

Abiding in Christ John 15:1-5

Missio Christi

- We've been going through the Mission of Christ, looking at what it meant that He was "sent" by the Father, so that we might understand what it means for us to be "Sent" by Jesus.
- We see the mission of Jesus- performing miracles, teaching with authority, breaking down cultural barriers, casting out demons, raising the dead, loving the sinners, and challenging Religiosity.
- Many of you have been listening to these sermons and getting fired up about "Being on Mission." Perhaps you've even stepped out and begun to minister to your friends and family. Perhaps you have been successful! Praise God.
- **Today we are going to step back from looking at the Mission of Christ and WHAT he did, and focus How he did what he did. More specifically, we are going to look at How He expects us to follow through with the mission he has called us to.**
- Let's open up our Bibles to John 15.
- **Pray**

John 15:1-5

"I AM the true vine and 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 it, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing." NASB

Background:

- Jesus- the infinite God-man, steps out of glory and eternity past, enters into the world as a helpless baby, born in a barn, spends his first night on earth in a feed trough.
- 30 years of obscurity. Works for his father as a carpenter. We don't know much about those years.
- 3 years of ministry start out with his baptism in John 1, then he begins to call his disciples, they walk with him throughout the rest of his ministry.

- Preaching, Teaching, Healing, Feeding, Casting out Demons, Raising the dead.
- The Disciples are being trained: Jesus, the master teacher is purposeful in His training. His teachings grow upon each other. He would give them these amazing truths and let them wrestle with them. Often times they would come back with questions.
- Now we find ourselves in chapter 15, the ninth hour- so to speak. a part of a larger section of the book. John 13-17 is this intimate dialogue between Jesus and his followers. It is the night before Jesus would be crucified. He knows He is going to die. They are celebrating the Passover together in the upper room and it is here that Jesus unfolds one of the most pivotal truths in the Scriptures.

Exegesis:

Verse One:

- I AM the **true** vine. The stress in this sentence is *true*
- **This does not mean true as opposed to that which is false, but rather true in the sense that Jesus is the one, perfect, essential and enduring vine before which all others are but shadows.**
- Reference to Israel- The vine is always a symbol of Israel. Many times in the OT we see God referring to Israel as His choice vine and His vineyard.
- "I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit... The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the hose of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And He looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress." Isaiah 5:1-2. 7.
- "I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock. How then did you turn against me into a corrupt, wild vine?" Jeremiah 2:21
- Ezekiel 15 and 19, Hosea 10:1, Psalms 80:8-10
- **OT and "types"**- Throughout the OT there are many examples of a "Type of Christ." These could be men or women, or in this example, the nation of Israel which were a foreshadow- a prophetic pointing to the coming Messiah. Israel as the Vine was one of those.
- Where Israel had failed, Jesus now steps in with the declaration that He is the True Vine- His vine bears much fruit.
- The Father is the Vinedresser- the Gardener.

Verse Two:

- There are two things the Father does here:
1. “Takes away” the branch that does not bear fruit.
 - Greek work *airo-* has four meanings. 1. To lift up or pick up. 2. To lift up figuratively, as in lifting up one’s eyes or voice. 3. To lift up with the added thought of lifting up in order to carry away. 4. To remove.
 - Most of your translations say “Takes Away” or “cuts off.”
 - James Montgomery Boice (commentator) argues that the word should be taken in its primary sense “Lifts up.”
 - First the Father is meant to be the caretaker of the vineyard, given the entire context and flow of the parable, it doesn’t make sense to begin by stating that any branch “In Him” not bearing fruit would just be cut off. There are many good branches in a vine that do not have fruit at first. In fact, according to horticulturalists, it can sometimes take up to three years before a new branch can bear good fruit.
 - Second, another common aspect of a growing vineyard is that a branch might slip from its wire and end up laying in the dirt. In fact this is common. In this situation then the farmer will take the branch, lift it up off of the ground and fasten it to the wire so that it can receive sunlight.
 - Third it says “In Me.” Implying that this is a true regenerate follower of Christ.
 - Summary- it goes with the flow of thought. With this translation in mind then, the flow seems to make sense. There are branches that are still connected to the vine yet they are either new and not yet connected to the bracing, or old and have somehow become disconnected, falling to the ground and rendering themselves fruitless. The gardener comes along and lifts these branches up, ties them into the wire, exposing them to the sunlight and allowing fruit to grow.
 - The idea of a completely dead branch which is not connected to the vine is later dealt with in V.6.
 - **Application-** For some of you in this room, you are new to the faith, or perhaps you’ve been walking in the faith for a while but you’ve never really grown, never experienced fruit. You might be far from the Lord, stuck in the mud. Feeling helpless. I want you to know that the Father see’s you. He wants to lift you up, and put you back on the right path. Know that **“He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it in the day of Christ Jesus.” Phil 1:6.**
 2. “Prunes” the branch that does bear fruit.
 - Greek word – *katharizo-* it means to cleanse, make clean, or purify.

