

## Jesus the True Vine

John 15:1-11 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

*“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 bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must remain in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown away like a branch and dries up; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. <sup>9</sup> Just as the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; remain in My love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep My commandments, you will remain in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and remain in His love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*

This morning, I invite you once again to ponder Jesus’ identity: He is the True Vine. We are the Branches, and God the Father is the Vinedresser.

## Content

**The Usage of Metaphor:** When Jesus calls Himself the true vine, He doesn’t mean that He is indeed a leafy green vine that bears grapes. He is using a metaphor for us to understand our relationship with Him and with our heavenly Father. With such explanation, we would get the better picture of who our Lord Jesus is, who we are, who our God is, and what God the Father expects from us and does for us in our life. Today’s text is a good example for that. Jesus says that He is the true vine, we are the branches, and our heavenly Father is the vinedresser.

**Jesus Is the Vine and We Are the Branches:** He is the origin and source of our life as the branches rely on the vine for life and nourishment. No branch cut off from the vine can survive or bear fruit. Neither do we apart from Jesus. Jesus sustains our ‘zoe’ life.

**Every Branch Is Expected to Bear Fruit:** Like the branches that bear no fruit are no good, neither are we if we bear no fruit. What’s that mean to bear fruit in our lives? It means that we are His disciples. Who are the disciples? Not those who call Jesus Lord with lips only, but the ones who keep His commandments. When we keep His commandments, there is always fruit that eventually brings glory and honor to God and His name. Listen to

Jesus. He says: *Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16).*

E.g., Not long ago, my family ordered the Chinese food takeout. As I picked up the foods, I paid the bill with my credit card. I didn't look at the receipt closely until I came home. Out of the three items I had ordered, only the first two were properly charged and the charge for the last item showed \$0.00! I thought it odd, so I called the restaurant back and explained the situation. The lady owner thanked me for my honesty and explained that it was a computer glitch. At the end of the conversation, she told me saying, "You're the Church, right?!" *How did she know that I am a pastor?* I wondered. I never told her that I am a minister, but somehow, she recognized it. Later, as I stopped in to pay the balance, the husband came out of the kitchen and profusely praised me for the honesty. *Not many people would do that*, he said. All I was thinking in that moment was, because of this one honest call, God's name was glorified in the world. The opposite scenario could've brought disgrace to God's name. Had I taken advantage of this computer glitch, it would have failed to bring glory to the Lord.

We are called to bear fruit in our words and actions. Why? For two reasons: First, when people see it, they will glorify our Father in Heaven. Second, because it proves to Jesus that we are His disciples: ***My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples*** (v.8). Bearing fruit is a mark of true Christian.

**We Need Jesus to Bear Fruit.** *Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself but must remain in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me*, Jesus says (v. 4). *Apart from Me you can do nothing* (v. 5). Please get this: Jesus makes it clear that we cannot bear fruit by ourselves but must remain in Him to do so. He is our lifeline. Apart from Him we can do nothing.

Some of us may disagree with Jesus. We may think that we can do anything by ourselves. Sure, God has given us freedom and power to do whatever we want. That's what a lot of people out there do and try to prove Jesus wrong! Humanly speaking, indeed, we have power to do anything we want. We even love to quote Philippians 4:19: *I can do all things through Him who strengthens me*. But don't forget. It says, **through Christ**, we can do all things, not through our own might.

Let's listen to Jesus what He is really saying here: *apart from Me you can do nothing*. That means, although we can do anything and everything we want, when we do it, very likely it will serve our own interests and desires, therefore, the fruit we bear may not be in sync with God's will. Such fruit is considered **NOTHING** in Jesus' eyes. It doesn't count in the eyes of the Lord. Remember all the miracles done in the name of Jesus were counted nothing in Matthew 7:21-23?

The same Jesus explains this way: In John 5:19-20, He says, “<sup>19</sup> ... “Truly, truly, I say to you, **the Son can do nothing of Himself**, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in the same way. <sup>20</sup> For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing;... Ten verses later in the same chapter, Jesus says one more time: <sup>30</sup> “**I can do nothing on My own.**” (John 5:30). Do you hear what He is saying here? The Son of God can do NOTHING of Himself and on His own?! Yes, NOTHING.

It is amazing to see Jesus so humbly admit twice that **He can do nothing of Himself apart from the Father!** Don't get Him wrong here. Of course, He is more powerful than all the angels combined. He is mightier than all humans put together. So, what's that mean? It means that He only did what pleases the Father. He only did what counts in the eyes of His Father. Apart from His Father and His will, He would not do or did anything. Consider all the things Jesus did and said in His ministry, for example. From healing the sick, teaching the crowd with God's truth, and to the dying on the cross on behalf of sinners, He witnessed His Father doing first, then He did repeat them in the same way! He copied them!

The same should be our attitude toward anything we do and say (Philippians 2:5). Let us joyfully confess that *apart from Jesus we can do nothing!* Let the world know that we will do everything in the same way Jesus did. Ask yourself: *Do I do only what I see Jesus doing? Do I do the things in the same way my heavenly Father does? Do I copy what Jesus did? Do I imitate my heavenly Father?*

For instance, Jesus forgave, loved sinners, and prayed for those who did harm to Him. Do you copy Him by forgiving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you? Jesus tells the truth. Do you also tell the truth and live out God's will such as rejoicing in the Lord, praying without ceasing, and being thankful in all circumstances? Are you content with what you have? Do your word and action honor the Lord? Of course, unless Jesus helps us, we can't do these things. He gives us desire and power to do God's will.

