

Abiding in Christ

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[0 : 00] John chapter 15, verses 1 through 11.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser.! Every 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. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide 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.

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. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers, and the branches are gathered and thrown into the fire and burned.

If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.

[1 : 19] As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love. Just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. I got out a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? I'm sure somewhere, some kid was excited yesterday to receive one of those play kitchen sets, you know what I'm talking about, that was complete with fake, a fake sink, a fake stove, a fake refrigerator, fake dishes, fake silverware, silverware, and shelves full of fake food that they were eager to serve their real family members with.

I'm sure that many of you have been the recipient of one of those fake meals. You were handed a plate with a plastic lemon or a plastic tomato or a rubber piece of cake on it.

You were handed a plastic fork, and you sat there, and you pretended to eat that fake meal and enjoy every last bite. And you know, some of that fruit can be pretty deceiving.

From a distance, if you didn't know better, you might even think that it was the real thing and that it looked quite appetizing. But then again, on closer inspection, you'd see that it's just a hollow piece of plastic that is full of air.

[3 : 07] It has nothing of substance and has no ability to nourish your body. Over the course of His earthly life in ministry, Jesus was surrounded by a lot of people like that fake fruit.

Chief among those people were the Pharisees, Israel's religious leaders. the way they dressed, the way they spoke, the way they diligently obeyed the law and were critical of those who did not, gave them an outward appearance of being very religious people.

People who truly knew God. But time and time again, Jesus revealed that that wasn't truly the case. And so ironically and tragically, those who claimed to appear to be close to God were in fact the ones who were opposing Him the most.

And Jesus was never afraid to point that out each time they attempted to discredit Him and discredit His claim that He is the Son of God.

Case in point, in Matthew 23, verses 27 through 28, Jesus, addressing the Pharisees, says to them, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

[4 : 41] For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

You know, when the disciples first heard Jesus talk like this to men who they thought were close to God, it stunned them.

And they witnessed how the hostility of the Pharisees towards Jesus only intensified as the days grew closer to His crucifixion.

They wanted Him dead. But as stunning as those realizations must have been for the disciples, it no doubt was not as shocking, I believe, as the realization that one of them, one of the twelve disciples, one of their group who was close to Jesus, who had ministered with Jesus for three years, and whom they knew well, one of them, Jesus has just pointed out, is a traitor.

One of them was fake. One of them was a counterfeit disciple. And when Jesus broke that news to the disciples, Matthew records in His gospel that the disciples were grieved and also they had no idea who it could be.

[6 : 21] None of them pointed the finger over to Judas and said, aha, we knew it all along. They all thought, is it me? And they asked, is it me, Lord? Is it I? At this point in John's gospel, Jesus has now left the upper room with the eleven disciples.

Judas has left. He's been dismissed by our Lord to carry out His plan. And so as Jesus now continues on with the eleven disciples, they are going to the Garden of Gethsemane and He continues to teach them.

And it's there where Judas will eventually lead a group to capture Him. But at this point, the shock that one of the disciples would betray Jesus was still fresh on the minds of the eleven.

and so in John fifteen, one through eleven, Jesus gives instruction to them, instruction that will prepare them for what is about to happen.

Preparing them for His crucifixion that will soon take place, but also giving them knowledge that will help them hear, discern between a true and a false disciple.

[7 : 39] Jesus knows that the cross is looming, but He is busy preparing His disciples for what will happen after it.

He will rise and He knows that. He will ascend to heaven and the disciples will continue to advance His gospel and they will be indwelt and they will be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

He knows that His disciples as they do this, as they advance His mission, will encounter various kinds of false teachers and various kinds of false teachings.

In fact, most of the books of the New Testament were written to counter such false claims that were out there about Jesus and teachings which distorted the gospel.

people. And you know, this is still true today. Like then, the church is still commanded to be a pillar and a buttress of truth.

[8 : 40] We are commanded to warn false disciples of the reality of their spiritual condition and preserve the instruction of our Lord and keep it from any kind of demonic distortion.

And so, in our text, Jesus uses an illustration to drive home the importance of abiding in Him. He makes the point that whether or not a person abides in Him reveals whether they are truly saved.

And in making this point, there is also within our text a plea today to false disciples that they would repent, that they would express true faith in Him and that they would do so before it is too late.

And so, the main idea for our sermon this morning is this. Those who abide in Christ are those who have been truly saved. Those who abide in Christ are those who have been truly saved.