- This not only relates to cleansing the branch of insects, moss and other harmful things, but also to the pruning of those parts of the branch which are dead.
- As we grow in our walk with the Lord, we will surely experience His cleansing. Unhealthy relationships, pride, lust, greed, addiction, religiosity, laziness..... on and on. **He** takes these away and cleanses us from these things.

Verse Three:

- Jesus points out that his followers are already “clean.” Much like the kingdom this is surely another example of something that is “already” but “not-yet.” In an eternal salvific sense we are all “clean” before a righteous judge, yet in our remaining time here on earth we all have to deal with our sinful bodies.
- The word: Let’s make sure that we are looking to our cleansing from the Lord! So many times we are looking to pop-culture to tell us how to have a “good life.” “Your Best Life Now.” We don’t believe in a Jesus plus Gospel. Jesus is ALL we need!

Verse Four:

- Abide- Some translations “remain.”
- **“to be and remain united with him, one with him in heart, mind and will.”**
Zodhiates
- This is an intimate and organic union between Christ and us in which we draw from Him the nutrients we need to live.
- Jesus simply points out that a branch is not autonomous, and neither are we.
- Apart from me you can do “nothing.” Literal translation “NO THING.”
- **AS I READ THIS I BEGIN TO GET THE PICTURE THAT I’M NOT REALLY DONG MUCH! A BRANCH IS WEAK, A BRANCH Is FRAGILE, A BRANCH IS TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON THE VINE FOR ITS LIFE.**
- This is a sobering truth, and a very humbling truth.

The Essence of Abiding in Christ: Humility

Who is the one doing everything in this analogy? Jesus the vine and The Father the gardener! We aren’t doing anything but staying intimately connected, resting in Him, dependent on him.

Humility is defined by Andrew Murray as “Total dependence on God for everything.”

Let’s get it right. Two times in this passage Jesus reiterates that HE IS THE VINE, and we are THE BRANCHES. It’s not the other way around.

We can’t DO anything. It’s all HIM, that’s why apart from Him we can do nothing.

You might try, and struggle, and work really hard at making fruit in your life but eventually you’ll bottom out and realize that you can’t do it. It has to be Christ.

We need to recapture what it means to be humble in the church today.

“God created the world out of nothing, and as long as we are nothing, He can make something out of us.” Martin Luther

Humility recognizes Jesus as the Creator, and self as created.

We must look to Jesus for our Identity.

We must look to Jesus for our Purpose.

We must look to Jesus for our Mission.

Humility recognizes that everything in life is about giving Jesus the Glory

Westminster Catechism says that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

When the disciples asked Jesus who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven he put a little child up on display and said “Whoever humbles himself like this child is greatest in the Kingdom of heaven (Matt 18:3, Luke 9:46). Children are totally helpless and completely dependent on their parents.

They were focused on their own glory. But God doesn’t share His glory. True humility doesn’t search out glory.

Humility always puts aside self and focuses on another.

What room is there for the branch to be proud of the fruit?

Pride: The opposite of Humility is a dependence on self. This is pride.

It is based on the idea that you are in control, you are capable of running things, you are like God, you deserve glory.

Luke 18:14b ...”For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

This is the same sin that Adam and Eve gave into and it is the same sin we are dealing with today.

If you want to see if you are humble or full of pride just look at your relationships with those closest to you.

Humility in the Life of Christ

Jesus exemplified Humility:

Philipians 2:5-11 “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”

Jesus humility in the book of John:

John 5:19 “The son can do nothing by himself”

John 5:30 “By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me”

John 5:41 “I do not accept the praise from men.”

John 6:38 “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will”

John 7:28 “I am not here on my own

John 8:28 “I do nothing on my own”

John 8:42 “I have not come on my own; but he sent me”

John 8:50 “I am not seeking glory for myself”

John 14:10 “The words I say to you are not just my own”

John 14:24 “These words you hear are not my own.”

Humility in the Life of the Church: Gathered

How does this relate to our church?

We want to be a church gathered that is all about Jesus! His glory, His Church. We are excited to be a part of his church but it is His, He is the Senior Pastor.

Ministry flows from Intimacy- This is why we stress worship so much. This is why we constantly encourage Bible reading. This is why we have small groups because we want to encourage each other to know Jesus.

Prayer Meetings- We don't just wake up at 6AM for our health. We do it to seek God's direction for the church. Often the Lord will speak to us through prayer and offer wisdom, correction, direction and even exhortation.

Humility in the Life of the Church: Scattered

Are you living your life completely dependent on Jesus? Or are you depending on yourself? We are called to be dead to self

Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who lives but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loves me and gave himself for me.”

Personal intimacy: Are you cultivating a life of intimacy?

Are you daily, hourly, moment by moment, drawing near to Jesus, letting his life fill you and live in you. Let's start now.