**A Must for Bearing Fruit:** Jesus further explains how we can bear fruit. *By remaining in Him, in His love, and by keeping His words.* To remain in Jesus means to keep His commandments (v. 9). And, to keep His commandments, we must know His words first. To know His words, we must hear, read, study, meditate, and understand His will for us that was revealed in the Bible. Unless we soak ourselves in God's Word daily, we will not understand God's will. Unless we understand God's will, we will not be able to keep His commandments. When we don't keep His commandments, we are not in Him. When we are not in Him, we won't bear any fruit. When we don't bear any fruit, that will result in “God taking us out of salvation and His Kingdom.” *Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; (v. 2). If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown away like a branch and dries up; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned (v. 6).* Are you serious about being Jesus' disciple? Then, bear fruit. And, to bear fruit, you must remain in Jesus and His love. You must know His words and keep His commandments.

The good news is that our Father in Heaven works with us which Jesus calls ‘pruning.’

**What Is Pruning?** Here’s one secular definition. It is “*the **measured removal** of parts (such as branches, stems, and flowers) **from plants... (not) done just for shape and style;** pruning helps to **manage the growth** and structure of shrubs and trees. When you prune, you’ll **remove dead or diseased stems and branches** to encourage the development of flowers, fruit, and new foliage. Especially when it comes to woody plants like trees and shrubs, **pruning is a great way to keep them growing in a healthy fashion.**” (<https://www.almanac.com/pruning-101-guide-pruning-trees-and-shrubs>). Pruning is a must to maximize the fruition and to promote healthy growth in the tree. Keep that in mind.*

**Welcome Divine Pruning!** In verse 2, Jesus says, *every branch that bears fruit, He (the Father---kc) **prunes** it so that it may bear **more fruit**.* Of course, Jesus here is least concerned about actual vine. Rather, He is talking about our life as His followers. God has called us and expects us to bear fruit and more fruit in our daily walk with God.

Get this: God the Father meticulously works on every child of His. The Bible calls it ‘sanctification.’ He removes the dead or diseased parts in our walk with God to make us complete and holy as He is. He refines our character and transforms us into the same image of His Son (2 Corinthians 3:18). So that we may be pure and holy for the day of resurrection. So that we may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God (Colossians 4:12, Hebrews 2:18). So that we may walk with God in a healthy and godly way. His pruning work is a lifelong process. It is designed for every child of God. It is done for our eternal good and benefit. Therefore, we must welcome it instead of running away from it.

To maximize our fruit-bearing that would glorify His name, God prunes certain areas in our lives. Not just bad areas but even the good areas that may stand in the way for the most fruitful life in Christ.

E.g., In my salad days of ministry, as pastor, I have been involved in many things in the church: from toilet cleaning to visiting shut ins. I did them all with gladness and gusto. One time I was helping an elderly gentleman to clean up his apartment. He got an eviction notice from the office due to the messy condition of his room. Things were piled up on his bed that he couldn’t sleep in bed. Dirty dishes were piled up in the sink that created a multitude of fruit flies, and so on. When he asked for help, I gladly jumped right in. For the next couple of days, I was having a ball. Spending 4-5 hours each day, scrubbing his bathtub and doing dishes, and organizing his mess. At the end of the day, I felt great until my wife gently reminded me that I should ask for help from the congregation to help this gentleman. “You have other people in the congregation to feed with spiritual food,” she said. “You ought to spend more time on your sermon than helping him. Why don’t you ask others to help the man?” she concluded. Reluctantly, I acted on her counsel and asked for help from the Men’s Group. All worked out well in the end. The man was not evicted, the men in the Church were glad to help, and I was able to feed the congregation with a well-prepared message on the following Sunday. Praise God!

The lesson I learned was this: Focus on the priority. Maximize the fruit-bearing in the area God has called you to serve. Don't hesitate to prune other "good" branches even though you enjoy doing them and are good at them. Remember the Apostles in the Early Church who chose to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of Word over serving at the table (Acts 6:4)? God is committed to the work of sanctifying us in the areas that stand in the way for bearing more fruit. It can be our bad habits, desires and lusts, work schedule, relationships, finances, and so forth. Embrace God's pruning work with gratitude. He is doing it for you to bear more fruit in your walk with God. You can count on Him!

One last thing: Jesus warns about two types of 'fruitless' believers in verses 2 and 6:

<sup>2</sup> **Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away;** ---those who confess and claim that they remain in Christ with lips only, yet bear no fruit.

<sup>6</sup> **If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown away like a branch and dries up; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.** ---those who do not remain in Jesus, i.e., ignorant of His words so as not to keep His commandments, therefore, no fruit in their lives.

May it never be with us.

## Conclusion

**Three sets of questions** to ask: first, ask yourself: Do I keep His commandments? Do I prove to the Lord that I am His disciple? Do I see fruits in my life that glorify the Lord?

Next, ask: do people see a difference in me, in my words and actions? Do they see God working in me? Do they see my life reflect Christ's image and His character? Not just outside godliness and appearance, but inside and fundamental change in me.

Finally, ask: Does Christ see in me the fruit He expects from every believer? Does He know me? Will He acknowledge me on the Last Day because I do the will of my heavenly Father? (Matthew 7:21-23).

**Self-test:** See if your life demonstrates the following nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control;* (Galatians 5:22-23). If you do, praise God and keep on doing to bear more fruit. If you don't, you need to know God's will in the Bible. Also, ask God to keep on working on your life and character so that you may bear fruit and more fruit in Christ.

Let us pray.