And so, in His illustration of the vine and branches, Jesus wove all of the key figures of that night's events into His analogy.

[9 : 58] Himself as the vine, His Father as the vinedresser, the abiding branches symbolic of the eleven disciples and other true believers who would come after them, and then also the non-abiding branches, picturing Judas and other false disciples who are like Him.

And here, before His crucifixion, Jesus gave one final warning to those who claim to believe in Him but do not demonstrate by their lives that their confession is genuine.

Now, as a pastor, I've spoken with many people who have struggled over their, the state of their salvation.

They believe, but they're aware of sin in their life and their struggle against sin.

And in that struggle, they've questioned the genuineness of their salvation. Maybe you've been there before where you've wrestled with that question, am I really saved?

[11 : 15] In fact, you may be wrestling with that question right now. Am I truly saved? Perhaps someone has approached you with that question or will come to you with that question one day as a brother or sister in Christ and they'll come to you and they'll ask you, how can I know that I'm truly saved?

And so whatever the case may be, I believe that this message from this text will help because God's word has answers.

And so as we look at this initially, we're going to see four principles from this text. Principle number one is that Jesus is the true vine.

Jesus is the true vine. In the beginning of verse 1, in the beginning of verse 5, he says, I am the true vine. And then in verse 5, at the beginning, I am the vine. The metaphor that Jesus uses here of a vine was used in the Old Testament and it was used there to describe Israel.

God says through the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 2, 21, yet I planted you a choice vine, holy of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine?

[12:39] You see, Israel was to be the channel through which God's blessings flowed to the world. They were to be a light to the Gentiles, but instead of that, they proved over and over again to be a fruitless vine, an unfaithful vine, as they continually persisted in their sin.

And so, Jesus is making the statement here that where Israel has failed, he will succeed as the true vine. And so, here we have the last of his seven I am statements that John records in his gospel. All of those statements affirmed that Jesus is God, that he is the son of God, that he is God in the flesh.

And so, he was here as he did before, rightly declaring himself to be the source of all spiritual life and vitality and growth and productivity.

And he does it here again by using the illustration of a vine. Just as branches draw their nourishment and their life from the vine, so our spiritual life and nourishment is drawn from our union with the vine, Jesus Christ.

[14:03] The Bible says that the true people of God are those who are united to Christ, the true vine, and who then bear fruit. In another place, Jesus says in Matthew 21, 43, Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.

Those who are united to Christ, the vine, bear fruit. He is the true vine. Outside of him, the Son of God, the Savior of the world, there is no spiritual life.

The next principle Jesus makes here is that the Father is the vine dresser. In verse 1, after identifying himself in this analogy as the vine, he identifies the Father as the vine dresser.

Georgos is the Greek word there for vine dresser, and it refers to someone who tills the soil or someone who is a vine grower. apart from planting, apart from fertilizing and watering the vine, the vine dresser had two primary responsibilities in caring for it.

First, he removed branches that did not bear fruit, and then second, he pruned branches that did bear fruit so that they could bear more fruit. And so that's the picture that Jesus is wanting to put in the minds of his disciples and in our minds today.

[15:31] Having established in his illustration that he is the vine and that his father is the vine dresser, he moves on to the issue which he is primarily concerned with communicating to his disciples, and that is about the two different kind of branches that associate with the vine and how his father interacts with each of these branches.

And so he begins first by talking about the fruitless branches. And our third principle we see here is that fruitless branches are taken away and destroyed.

Fruitless branches are taken away and destroyed. The beginning of verse 2, Jesus says it very clearly, every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away.

And then in verse 6 he talks about what happens when it is taken away. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers and the branches are gathered and thrown into a fire and burned.

In Matthew 13, 38 through 40 Jesus used a similar metaphor to illustrate the same truth. There he said the field is the world and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom.

[16:54] The weeds are the sons of the evil one and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. the harvest is the end of the age and the reapers are angels just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire so it will be at the end of the age.

In these verses, Jesus teaches that the first work of the vine dresser is that of judgment. With some of it happening now and with the rest of it happening at the end of the age.

And so now when we read this passage, a question that often arises in the minds of those who study it is this. Can a branch united to the vine or can a believer, a disciple, united to Christ, lose its fruit-bearing abilities and suffer the cutting away of the Father's judgment?

In other words, can someone lose their salvation? Verse 2 appears to indicate that in some sense the branch can be in me or in Jesus and then cut away and destroyed.

