



The Christian Life Institute

Monday, April 20

Thank you for joining us today, as we continue our series, at the Christian Life Institute, presented through 15-minute encouraging messages three times per week, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 12:45 Central time, on practical ways to grow forward in Christ in uncertainty, unpredictability, and upheaval.

This message is entitled: I am a Branch

Let's read John 15:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. ¹²"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. ¹⁷These

things I command you, so that you will love one another. ¹⁸ “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹ But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father also. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’ ²⁶ “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.”

This is one of the richest passage of Scripture in the Gospels, which is a powerful statement, as all of Scripture is rich and nourishing but as our focus is on you and me as a branch – let’s explore a few particular verses as they pertain to our ‘branchness.’

First, let us be clear we are the branch. We are not the vine, Jesus clearly states “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” So, what is this horticultural metaphor and its meaning for you and me. The trunk of a mature vine usually has branches and Christ makes it clear that our connection to Him is our only way for life and function. He states clearly that if we are disconnected from Him, not abiding in Him, we can do nothing, as he reminds us when He says, “abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself.” That is a powerful statement which we must digest. In challenging times of unpredictability and uncertain we are more prone to wander into self-will and control because of fear, worry, anxiety when what we need the most is a deeper, stronger, richer connection to withstand, standfast, and endure, as we shared on Friday.

As we also shared on Friday, Christ is concerned about our spiritual well-being and in such He desires that we bear fruit. As Christ-followers, our purpose is to glorify our Father. Jesus states in this Chapter, “by this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.” We are loved, and in His love, as we are connected to Him, we can and will bear fruit. Love is a fruit of the Spirit. In Galatians 5:22-23 we read, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

We know from the Gospel of John that Jesus said in verses 12-13, “this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” During this season we have an opportunity to share Christ’s love in a powerful way. We have the opportunity to share our testimony of how we are turning into Christ and not pulling away because of fear and external factors. There is a ripe opportunity to share how you are surrendering to Christ, turning deeper into His word, praying more fervently, choosing to look upward by your words and actions. To demonstrate love through a smile, a kind gesture, prayer, encouragement, sacrifice. Ask the Lord how you can reveal love to those around you, even within the midst of social distancing and even quarantine. Technology, while tiring and tedious at times, is a gift that allows us to connect, to experience community to share the light of Christ through our facial expressions, our tones, our words, and yes, even our actions. Purchasing food for a neighbor, dropping a needed item on a doorstep, leaving an encouraging note in a mailbox – ask the Lord to provide you with creativity during these times.

We also know from these Scripture that we have a Helper and He is the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in verses 26-27, “but when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness.” Jesus knew His disciples were confused, concerned, worried about His impending departure. They did not understand when Jesus said, in John 16:16-18 ““a little while, and you will see me no longer; and again, a little while, and you will see me. So some of his disciples said to one another, “What is this that he says to us, ‘A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will

see me'; and, 'because I am going to the Father?'" So, they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about." Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'? Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy." Jesus wanted to assure and reassure His disciples and you and I today, that we are not alone – we have a Helper, a Comforter, One who Guides us into all Truth.

Jesus in both 15:11 and 16:20 wanted His disciples and us, today, to know His joy. In 15:11 he said, "these things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full" and in 16:20, "your sorrow will turn into joy." We can choose to appropriate His joy in these times, in any times. Our sorrow can turn to joy as we re-focus our eyes, priorities, choices on our Living Savior, Jesus Christ and we can bear fruit birthed from His love in us. Jesus reminded His disciples in 15:16, "you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit," that He has chosen us. We are precious to God. You and I matter to the Creator of the All and He wants us, as we shared on Friday to 'endure,' to continue forward in the strength and power of Christ. We must remind ourselves it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). It is His Holy Spirit dwelling in you and me, as His children, which moves us to endurance and allows us to endure and this flows from our connectedness to Christ – we are the branch, He is the vine.

Let us endure today through His will and way. As John Piper writes in his book, *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*, "let us bow down and worship Jesus Christ. Jesus alone is worthy of our highest admiration. Jesus alone is worthy of our trust. He can show us the Father. He can give us irresistible wisdom. He can see how all things work together for our good (Romans 8:28). He teaches the way of God with infallible truthfulness. Follow Him!" (p. 55). As we shared on Friday, endurance is a positive, healthy attribute derived from a desire to hear, question, I pray, evokes a sense of desperate dependence on Him which moves and motivates us to develop and cultivate a deep and rich attachment to Him, Who is the Vine and He, Who is infinitely "able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20). Let us connect securely and remain connected to our Vine through His love and His nourishing strength.

As a friend shared with me 1 John 15 exemplifies that:

He, Jesus is the Vine

- We cannot be the victorious overcomer He desires us to be without a strong connectedness to Him
- This is a Life-union – a lifestyle
- He cares for us by cleansing us, feeding us, and redirecting us to Himself

Jesus is love

- We are continually nourished and empowered by His love and deeply loved by Him
- We are commanded to love one another just as He loves us

Jesus, Chose us

- We are chosen from the beginning
- We are commissioned to do the will of the Father

We are His co-workers

- We are co-workers in the Kingdom of God
- Jesus shares the desires of the Father with us
- Jesus makes us worthy

We are not of this world

- We will feel strange, alien – out of place in this world
- We can expect to face alienation and persecution in this world – as we are in but not of

Jesus sent us and gave us the Holy Spirit -the Divine Encourager, Comforter, Helper – The Guide into Truth, into Jesus, Who is the Truth.

Let us choose to experience the overflowing of His love and joy upon us and embrace and live truths from John, Chapter 15.

In this season, and life which is a journey of seasons, we as Christ-followers, have opportunities to, through His strength and His power reflect Him to a broken and hurting world – so, let us persevere and come together, even when technology weary.

Let us agree together to:

“Walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7)

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

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