

## Title: “The True Vine”

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John 15:1

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**Service Readings:** Acts 8:26-40; 1 John 4:1-11; John 15:1-8

*Jesus is not just the vine, he is the **true** vine. We are all branches attached to some vine. Let us ensure that it is, and always remains, Jesus.*

### Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

I need to belong to something. I need to be a part of something bigger than me. The world may tell me that I'm wrong, and that I can find joy and completeness from independence, and I may even try to believe it and live it out. But I know that it will not be sustainable and in the end I'll be back to needing attachment to something.

It is not just me that experiences this longing, we all do. We were designed to be connected to something, to receive life from something outside ourselves. God created us that way and in the first garden, the first couple experienced that attachment. They were connected to him in a way that we will not understand this side of heaven. And yet, they wanted independence. They desired independence. And so they cut themselves off from the very vine that supplied them with true life. On that day, all creation learned that even though there is no greater need than to be connected to the true vine, there is no greater desire than to go it alone.

This was the true sin of Adam and Eve: their belief that they no longer needed God for sustenance. And so they cut themselves off and no longer abided in him. And that was the day that these two branches were destined to wither and eventually be gathered and thrown into the fire. And over the years the number of disconnected branches would continue to grow; all but one would be born destined for the fire.

In our gospel passage, Jesus was nearing the most difficult part of his ministry. Up to this point he had traveled throughout the area proclaiming that the kingdom of God was at hand. He had taught; he had healed. But soon he would suffer and die. This was his purpose here on earth and everything he did moved him ever closer to this event. And he knew it. And he knew that tonight would be the night when he would be handed over and the final act of his ministry would begin.

He had finished his last meal with his disciples and had sent Judas away to prepare the stage for his arrest. He had told them one last time that he must leave but that he would also return. And he had promised to send the Holy Spirit as a helper that will be with them forever. The only thing left to do is to go to the garden and prepare for what was to come.

It was during this time when he taught his disciples using this allegory.

**15** “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not abide in me he is

thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Jesus was on his way to the garden of Gethsemane where he would sweat blood. He would ask the father to allow the cup of his wrath to pass by. He knew what was to come; he knew the physical pain that he would experience; he knew the spiritual hell that he would go through. And he knew that with a single word he could escape it all. He could disconnect, so to speak, from the father's will and go it alone. And I can imagine that he must have been tempted to do just that. But he didn't. "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

What Adam and Eve didn't do in their garden is what Jesus did do in his. He remained connected to the father, attached through perfect trust and obedience to his will. Adam and Eve desired independence; Jesus understood complete dependence. And because of his obedience, Jesus became the only branch ever that was not destined for the fire.

And yet, Jesus doesn't save himself from it. Instead, he took the place of every disconnected branch. He stood in their place and took upon him the punishment that they deserved. He willingly disconnected himself, not through his own sin, but through ours. He took upon our sins and thereby severed himself from the father. And he was thrown into the fire, not for his sake but for ours. And through this selfless act of perfect love, he created a way that we can be brought back into fellowship with the father.

We all need to belong to something, we need to feel an association, an attachment with something. And until Jesus, we searched for anything... anything other than God. But through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can now want to belong to him, we can want to be grafted to him. And this is what he means when he says "Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you." The power of God's word in our baptism has grafted us to Jesus, and the power of God's word in the Lord's Supper keeps us grafted by sustaining our faith and nourishing us with the lifesaving body and blood of Jesus.

So what does this all mean for us? In a word, comfort. "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." These are words of comfort that Jesus speaks to us this morning. These are words of assurance, of promise, and of forgiveness and they are spoken to us.

Have you disconnected yourself from Jesus in search of something else? Have you grafted yourself onto something, anything that is not him? Maybe it is something you know is wrong. But maybe it is a sin that isn't so obvious. Are you anxious because of your circumstance? Are you feeling a loss of control in your life? Is there a burden or responsibility that is weighing you down? These may not start out as being sinful but become so as you continue to go it alone. Are you set God aside from this part of your life because you believe that he can't help, or that maybe he doesn't want to? Are you afraid to petition him because you just know that the help he will provide or the answer that he will give is not what you desire? We all fit into a situation like this. We all at one time or another, and maybe even now, disconnect ourselves from him.

But this morning he speaks to us. He says, "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." Our vine is ready to receive your withering branch. Let him graft you back on. Allow him to nourish you with his body and blood. Allow him to offer you forgiveness for your sins.

We all need to be connected to something. This morning, be reconnected to the vine... The true vine of Jesus Christ.

Please pray with me.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your love and care for us, just as a vinedresser cares for his vines. Help us to trust in you as Jesus trusted, even when times are difficult. Give us the strength to bear fruit for your glory. Amen.