

The Glory of the One and Only: Remain, Love, and Become
Patrick Murphy / February 9, 2020

John 15:1-25 Remain, Love, and Become

Intro: I grew up going to church, and there was never a season in which my family ever stopped going to church. And we were a two service family! I can remember times when I thought to myself, "When I'm older, I can't wait to not go to church some Sundays like some of my friends." I don't know if it was that thought that compelled the Lord to lead me into pastoral ministry, but I like his sense of humor because I'm in church every Sunday. On the rare Sundays when I can't make it church due to sickness or something keeping me, I miss it. I miss worshipping God in community, I hunger for the word to be taught, and I long for the focused times of reflection and guidance. That wasn't always the case.

A year in college, the desire to worship, listen, pray, and meditate on Christ had all but evaporated. A time when the congregation would sing, and I tried to join them, but it felt like the air in my lungs weighed 100 pounds. I could not push the words out. I would come to scripture, and instead of find peace in the promises written to me, I only found frustration. In prayer, I could only ask one thing, "How can I do this?" "How can I keep the faith when everything I do doesn't measure up?"

It took this passage John 15 to jump-start a drained heart. It took 3 weeks for the truth I had known my whole life about Christ to travel its way from my head to my heart. This morning brothers and sisters, I want us to come to John 15 with those questions: Why am are we here (in these seats), and How do we continue in Faith with Jesus?

Main Point: True disciples remain in Christ producing fruit to the Glory of God

TS: The disciples were distraught (14:1). The high of Christ's triumphal entry had quickly waned, and a palpable sorrow filled the disciples as their Master tells them of his impending departure. Although they will see him after his death for a time, he is leaving and sending the Holy Spirit, the paraclete, who will call and guide the 11 into greater and greater discipleship of Jesus. Jesus rose from the last supper and, with his disciples, walked through a quiet city on the eve of Passover. He leads his disciples through the town to Gethsemane or the Mount of Olives passing by the Temple. The Gates were open during that time for the festival, and Jesus may have either led them in or just passing by began to speak the words of John 15.

John 15:1-11 True disciples remain in Christ through faith and obedience.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. ⁶ If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples. ⁹ “As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ “I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.

In the temple stood a curtain leading into the Holy place and it was adorned with gold and silver. In one corner began a grapevine made a pure gold that wealthy Jews would add to, creating an ornate grapevine representing Israel. Here Jesus says, "I am the TRUE vine." The vine that was Israel has been superseded by the true vine in Christ.

Israel's representation as a vine is scattered throughout the OT, and in almost every correlation made, the nation is chastised by God for not bearing pleasing fruit. Jesus has come to replace Israel with himself. Where Israel failed, Christ would not. Through him will come the fruit God desires for his people to produce. Real followers of Christ produce fruit.

Vs. 2-3 Notice Jesus is not proposing the possibility of losing our salvation. The branches that did not bear fruit were followers who, for one reason or another, enjoyed being around Jesus for a time but ultimately left him. Some were curious about Jesus's teaching and interested in his celebrity status. Others wanted something from him, more bread and more miracles. Others, like Judas Iscariot, had a different expectation about Jesus that was never met. These were branches that never believed in Jesus. The life of Jesus never flowed through them, and they produced no fruit.

Vs. 4-5 Belief in Christ's message brought the disciples salvation, but how would they continue to remain in him? Believe, cherish, and abide are all captured in Christ’s command to remain with him. We came to Jesus through belief, and belief in the person and message of Christ remains. There is no magic formula to discipleship, we believe, and we obey. Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes disciples saying, “only the believers obey, and only the obedient believe.” What do we continue to believe?

- **The internal and external care of the Father and Son** – Christ is promising to always supply us the spiritual nutrients to live. Likewise, the Father is tending to us perfectly to produce more excellent fruit.
- **We are already Saved** – Christ accomplished our salvation if we still have to work for it then he didn’t accomplish it.
- **The peace of Christ** – An internal peace despite the uncertainty and hostility of the world around us.
- **The unconditional love of Christ** – The same love that God has for Christ he has for us.
- **The joy of Christ**

There are pitfalls that keep us from abiding in Christ. Have you noticed we avoid the people we've offended? Remember, in high school, you might have dated someone for a while. The two of you were close, but the relationship soured, eventually ending. On-campus you started taking a different route to class so you wouldn't have to see or interact with that person. If we happened to see them, we'd act as if we'd never met them before. We do this with Christ consistently, don't we? At least the temptation is there, isn't it? Christ is positioning the 11 and all of us to draw near to him in faith all the time. Keep believing in the promises he's surrounded us with and keep obeying the commands he's issued.

Vs. 9-10 Obedience is a means of experiencing Christ's love, not earning it. Bonhoeffer, describing obedience says, "obedience is not something people offer Jesus; it is always Jesus' gracious offer to people." Remember the very first word's God spoke to man in **Gen. 1:28, "God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth."** God's blessing to mankind is a command. Our sin has corrupted our initial experience of his commands because the flesh despises rendering service to God. That doesn't change the truth that obedience to God's commands is the way we enjoy God.

The nutrients passing through the vine and into the branches is the truth of Christ, the love of Christ, and the joy of Christ. Remain in these things. Remain in Christ

John 15:12-17 A Disciple's love is Christ's love.

¹² "This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants anymore, because a servant doesn't know what his Master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. ¹⁷ "This is what I command you: Love one another.

Like I said before, there is no magic formula to discipleship. When God told Adam and Eve to Create, Fill, and Rule over the earth, he was telling them to be like him. To do the very thing he just did by creating everything, fill everything, and ruling over it. Christ is sending his disciples into the world in the same way God blessed Adam and Eve by saying be like me! Love like I love. The best way for you to remain in me is to be like me.