But you know, we use Scripture to interpret Scripture. And so the very short answer to that question, can I lose my salvation, is no.

[18:31] You can't. And the answer is no because Jesus has gone to great lengths to teach that already in John's Gospel that we've been going through.

As we've been going through this book, we have seen how there are those who genuinely trust in Christ. God and they are genuinely united to Him in faith. And then there are those who we've seen who attach themselves to Him with a kind of belief, but we know that it's not truly saving.

And the difference between the two is whether or not they continue to abide in Him, whether or not they continue to be faithful to Him, and whether or not they bear fruit.

Let's look at what Jesus says and what He has said to this point about this in answer to this question. In John 6, 37 and 39, Jesus says, all that the Father gives me will come, will come to me. And whoever comes to me, I will never cast out. And then in verse 39, and this is the will of Him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given me, but raise it up on the last day.

[19:56] In other words, what Jesus is saying here is that God has a people before they come to Jesus. And then in John 17, 6, when eventually we'll get there, we'll see Jesus says, I have manifested in His prayer to the Father.

I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you have given them, or you gave them to me.

So what Jesus is saying here is this, those whom the Father calls, come, all of them. And when they come, they are kept.

Not one is lost. None of these branches are snipped off by accident. Jesus said in John 10, 26 through 30, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.

Again, speaking to those who oppose Him. He says, my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

[21:10] My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one. So this is what He's saying.

Those whom the Father calls come, and once they come, and they receive life in Christ by faith in Him, they will never ever perish because there is no power capable of snatching them out of His hand because He and the vine dresser are one.

These statements make it clear that those who have been genuinely saved are eternally secure in the Father's hand, but if that wasn't enough, here's more.

Romans 8, 28-30, and we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Those whom He predestined, He called. Those whom He called, He also justified, and those whom He justified, He has glorified. You are brought by Him through every stage of salvation until the very end when you are glorified by Him.

[22:30] And if that wasn't enough, Romans 8, 38-39, moving down a little bit, for I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor heights, nor depths, nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Not even you can separate yourself from Him. No one who is born again, no true believer, no genuine convert, ever falls through the cracks.

Because God does not abort His children. God does not abandon those whom He has adopted. God saves and God keeps. That's who He is.

He saves you and He keeps you saved. So who is the branch then that is in me, Jesus says, but that is then severed from the vine?

Well, they are the people like Judas. People who attach themselves to Jesus but they do so for all the wrong reasons. Jesus has encountered many like them to this point in His life.

[23:43] John 2, 23, at the very beginning of His ministry, now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, many believed in His name. They had some kind of belief in His name but it was

because they saw the signs that He was doing.

But Jesus on His part did not entrust Himself to them because He knew all people. He knew their true motivation. He knew what was really fueling their belief.

They are people like the one Jesus encountered in John chapter 6 who followed Him for a free meal. Remember after He fed the 5,000?

That was just recording the men not including the women and the children. Jesus at a point had about 20,000 people following Him. And they did so for a free meal.

They did so to be entertained, to see some miracles. They followed Him as long as they believed they stood something to gain from Him materially.

[24 : 45] But once they realized that He would not perform at their behest and would not be the political Messiah that they wanted and once He began to tell them what it meant to be a true disciple of His they left Him.

They jumped off of the Jesus bandwagon. In John 6, 66 after this many of His disciples many of those who said they believed who said they were a disciple of His turned back and no longer walked with Him.

We see this in our culture people jumping on and off the bandwagon. I remember back in 2015 the Royals won the World Series. Growing up in Kansas City I was used to seeing a lot of really bad baseball for a really long time.

The Royals were horrible then all of a sudden it started coming together they started winning and then they won the World Series something we never thought would ever happen at least I never thought would happen in my lifetime.

