

“I Am the True Vine”

John 15:1-8

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^{la} so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

*⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. **If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.** ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

⁹ “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

We are half through the year’s Lenten season. For this Lenten season we picked a study book called “the God we can know”, which helps us to get a better understanding of who Jesus is through studying the Jesus’ “I am” statements.

According to the book of John in the Bible, we are able to find 7 "I am" statements, which Jesus tried to explain who he was and how he was related to humanity.

1. I am The Bread Of Life - sustainer

Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. (John 6:35)

2. I am The Light Of The World - guide

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

3. I am The Gate - protector

I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. (John 10:9)

“I Am the True Vine”

4. I am The Good Shepherd -care giver

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11)

5. I am The Resurrection And The Life -savior

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” (John 11:25-26)

6. I am The Way, The Truth, And The Life - purpose

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

7. I am The Vine

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

Pastor Richard also started tailoring his sermons around these statements. Today even though the next “I Am” statement in the Bible is “I Am The Resurrection And The Life”, we will follow the order of the book chapters and look deeper into the last “I am” statement, “I Am The True Vine” instead.

In order to better understand the mindset of Jesus when he was speaking these words I want us all to use our imaginations.

It was the night before Jesus was to be crucified. The Jews were celebrating the Passover feast. The Bible tells us Jesus was *preparing* for his departure because he knew what was coming to his way in just a couple of hours. Jesus was celebrating the feast having what has become known as the Last Supper with his disciples. During the supper Jesus broke and shared the bread telling them it represented his body. He then shared the cup telling them it was his blood given for them. During the supper Jesus washed the disciples feet and ask them to serve others. When the supper was over, Jesus said, "Come now; let us leave." and they all left the upper room. That is how John 14 ends.

“I Am the True Vine”

If we use the Bible to follow the footsteps of the Jesus that night, He and his disciples were heading toward the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus was arrested and taken to the house of Caiaphas. *So from the upper room they go down the hill on the south side of the temple, cross over the Kidron valley towards Mt Olive where the Garden is located. As they walked that evening Jesus said, these words.*

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

This final ‘I am’ statement is indeed different from the others. Jesus not only said who he was, but also told his disciples who we are. **He gives us our true identity and explains how we should live.**

Jesus said, we are the branches attached to the vine. What does this mean?

It means we are having a close, permanent, a vital union with God. Branches cannot survive alone, but need to belong entirely to the vine, and completely depend on the vine for nourishment, support, strength, and vitality.

⁴Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

How can we remain in Jesus?? What do we need to do?

Some people say we should spend our time reading, studying, and meditating on the Bible in order to remain Jesus. Others say, we should pray often in order to abide in Jesus. We should this and do that... While these may be good answers, when I meditate on this metaphor of the vine and the branches, it seems to me the branch is not on and off doing something to become attached to the vine to get nourishment. No, instead the branches are just attached to vine.

The missionary Hudson Taylor once explained this.

“I Am the True Vine”

Hudson was a missionary that served in China for over 51 years. During that time he had led thousands to Christ, recruited hundreds of missionaries to join him in the task, and built 125 schools.

This man of giant faith once confessed that he sometimes struggles with this most elemental principle from the Scripture – remaining in Jesus.

He said, “For years I longed to remain in Jesus, but I thought of it as a very high attainment to which I was unequal, involving spiritual heights to scale for which I did not have the needed strength.”

For Hudson Taylor the pathway to remaining in Jesus seemed difficult for him. Because he thought he should **do** something to obtain it. Then one day, he had a breakthrough in his understanding.

He realized that the branches do not work to accept the nutrition and strength but just attaching into the vine and the branches receive everything what is needed.

