



19 Minutes With the Messiah

I AM the True Vine

(John 15:1-8)

Jesus' Body as the Temple
The Living Water
New Cloth
New Wine in Old Wineskins
The Salt of the Earth
The Light of the World
The House Built on the Rock
The Two Debtors
The Sower
The Weeds
The Growing Seed
The Mustard Seed
The Yeast
The Hidden Treasure
The Fine Pearl
The Net
I AM the Bread of Life
Becoming Childlike
The Unmerciful Servant
I AM the Light of the World
I AM the Gate
I AM the Good Shepherd
The Good Samaritan
The Friend at Midnight
The Rich Fool
The Wise Servant
The Barren Fig Tree
The Great Banquet
The Lost Sheep
The Lost Coin
The Lost Son
The Shrewd Manager
The Rich Man and Lazarus
The Unworthy Servants
I AM the Resurrection and the Life
The Persistent Widow
The Pharisee and
the Tax Collector
The Workers in the Vineyard
The Ten Minas
The Two Sons
The Wicked Tenants
The Wedding Feast
The Fig Tree
The Householder
The Ten Virgins
The Talents
The Sheep and the Goats
A Lesson About Foot Washing
I AM the Way
▶ I AM the True Vine
The Woman in Labor
I AM the Alpha and the Omega

¹[Jesus said,] "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 so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, and I will 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 a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not remain in me, he is 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 given you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

1. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, . . . before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58). What truth did Jesus proclaim with each of his "I am" statements?
2. Explain Jesus' picture of the vine and the branches by completing the following paragraph.

Like a vine which _____ the vital, life-giving sap to its _____ so they may remain alive and be _____, so the Lord Jesus is the source of life for his _____. As long as the connection between _____ and the _____ remains, there will be spiritual _____ as a result.
3. Jesus stresses the importance of having a connection with him. What connects us to the Savior? Who created this connection? How?
4. Some people only appear to have a connection with Christ. What is the immediate result for those branches that are not truly connected to Jesus? What is the ultimate result?
5. The word *prune* suggests a painful experience. Give examples of what the Father might use to prune the branches that are connected to Christ. Why does the Father prune? Share an example of such pruning found in the Bible and, if possible, from your own life as well.

6. Jesus uses the word *remain* eight times in this short discourse. What warning is implied by his frequent use of this word? How will Christians respond?

7. Why does Jesus say that our bearing fruit is to the Father's glory rather than to our own?

For Further Study

8. Agree or disagree with the following statements:
 - In this lesson, Jesus is handing us a blank check regarding prayer.
 - Jesus clearly teaches that people will go to hell because they bear "no fruit."
9. How would you respond to each of the following fellow Christians?
 - "I'm not sure why the Lord took my job away. He must be punishing me."
 - "I pray all the time. I don't have to attend worship services to be a Christian."
 - "I'm so disgusted with myself. I want to live for the Lord, but no matter how hard I try, I keep messing up. Sometimes I wonder if I'm really a Christian at all."
10. In the eyes of God, "a good work is whatever a believer does according to God's Word out of love and thanks for all of God's goodness." Why can we rightfully say that even the very best unbeliever can never do anything that is pleasing to God?

Prayer

Father in heaven, keep us connected by faith to your Son, the true and life-giving vine. According to your wisdom and love, prune us as necessary, and then strengthen and enable us through Word and sacrament to bear much fruit to your glory alone. Amen.

Helps:

(1) With each use of “I am,” Jesus proclaimed that he is the true and eternal God—the great Yahweh, who has come into our world for our salvation.

(2) provides/conveys . . . branches . . . productive/fruitful . . . people . . . Christ . . . Christian . . . fruit.

(3) God the Holy Spirit creates the saving faith connection with Jesus through the gospel in Word and sacrament.

(4) Some may have only an outward connection with Christ, perhaps through church membership, but do not have the spiritual life of faith. Because of their unbelief, they do not bear fruits of faith and are condemned eternally to hell.

(5) Because the Father is very much a results-oriented gardener, he may allow us to suffer painful loss, cutting and trimming from our lives anything that might hinder us spiritually and keep us from being more fruitful. The lives of Job, David, and the apostle Paul provide examples.

(6) Believers can fall from saving faith. Yet, through the Word, the Holy Spirit brings us together with Christ and keeps us connected to him so that we will bear fruit in our lives and receive the gift of eternal life.

(7) Because it is the Father who works faith in us by the power of his Spirit and enables us to live according to his will, the fruits in our lives are his doing, not ours. He alone receives the glory.

(8) Jesus is not giving us permission to unbridle our greed but is assuring us that a faithful and fruitful branch, whose will has been shaped to coincide with the Lord’s, will pray in agreement with that will and will have those prayers answered. It is not the lack of fruits that condemns but the lack of a saving faith connection with Christ that naturally gives evidence of itself in one’s life.

(9) While Christians are “clean” (verse 3) through the blood of Christ and will never be punished for their sins, they will experience God’s pruning of their sinful nature for their spiritual and eternal good. Prayer is evidence of spiritual life (although it is true that even unbelievers pray), yet that life will not be sustained without the Spirit’s working through Word and sacrament. Those who want to live according to God’s will are Christians (Philippians 2:13 and Titus 2:14) and will grow and be strengthened in their faith life through the means of grace.

(10) The quote is from Luther’s Catechism(NPH), answer to Question 230. The unbeliever may perform deeds that appear good and praiseworthy in the eyes of the world, but because they do not proceed from saving faith and from the proper motivation, they are not pleasing in the eyes of God.