

The Parables of Jesus

Lesson 17

Parable of the True Vine – John 15:1-17

The parable of the true vine will enrich your understanding of the depths of God's love and your duties to Him in response to that love. This may be one of your favorite lessons.

Setting for the Parable

Jesus told this parable to His disciples in the intimate setting between the Last Supper and the Garden of Gethsemane. The teaching of this parable is a critical part of Jesus' final instructions while here on earth.

Telling of the Parable

Jesus opened the true vine parable by saying he is the vine and the Father is the gardener. Jesus informs us that the Gardener cuts off those branches that fail to produce spiritual fruit. A branch without fruit takes up space. Branches without fruit are useless in the vineyard.

He goes on to say that the branches that produce fruit are pruned so they can produce more.

So what does this mean to us? Well I'm glad you asked...

Meaning of the Parable

Jesus as the True Vine is the direct source of life for the us...the branches. He says in verse 5, "Apart from me you can do nothing." Apart from Jesus we are totally fruitless. Outside a right relationship with Him, our efforts can't bring us closer to God; our love for others doesn't eternally benefit them or us; our goodness is worldly. Everything we do apart from the True Vine is wrongly motivated and futile.

Branches desire to be useful above all else and as His children that should be our desire as well.

"Abiding in Christ" assures us that we will bear spiritual fruit.

So exactly how do we abide in Christ? We follow him like His disciples did. As Christians we are to desire to live the way God desires us to live.

Verse 7 shows us that abiding in Christ means that we are reliant upon prayer for a strong spiritual life. It also means that we meet together to hear the preaching and teaching of the Word. During this church age, we're instructed to read and study the Bible and then called upon to apply the Bible's teachings to our lives. Abiding means remaining and therefore means we are fully committed to live an entire lifetime devoted to Him.

Jesus teaches that true Christians will produce real fruit...fruit that will glorify the Father. So that really begs the question, "What fruit will glorify God?"

Good works are those things that the Bible teaches us to accomplish through His power Good works are those things that we're called by God to perform which are laid out by His providential will.

Some examples can be found in Galatians 5 where Paul talks about the Fruit of the Spirit. These include...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.

As Christians grow toward maturity in Christ these fruits multiply into more fruit and other people are affected by our changed lives. When we practice love, others notice and are drawn to Him. The joy we express attracts others to Christianity. Displaying peace in difficult circumstances gets the attention of people who need the peace that passes all understanding. These spiritual fruits lead to even greater fruits...souls being won to Christ.

Let's look for a few minutes at the pruning of the branches. We all have bad seasons as Christians...those times when we fail to produce good fruit. Fortunately, the Father prunes us so we can produce more fruit.

Pruning means that He takes special care of His children. He works to trim away those things that displease Him as well as the things that keep us from reaching our full potential. I'm glad that we have such a wonderful, loving, caring and capable Gardener.

Pruning can be painful for us. We, as Christians, can be wrapped up in our own sin going our rebellious way for a time reaping what we've sown. That isn't a good thing for us because we end up spiritually broken and alone. Scripture tells us to turn from our sin before it devours us.

Because of God's patience and mercy, He has given us an opportunity to return to abiding in Him. He has gifted us with a thing called repentance. Romans 2:4 says, "Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?"

This is the beautiful Gospel message in a nutshell...we are loved by God with an amazing grace...an undeserved, unearned love that transcends all other loves. Nothing should be more important to us than what Jesus reveals to us here in this parable.

Finally, here's one more bit of motivation for bearing fruit. Verse 16 says, "I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name." Jesus is telling us that when we are truly abiding in Him, we possess a working knowledge of God's word. That working knowledge compels us to properly pray and as we biblically pray God answers our prayers. God motivates us to bear fruit by answering our prayers.

Get This!

We as Christians (branches from the parable) should flourish and produce the Fruit of the Spirit. According to Philippians 1:11, God desires this for you; those who truly love you desire this for you; YOU should desire this for you and for all those you love.

The reality is that if we really and truly love Him, we will die to the world and to sin and continue to abide in Christ. You CAN do it! You can have a dramatic effect on the people around you and influence them in a positive way for Christ. The choice...as always...is up to you.