I remember soon after that going I don't even remember what it was family trip of some sort to visit we went to Branson and you know Branson is in Missouri so is Kansas City but they're not super close but here's the thing I've been to Branson before I was in Branson before 2015 multiple times and I would maybe see one other person wearing a Royals hat or a Royals shirt beside myself after 2015 or during that season after they won the World Series we go to Branson and everybody all of a sudden is a Royals fan I remember going to that outlet mall they have the Tanger outlet mall and it's like everybody it was a sea of blue wearing Royals shirts and Royals hats I was thinking where were these people before back during the days of despair that's what people do people like to associate with a winner but winning in the eyes of the world and success in the eyes of the world is much different than how

[26 : 58] God defines it in his word Jesus won by dying and he won by dying on a cross his victory over Satan and sin and death came when the world thought that he had lost when they heard him shout from the cross it is finished in a sense he was finished he was finished satisfying God's wrath towards the sins of his people but he wasn't finished as in it wasn't over for him he hadn't lost he arose on the third day and those who truly know him who truly follow him realize that in him there is life in him they have life and this world is not their true home can a person be born again and then lost can a person be a child of God through faith be adopted as his child and then kicked out of his house the answer is no and thank

God that it's no but like Judas there are many who claim to know Christ they claim to be his true disciples but they don't truly know him they can deceive everyone else but they don't deceive him they do not bear fruit because they do not truly abide in the vine and so such people Jesus says will always be present within his church Jesus described them as the tares among the wheat in Matthew 13 25 he described them as bad fish that are collected with the good ones and then later thrown away in Matthew 13 48 goats condemned to eternal punishment Matthew 25 33 through 41 he defined them as those who are left standing outside when the head of the house shuts the door in his parable in Luke 13 25 through 27 then also in his parable he describes them as the foolish virgins who are shut out of the wedding feast in Matthew 25 1 through 12 and the useless servants who bury their talents in the ground

Matthew 25 24 through 30 and they are those who believe that they are on their way to heaven who think that all roads lead to God no matter what you believe but Jesus says in Matthew 7 13 through 14 that they are on the broad path but it leads to destruction and so there is a lot of sobering truth in this text Jesus says here whether you like it or not that the ultimate fate that awaits the false branch is that it will be taken away it will be gathered and then it will be thrown into the fire and burned in Matthew 13 49 through 50 Jesus warned so it will be at the end of the age the angels will come out and they will separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace in that place

there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth in Matthew 7 22

Jesus talks about that that day and the anguish which many will protest against him with he says on that day many will say to me Lord Lord did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do mighty works in your name see again though they had the outward appearance like Judas of being one of his disciples though they had everyone else fooled God is omniscient and you cannot fool him and they will hear that chilling reply Jesus says in verse 23 I will declare to them I never knew you I never knew you depart from me you workers of lawlessness so in my time again as I said serving as a pastor

I've seen many people unfortunately who proclaimed and confessed were baptized said they knew Jesus but then you see later on by how they live that confession was most likely not genuine and I've talked with many who thought they were saved and then later on in life realized that they weren't they were baptized they went through all the motions they made that public demonstration of their confession but then they realized that you know what in that moment I didn't truly believe that wasn't my motivation maybe it was because I was trying to please my mom or my dad or my grandparents maybe it was because my friend was getting baptized and I thought that that was the thing I wanted to do too maybe it was because the baptistry just to me sounded it seemed like such a mysterious thing I just wanted to see what was back there and be a part of that whatever the case might have been they knew they weren't saved until later on and like

[32 : 38] I've said I've counseled with many believers who were concerned about whether or not they were truly saved and you know in each of those cases I've told them that the fact that they're concerned about that indicates that they probably really are saved because if you're not truly saved you don't really care though we undergo a transformation in salvation we know the sin nature remains in this life but a person who is genuinely saved is forever united to Jesus Christ and they are pruned by the vine dresser to bear much fruit so the fourth principle fruit branches are pruned fruitful branches are pruned but as I said at the beginning I was thinking I was going to preach through all these verses at the beginning of the week and I realized that's not going to happen because there's just too much here too many great things for us to pack into ten minutes of time and so

I'm really looking forward to next week as we talk more about what it so instead of unpacking those verses I want to just brag on God's grace for a little bit the grace that I've received from the great shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine to find the one if ever there was anyone who could have lost their salvation it would have been me I was blessed to grow up in a Christian home to Christian parents in a church that loved me and cared about me and prayed for me I was called to the ministry when I was sixteen No doubt God made it very clear and for a time I decided that yeah okay you know I will do that until I got to college and many of you have heard my testimony I got to college and I decided that you know what God is it really fair for you to tell me how I should live or what I should do with my life and so I pursued other goals and I got in trouble and I hurt people I cared about and people look at my life and say that's not a Christian but

