

The 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter  
May 2, 2021

"Remain in Jesus, the True Vine, the source of all forgiveness and life"

(John 15:4)

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LSB

"Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today's text for this 5<sup>h</sup> Sunday of Easter is from our Gospel reading John 15:4

**"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."**

Here ends our text.

"Abide" Or some English translations choose the word "remain". Neither one is a very flashy action verb. There really isn't anything very exciting about the word, "abide", is there? It's meaning? Well, think of a parent telling a small child to abide or stay with me as we cross the street together. Hold my hand. Trust in me and stay with me and you'll be safe. Run off on your own and a car will not see you and hit you.

Jesus is saying, "hold My hand". Abide in Me, the Good Shepherd, the True Vine. Trust in Me and there is continual cleansing, forgiveness, and protection from the wolf, the devil. On your own, the devil will snatch you. On your own, you who are a broken off branch can do nothing.

Jesus says the word "abide" seven times in the eight verses of our Gospel reading, three times in our text alone. Clearly, it's an important word for us to not skip over. And most especially, in our text, Jesus uses this verb "abide" as a command. He tells us very straight forwardly, "Abide in Me." This is not a suggestion, or open to discussion. It's an imperative! Do it!

Of course, Jesus does not command Himself to abide in a Christian. He doesn't need one. It's what the Triune God does in great perfect love for the sinner who

needs God's abiding, first. Jesus simply says, "and I in you." For God it's automatic. For us, we need to be commanded to abide, to trust in God always...why?

- I. Because our sinful nature believes it can abide apart from God in oneself

That's the simple truth. We like sheep wander away and stop hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd. **"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me."**

Our Gospel reading tells us especially about how personal and intimate each believer's relationship with God is. It's closer than any human relationship that we have on earth, whether that be husband/wife, parent/child or between friends. Fourteen times Jesus refers to Himself and fourteen times He speaks directly to "you".

The believer has a very close I/you relationship with Jesus. Being connected to the Vine means that Jesus knows all our thoughts and supplies all that we need so that we bear much fruit. Not a little fruit. Being connected to Jesus means bearing "much" fruit! But, if you're not connected to the Vine, you bear nothing.

That's what the very next verse, verse 5 again emphasizes.

**"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."**

You can do nothing. A big nothing burger.

We begin to see why Jesus commands us to "abide" in Him. A branch on its own cannot bear fruit. It has to be connected to the Vine.

We fool ourselves into thinking that we are self-sufficient, that we don't need to stay connected to the Vine, remain, abide in the Vine. We con our souls into thinking that I can get along just fine without coming to church, and without taking time on my own to read God's word and listen to good devotions.

This is a lie perpetuated by your sinful self, egged on by the devil and the world with the one goal of separating you from the true Vine. If that happens, you cut yourself off from the source of life. For if that severing can take place, if your faith

can be dried up and turn to unbelief, then the branch becomes a brittle dry worthless piece of wood.

This past week the students at the school went around the playground and picked up the branches that fell down from the high winds. They all had nice green leaves. A few days later the pile of branches sat in the corner. They now had brown leaves and were ugly and twisted dry branches – useless, to be tossed in the trash. Separated from the tree, the branches could not sustain life on their own.

We are no different. Separated from God, we cannot sustain life on our own. We wither and we die spiritually and physically. Anyone who cuts him or herself off from God becomes useless to God the Father, the gardener.

**“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away”.** (v.2) What happens next?

**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.**

There’s a burn ban in effect in the valley still. It’s too dry to be burning brush because that might get out of control and cause a bigger problem.

But there’s not a burn ban in God’s word. Those who don’t produce fruit because there is no trust, no faith in Jesus, are cut off from the Vine. The person who rejects the True Vine will hear Him say on the last day, “I don’t know you”. For there was not a connection. The unbelievers will be gathered together and cast into the unending fire of hell.

Oh, how we need to take seriously Jesus command to abide in Him every day.

2. because abiding in Jesus there is forgiveness and life

Of course, God doesn’t want anyone to perish eternally. We see during this Eastertide how Jesus sought out His disciples who were not bearing any fruit. They were withering and dried up with much fear behind locked doors. But, Jesus came to them. Jesus always seeks the lost sheep and strengthens them. He nourishes us with His word and sacraments. It’s the sap that gives our souls life.

Jesus the Good Shepherd feeds His sheep with the green pastures of His Word and Sacraments. He gives them life, for He laid down His life for them. He raised up His life so that He will also raise up the sheep.

Listen to verse 3 of our Gospel again. **“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”** It is God’s word that cleanses the branches and makes them green and supple and free from disease! Already! It’s God’s word not the fruits that we produce that cleanses us! Already! It is God’s word that tells us, that we were connected as branches to the True Vine out of pure grace. We have been grafted into the Vine and cleansed, already! It’s God’s doing 100%

By grace we are saved. We couldn’t attach ourselves to the Vine. We had to be brought in. We were powerless, but God grafted us in. We are the “other sheep” that Jesus brought into His sheep fold. As St. Paul says in Romans 11.

**13 For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, 14 if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. 15 For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?**

**16 For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. 17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.**

And the Gardener, the Father Himself takes care of His newly grafted branches. Our Gospel reading tells us, **“My Father is the vinedresser. 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.”**

He prunes us out of love so that we don’t grow wild, but produce more fruit. How does He do this?

Listen to verses 7-11 of Hebrews 12.

**If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9**

**Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”**

Whatever form of chastening, testing, pruning is for our good because it humbles us to remember that we need to repent daily and receive daily Jesus’ forgiveness. That’s what it means to abide in Him. Trust in Him daily, though I find no good thing in myself.

Here again Galatians 2:20-21.

**“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”**

The life I live is “Christ in me”. Continual pruning from the Father produces more fruit of greater service to God and our neighbor. It produces more fruit, more love, more patience, and the blessing of a deeper prayer life. That’s the blessing that we hear of in our Gospel in verse 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.” (John 15:7)**

Because you’re abiding in Jesus, you are in sync with His will and what you ask for brings much fruit, and also glory to the Father. So ,we pray on this Rogate Sunday and always! What an amazing interconnection a branch, a believer, has with the Holy Trinity, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

Jesus, the True Vine, and source of all forgiveness and life doesn’t change. He remains and abides in the believer, the branch. He doesn’t have to be told to abide. That’s who He is. We can count on Him always! What we can’t count on is our own sinful flesh, the world and the devil. They will tempt us to try and live apart from the Vine, by our own human wisdom and desires. They will try to cheapen and diminish what the Vine gives as not all that important. Abide in the True Vine! For of yourself you cannot bear fruit, and in you there is no life. Abide in His word always. There you will find the most exciting, breathtaking life there is! There you

will watch in amazement as the Holy Spirit moves you by His word to do things for His kingdom that you never thought you could do. And, of course, you couldn't, apart from the Vine. But, connected to the True Vine, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)**

What fruit the Holy Spirit works in you to the glory of the Father! Amen!  
**Amen.**

**The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**