Remaining in the vine is just accepting what is already given by **being** (*not doing*) in a state of commitment to Jesus through our faith. *What is being in a state of commitment to Jesus? It can be as easy as just facing Jesus with longing to be with him.*

I need to share aha moment I had from my little dog. Some of you know the Horton’s have new puppy in their family. Her name is Dolly and she turns eleven weeks old this Tuesday. Last Saturday when we took her from her farm home in PA, she had to say goodbye to her mother and siblings. The first night was tough on her in a new place with new faces. I am sure that it was very first time in a crate as she grew up in a barn. She cried and cried... finally getting so tired she fell asleep for a little bit.

Then in the middle of the night she woke up and started crying again. I tried everything to make stay in the crate and stop crying but nothing seemed to work for Dolly. Finally, exhausted and needing my own sleep I took my pillow and.. No I didn’t get into the crate but did lay down next to the crate. Soon her whimpering stopped and her nose poked out of the crate in an attempt to touch my face. I moved closer letting her nose touch my cheek. Once she made contact with my face, she relaxed and fell asleep for the rest of the night.

“I Am the True Vine”

All she needed was to be able to make contact with her master to find peace. Isn't that so true for all of us?? All we need to do is to stay connected to our master in times of happiness and trouble.

If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.

Hudson Taylor who said, “Remaining in Christ is being in a state of commitment to Christ through faith.” He also said, “the reality of that faith is proved by the result: fruit. In other words, we are able to measure how healthy our attachment to the vine is by the fruits.

What are the fruits of the vine? In a vineyard it would be grapes. But what are the fruits of the true vine, Jesus? (money, power, better job??) The answer is given to us in [Galatians 5:22-23](#), “But the **fruit** of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” *Transformation*

If you find love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control overflowing your life, you can be assured that you are well attached to God in a very healthy way.

If you are lacking in any of these fruits of the Spirit, perhaps there is something preventing you from receiving the full nourishment.

If you do not feel peace in your heart,
if you lose sleep at night because worries,
if you cannot control your anger,
if you become irritable and impatience...

Perhaps you need to find out what is preventing you from receiving the nourishment you need that God wants you to have. What could be the obstacles to God's grace in your life? (Perhaps it is an unforgiving heart, bitterness towards someone, an addiction, self-pity, an ungrateful heart, selfishness, impure thoughts and actions...)

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Jesus said, *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. ³*

God is the gardener and he prunes the branches of the vine to make it more fruitful. If you know there are obstacles to God's grace flowing in your life, you need to come to God and expose your problems and God will prune (clean) you and give his healing hand.

During His final hours as He was heading to the cross, Jesus assures us that he will continue to provide us with every necessary nourishment so that we will have abundant fruits. Even though our life's journey may throw us into the darkest valley of the shadow of death, if we stay connected to the true vine, God will keep us safe, clean us, and heal us.

Think about what happened after that night when Jesus and his disciples walk toward the garden of Gethsemane, what darkest hours these disciple had to go through...But in that very entrance of the dark hour, facing his own death, Jesus assure us all that we will always live in the land of living as long as we trust and remain in him.

Just like when my little puppy nose connected with my face, if we remain faithful towards God seeking his grace, God will take care us all to the end.

I would like to end today's sermon with prayer of St Patrick.

The Prayer of St. Patrick

I arise today
Through the strength of heaven;
Light of the sun,
Splendor of fire,
Speed of lightning,
Swiftness of the wind,
Depth of the sea,
Stability of the earth,

“I Am the True Vine”

Firmness of the rock.

I arise today

Through God's strength to pilot me;

God's might to uphold me,

God's wisdom to guide me,

God's eye to look before me,

God's ear to hear me,

God's word to speak for me,

God's hand to guard me,

God's way to lie before me,

God's shield to protect me,

God's hosts to save me

Afar and a near,

Alone or in a multitude.

Christ shield me today

Against wounding

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,

Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,

Christ on my right, Christ on my left,

Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,

Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,

Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,

Christ in the eye that sees me,

Christ in the ear that hears me.

I arise today

Through the mighty strength

Of the Lord of creation.

Lord let's us remain in your love forever.