I'll tell you this I knew that God always had his hand on me he always had his hand on me I never not believe I just didn't want to do what God said I remember getting to the point where I was just my life was a mess and if I could have lost my salvation I would have lost it and if God was someone who was not gracious he would have snipped me off long ago and let me go my own stupid way but he's gracious and he's good and he's kind and even when you think you're too far gone he is the good shepherd who goes and finds and brings back and he doesn't throw the dirt back in your face he doesn't remind you how stupid you've been he heals your wounds he brings you home and he continues to bless you and to keep you and to watch over you something really cool happened to me this morning because man

I really regretted those days of my life and often times I look back on those days and think wow you know if I hadn't been so stupid how much different might things be today how much better might I know the Lord today if I hadn't been running from him so much but a couple amazing things happened during that time I told you I believed and I would share the gospel even though I wasn't living the Christian life and I would share it with my closest friends who were not believers one thing that was pretty remarkable the friend who Danny was the most concerned that I would go hang!

[37 : 40] out with because he was the worst influence on my life about three years ago he just showed up at this church one day in the front pew we had lost touch for a while and he was totally different TJ just like the same thing talking about how this guy who I knew in college was not the

same person because he had been saved totally different I remember going out to lunch with him and Danny afterwards talking about wow and I telling him if people knew us in college they never think we would have this kind of conversation we're talking about what God has done in our life but then this morning my best friend in college I shared my testimony with him and he was not saved but every time we would see each other afterwards of reunions or whatnot just running into each other and we get he got married still an unbeliever and then

I remember this was probably about three or four years ago I got a message from his wife that they were being baptized on Easter and that they had come to faith in Jesus Christ and I rejoiced it's like wow that's amazing and then I reached!

I said hey I am so thankful you've always been such a good friend to me in our garage and you shared the gospel with me this morning I got a message from him he lives in Minnesota now and he said hey you know he's got a guy that he has been mentoring a young man who he's been discipling that is moving to Oklahoma and he said would you give me a name of some guys in Enid do you know any churches do you know any youth pastors I want him to have a good church family just to think about that that you know what Lord at least in this case I've seen you bear fruit in my life and you've been so gracious and I'm so thankful that here's someone who is making disciples and it's so good to know our God and it's so good to receive his grace and if you don't know it please understand that he's calling you today he wants you to bear fruit he wants you to be united by faith in him and apart from him there is no salvation to come to the

Lord to see that he is good that you have sinned your sin has separated you from God eternally that you can only be saved through Christ because God is the only one who can overcome your sin and he has by sending his son who lives sinlessly who died sacrificially who endured his wrath so that by faith in him you won't have to and he clothes you with his righteousness it's not about making yourself clean and going to God and thinking am I good enough will my father love me it's about how he loves you through his son and he clothes you with his righteousness and he sees a saved person he sees his son he sees someone who is innocent of sin the gospel is good news and so two applications that I leave you with this morning number one are you truly in Christ today are you truly in Christ today listen again

I've counseled with a lot of people about this question and if you struggle with that question please let's get together and talk about that but I want you to really consider that are you truly in Christ today are you truly abiding in the vine is there fruit evidence of that and then secondly and that goes right into it is your life bearing fruit that matches your confession that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior is it clear by the way that you live that Christ rules and reigns in your heart is the fruit evident people know when they see you the life that you live and they interact with you that that's somebody who's different that's somebody who knows Jesus let's pray Lord God we are grateful for you Lord you are the one who is responsible for our salvation every step of the way

[42 : 22] God it is you who call and it is your call that we come and as we come Lord you keep us eternally even when we act so foolishly like I know I have in my life thinking that we know better than you thinking that our ways are better than your ways thinking that we can do better with the life you've given us than you can God even still you are gracious to us you truly are the great shepherd that leaves the 99 to find the one and when you find that one you don't beat it up you don't scald it you don't rub its face in the dirt you put it on your shoulders and you carry it back home to rejoice that what was wandering what was lost has been found thank you that you are such a good!

and! God Lord you've given us one life here to live and how we live it matters Lord I pray for those who realize today that they don't know you that their life does not bear fruit that they would be warned of what the consequences of that are eternal separation from you Lord and I pray that they would turn to you and know that you will save them and keep them and Lord those of us who do know you and know that we have been united to the vine we are in Christ forever Lord may we not shy away from the pruning knife but welcome it knowing that whatever you take away from us makes us healthier makes us grow better makes us produce more for you and so Lord we pray that you would use our lives however you see fit that we would be disciples who make disciples that we would bear fruit and that it would testify to how awesome and how great you are and we ask and we pray these things in

Jesus name Amen Thank you.