

Remain In Me

Readings

John 15:1-17

¹I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower.

²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit.

Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹²'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.



Hear what God's Spirit is saying to the church.
Thanks be to God

Reflection

Reflection

Let's pray...

God, you draw us close and invite us to remain, to remain in you.

As we reflect on these words of Jesus today, open our hearts and minds to your prompting.

Strengthen us, body, mind and spirit, to respond in our living. Amen.

⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.
What do you think Jesus means? And why does it matter?

When we talk about God being “glorified” we are not talking about some sense of bright lights and fireworks.

God’s “glory” is about God, in every sense, being made known.

God is glorified - God is made fully known - when we bear fruit and follow Jesus.

And the only way we can bear fruit is by remaining in God’s love.

Many translations render the Greek as “abide” but the sense really is closer to “remain” - perhaps something like stay, live, and taking the image of the vine, stay grounded or embedded in my love.

Remain in my love.

So if God is made known in the fruit that we bear, and in the way we follow Jesus, what does that say to us about what we need to do, who we need to be?

What fruit are we bearing?

And are we following Jesus as closely as we can?

The image of the vine and the fruit it bears is an image that appears a number of times through both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. In the Hebrew scriptures, the people of Israel are often referred to as the vine.

But here in John’s gospel, Jesus lays claim to that image for himself. “I am the true vine,” he says (15:1), and God is the grower. God tends the vine and the fruit that it bears.

Without the vine, without a commitment to walking the path of Jesus, we are simply unable to bear fruit.

Remain in my love.

And just as God does not let us go - even when we take our own path - God wants us to hang in there with God even when it seems God is absent.

Stay connected - stay connected with God - through prayer and the scriptures, spend time in God’s good creation, stay connected with God’s church, companions in Christ, the people who will speak God’s truth with us and for us when we can no longer find it for ourselves. Gather at God’s table, often, and remember - remember the love that God calls us to.

When we lose our connection, we become like a dry and brittle branch, unable to bear fruit, unable to make God known...

Remain in my love.

The pruning (15:2) is not about judgment. It is what every gardener knows needs to be done in order for the plant to continue to be strong and healthy and to grow lots of flowers or fruit. In fact, if we look closely here, it is the branch that is bearing fruit, the healthy, strong branch, that is pruned to grow even more!

So when we step out in faith and try something new, why are we surprised when we feel like it is one step forward and two steps back? why do we get cranky when it feels like our way gets blocked?

Pruning is hard, but the end result is better fruit. So next time it happens, perhaps we can see it for what it is and not take it out on one another.

Remain in my love.

There is a verse in this passage that is troubling:

⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

I know that this is not everyone’s experience. I know that there are lots of things that faithful people pray for that seem not to be done.

I have no answer except to say, remain in my love.

And fruit. What fruit are you bearing?

Or, to put it another way, how does your life reflect who God is?

How does your life make God known?

How does your life reflect a flourishing, embedded love that seeks the best for every living creature?

What choices do you make, who do you serve, what do you say, that makes the God of boundless love and grace known to the people around you?

Remain in my love.

In God's call to us to share God's love with the world, is also our naming as friends. This passage, this speech from Jesus, is given to his followers on the night he has been betrayed by one of them. As he addresses them, he draws them close - not as slaves or servants or students - but as friends.

"My friends, I chose you to go and bear fruit," he says (15:16)

Remain in my love.

Let us pray,

God remain with us as we remain with you.

In the comings and goings of our lives, remain with us as we remain with you.

And in our remaining, may the fruit we bear reflect who you are and draw all peoples into the embrace of your love. Amen.

Rev Kath Merrifield

9 May 2021

**Appeal to womanhood throughout the world
(also known as: the Mother's Day Proclamation)**

Again, in the sight of the Christian world, have the skill and power of two great nations exhausted themselves in mutual murder. Again have the sacred questions of international justice been committed to the fatal mediation of military weapons. In this day of progress, in this century of light, the ambition of rulers has been allowed to barter the dear interests of domestic life for the bloody exchanges of the battle field. Thus men have done. Thus men will do. But women need no longer be made a party to proceedings which fill the globe with grief and horror. Despite the assumptions of physical force, the mother has a sacred and commanding word to say to the sons who owe their life to her suffering. That word should now be heard, and answered to as never before.

Arise, then, Christian women of this day !
Arise, all women who have hearts,
Whether your baptism be that of water or of tears !
Say firmly :

We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies.

Our husbands shall not come to us, reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause.

Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of
charity, mercy and patience.

We, women of one country, will be too tender of those of another country, to allow our sons to
be trained to injure theirs.

From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own.

It says: Disarm, disarm!

The sword of murder is not the balance of justice.

Blood does not wipe out dishonour, nor violence vindicate possession.

As men have often forsaken the plough and the anvil at the summons of war, let women now
leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of council.

Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.

Let them then solemnly take council with each other as to the means whereby the great human family can live in peace, man as the brother of man, each bearing after his own kind the sacred impress, not of Caesar, but of God.

In the name of womanhood and of humanity, I earnestly ask that a general congress of women, without limit of nationality, may be appointed and held at some place deemed most convenient, and at the earliest period consistent with its objects, to promote the alliance of the different nationalities, the amicable settlement of international questions, the great and general interests of peace.

— Julia Ward Howe, 1870

[Note: Julia Ward Howe also wrote the words to the Battle Hymn of the Republic, said to be in response to a visit to the battlefields of the American Civil War. Her words are a warning and a plea to those who perpetuate the violence of war.]