Vs. 14-15 This is why he calls us friends, the care he has for us is based on the way he would care for himself. The title of friend is not a new stage of freedom and autonomy we have with Christ, but it is a new era in salvation history. We don't have to approach Christ the King with uncertainty and flattery. We come to him as one who trusted, loved and valued. However, when we think of friendship, we probably don't consider the first part of verse 14. "You are my friends if you do what I command." If I were to tell Kelsey that the basis of my friendship with her is her obeying my commands. She would not say much but offer an olive branch saying, "Do you want to try that again?" If we want to understand what Christ means by friendship, we should explore what the ideals were for friendship. Friendship carried with it three ideals:

- Loyalty – friends are faithful towards one another. (
- Intimacy – Friends share in each other's joys and sorrows. (Death – Lazarus / Kids – Let them come to me / Celebration – Wedding at Cana)
- Confidence – Friends don't disclose secrets even in times of estrangement. (

We are his friends and the objects of his sacrifice on the cross. The description that we are friends who obey is supposed to jar our senses. Reminding us we live in a tension between loving friendship and covenantal responsibility to serve our Master. A responsibility he states in the next verses.

Vrs. 16-17 We have been chosen and appointed for a specific purpose, to bear lasting fruit. What fruit has he been referencing this whole time? Everything he has heard from the father he is passing on, and when the Spirit comes, he will continue teaching these 11 disciples truth. The apostle Paul will be one of those who writes about the fruit produced through us, the fruit of the Spirit. Gal. 5:22-25 "²² **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.**" The fruit is not plural, there is one fruit, and it contains all of these attributes. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness... Why not fruits plural? Because we can fake a few of them. In a pinch, anybody can be kind towards others or patient with them. We can't fake all of them and, indeed, not all the time. Christ desires as lasting fruit a transformed life marked by each and every character trait found in Paul's words. The love that flows into us is also what proceeds out from us into the world. Our love is Christ's love, our joy is Christ's joy, our patients is Christ's.

Therefore, as followers and friends can come to God and ask for greater fruitfulness. Inquire about Christ's joy, petition for kindness, cry out for faithfulness. The greatest is love. A lasting fruit that should cover the earth. That happens to us if we remain in Christ with faith and obedience, producing lasting fruit? We become his disciples.

John 15:8, 18-25 Become a fruitful disciple.

⁸ My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and become my disciples.”

Aren't we already disciples? Does he suppose we aren't in some way? Yes and no, we are his disciples, but we're not what we ought to be. As we continue remaining in Christ, we are continually becoming the disciples he desires us to be. Discipleship is never over, there isn't a discipleship retirement age. I have always believed the hardest aspect of the Christian life is there are no days off. However, that is also the best part of the Christian life. We can approach the throne of Grace whenever and wherever. Christ desire for us to draw near to him each and every day. How do we do that?

There is freedom in the ways we can draw near to Christ. We pray, read, praise, but the context in which we do those things is unique to each and every one of us. What warms your heart to Christ? What activity draws out the peace of Christ? Who in your life draws out the joy of Christ? For me, I have come to love snow blowing. When I was moving here, I was warned of the dreary days of shoveling snow, but I love it. In those 20 minutes, I listen to sermons, sing praises, and pray for anyone or anything. I want it to snow more. Another way my heart is warmed to Christ is reading biographies or autobiographies of faithful Christian brothers and sisters who remain in Christ their whole life. Reading of John Patton, who labored on Southern Pacific Islands for years upon years to see the native people believe in Christ. A missionary who endured his wife and child's death, who was shot at, abused, ridiculed, cursed, suffered illnesses almost to the point of death, but none the less remained in Christ to see his first authentic convert accept Christ and take his first communion. Reading his account of that moment overwhelmed my soul with the joy and love of Christ that the rest of that day and week, I was giving it away freely to others. What warms your heart to Christ? Do those things and cut off what hardens your heart.

The Gardener will prune and remove the areas of our life that prevent lasting fruit from growing. The things that keep us from becoming the disciples he desires. I know if I come home and sit on the couch the rest of the day I will numb my head and heart with tv and YouTube. Those things for me, distance me from Christ. Instead, I come home and either serve my family, work with my hands, or wrestle with my boys. I have to do those things. What needs pruning?

As you become the disciple, Christ desires there is a cost. An internal cost of dying to self by opposing the desires the flesh in the Spirit. But, there is also an external cost with our relationship to the world. Jesus says of that cost:

John 15:18-25 **¹⁸ “If the world hates you, understand that it hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word I spoke to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹ But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they don't know the one who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ The one who hates me also hates my Father. ²⁴ If I had not done the works among them that no one else has done, they would not be guilty of sin. Now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this happened so that the statement written in their law might be fulfilled: **They hated me for no reason.****

Vrs. 20 We are not above our Master, and with every passing day, we become more and more like him. Some will hear our message and believe, but most will not. The heart of persecution is always the same, the persecutors don't know the Father. They don't know what they are doing, but because of our lasting fruit, which stands as a whiteness to the abiding love of God towards mankind, they stand condemned. The guilt of sin that Jesus is referencing is the utter rejection of him and his message despite witnessing with their own ears and eyes the countless words and miracles he presented to them. Their sin is the rejection God. What do we do when we face this persecution? We bear the fruit of Christ and we love them.

Conclusion

Remember the time in my life I shared at the begging of this sermon, where I was spiritually exhausted? I was trying to achieve blessing rather than receiving it. Remember Jesus' word when called his disciples what did he say to them in Matthew 4:19? "And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

What's the command? Follow Me

What is Christ promising? He will make us fishers of men. In terms of John 15, he will make us disciples.