus is making His way towards the Garden of Gethsemane, where He would be praying in the hours prior to His arrest.

And on the way to this familiar Garden outside the city of Jerusalem, Jesus speaks to them through this figure of speech.

He says “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”

Friends, this is one of the many places in Scripture where we see God revealed at Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the vine and God the Father is the gardener. And through the Holy Spirit, there is a pruning that happens so more fruit can be produced.

Now what is Jesus trying to teach His disciples here? Is He giving them gardening strategies to help them get more fruits and vegetables in their gardens at home? No, of course not.

But Jesus is using that familiar metaphor to speak about their need to stay connected to Him.

Jesus is the vine. What are some fruits that grow on vines? Can you name some?

Grapes, kiwis, strawberries, melons, cucumbers, tomatoes, and several others --- Did I mention that we have a meal together after worship today? Talk of that is making me a little hungrier. 😊

But for those foods to grow and thrive, they need to stay connected to the vine. It is from the vine that they are nourished and sustained and made strong and healthy. If they lose connection, they begin to wither.

Jesus is telling His closest followers of the extreme importance of staying connected to Him. Yes, Jesus would be soon returning to Heaven. But they could continue to remain strongly connected to Him.

How? Jesus would give them the Holy Spirit to help them stay connected to Jesus. The Holy Spirit would remind them of what Jesus had taught them. The Holy Spirit would give them understanding and lead and guide them. The Holy Spirit would enable them to remain in Jesus and to abide in Jesus.

And God the Father, as the gardener, is looking over the whole process. He is in charge. He knows what is needed, as a good gardener knows what their gardens need to thrive.

And the biggest thing that was needed was to stay connected to Jesus. Jesus is the life-giving vine that spiritually nourishes those that put their trust in Him.

Jesus describes His followers as the branches. Branches cannot bring forth healthy produce on their own, they need to be connected to the vine.

Jesus says in this passage, “apart from me, you can do nothing.” That is a humbling statement, friends. But it’s true.

We can’t do a thing without His help. Even those that do not know the Lord, it is only by His grace that they can breathe and talk and communicate. We are utterly helpless without the continued grace of Jesus Christ.

But when it comes to producing spiritual fruit for God, the biggest thing that Christians are called to do is to stay connected to Jesus. This is why the very first core value that we have discerned as a church to help us live out our vision of being a light on a hill sharing the love of Jesus Christ is to abide in Jesus. I will talk more about this in a few weeks as well.

But everything builds off of Christians abiding in Christ. Everything is contingent on Christians staying connected to Christ.

Jesus tells His disciples that if they do not eventually produce fruit, they would be cut off. In gardens, sometimes, something just needs to be thrown away. It is not helpful to the garden. And it would be because an important connection was not happening or had stopped happening.

**The key is connection to Jesus!** And Jesus goes on to say that for those that are bearing fruit, there would be some pruning to help it to be even more fruitful.

Again, sometimes gardens that are doing well can do even better with some more care. Some weeding. Some extra water. Some extra TLC.

This pruning is also a work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is constantly molding believers and shaping them to be more and more like Jesus. He brings conviction when that is appropriate. But He always does it with love and grace. He knows what’s best for His people.

The Holy Spirit also guides to action. It may not be that people are sinning in some way, but that there is some action that He is calling them to being doing to help strengthen their walk with and connection to Christ.

Sisters and brothers, as we consider this “I Am” statement of Jesus today, what is it that the Lord wants us to take home with us?

And I think that it is simply this. Our biggest and most important task to effectively live as a Christian in this world is in staying connected to Jesus by abiding in Him. Remaining in Him.

How can we do this well?

**Frist, we need to remember that apart from Jesus we can do nothing.** We need His help 24/7. Remember the very first beatitude that Jesus gave “blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” --- This means blessed are those that recognize their complete need and dependance on me and who live with that dependance on Him every day.

**Second, we are to actively abide and remain in Jesus by looking to the Holy Spirit to help us**. He will help us to better grasp the Scriptures. He will guide us in directing us to do what is right and pleasing to God. He will remind us of Jesus’ teachings and help us to live in obedience to His teachings. He will convict us of sin and He will encourage us on knowing our new identity as followers of Christ.

And **third and finally**, we are to remember that a life of abiding in Jesus is a life where we can experience the most joy possible.

Jesus states in verse 11, “**I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”**

There is true joy that comes from staying strongly connected to Jesus and allowing His Spirit to lead you and guide you and convict you. As we do this, the Gardener will be very joyful.

The joy of Jesus will grow within us and we will bring Jesus great joy 😊 Amen!

And then you will become like Charlie and the others amongst us that producing so much fruit, you become eager to give it away.

Think of the fruit of the Spirit. They grow as we abide on Jesus the vine.

Friends, whether or not we are gardeners in the natural, we offer ourselves to the Lord as branches in His garden. And may He see fit to produce much fruit in every one of us.

To Him --- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit --- be all the glory. Amen.

Resources: [www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com)
<https://thrivecuisine.com/fruits/list-of-fruits-that-grow-on-vines/> - List of 9 Fruits that Grow on vines The Gospel According to John by D.A. Carson