

John 15.1-11—Abide in Christ, Bear Fruit, Glorify the Father and be joyful!

I. Introduction

- a. God created the heavens and the earth and it was good. His creation was to be inhabited and enjoyed. Mankind was meant to have a relationship with God and enjoy him forever. But you know what happened. Adam and Eve were created to be happy. That desire was in them and it is in us. However, they sought to be happy outside of God's ways. And as God's creation, that just doesn't work.
- b. Even still, this, in part, can happen now in the new creation that comes through repentance and faith in Christ. We are forgiven in Jesus. God reconciled himself to us and we enemies of God are given amnesty through the finished work of the Son. And believing in Jesus is not only to have forgiveness but also to be happy and satisfied in him.
- c. Consider this: "Because you have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee." Augustine, *Confessions*
- d. From the Garden of Eden to a land flowing with milk and honey, God would have you be happy in Him and all His inheritance! But as we will consider in a moment, that land flowing with milk and honey is laid waste and the vine was cut down.

II. Main Point

- a. The purposes of trusting in God are to bring glory to him and a joyful relationship.

III. Outline

- a. Glory to God and Joy to you
- b. Jesus is the True Vine
- c. Abiding in the True Vine

IV. Exposition

- a. I want to skip down to verses 8 and 11 and show you what all of this abiding and bearing fruit is supposed to do. As the introduction and outline suggest, God's glory and our joy are the purpose of this great work of salvation.
 - i. One simple word clues us in on these amazing purposes. Listen for it in verse 8 again: (Jn. 15:8) In this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit.
 1. Kimberly planted some cucumber seeds in the backyard. Of course, our hope is that they will bear cucumbers to make some of my grandmother's pickles. If they do not bear any fruit or if they bear something other than what it is then we will be unhappy about that. In a most simple way, the bearing of these cucumbers will make us happy as we enjoy its fruits.
 2. Is this not normal? Whatever your work is, surely you expect it to be fruitful. Is that why many of us do not clean and vacuum our cars? As soon as every piece of grass is removed, you have to get in and drive and ten shoes carry it all back in. I don't do it very often because it's not fruitful.
 3. How is this much different than what glorifies God? Of course, it's not as simple as my illustrations but when Jesus saves us from that which was going to eternally kill us why would we willingly and gladly jump back into our sin? Is his work in vain like that of vacuuming our van? Or will it bear fruit?

- ii. The other amazing purpose in verse 11 is similar. (Jn. 15:11) ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.
 - 1. What is joy? Is it not happiness and delight? How about content and satisfied? Yes, all of those things.
 - 2. Is it strange to you that God wants us to be happy? Let me ask it this way: if you were to fix a dinner would you not want your family to enjoy it? If you build a house, is it not the builders joy for someone to purchase that house and enjoy living in it? I hear people complaining about big family gatherings on Memorial Day cooking out but if I were the soldier who fought for freedom my greatest pleasure would be watching families enjoy their freedom in safety with their family.
 - 3. Jesus' commands are not keeping you from happiness but rather they are the way of happiness.
 - a. I'm reading Proverbs right now in my daily readings. Here's one example:
 - i. (Prov. 3:13-14) ¹³ Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, ¹⁴ for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold.
 - iii. There's a lot more to be explored but just know the purposes for which God saves people is to be fruitful and one of those fruits is joy in him. Be satisfied in all that Jesus is for you and your joy will be full.
- b. Now, let's see how we got to these grand purposes. First, if we are to be fruitful, that fruit must come from the True Vine.
 - i. If you have been following along, you might wonder where this idea of the True Vine came from and that would be a great question.
 - ii. Verse 1 "I am the true vine" is the last of the "I am" statements in the Gospel of John.
 - iii. All of those statements are rooted in the OT. The same is true of this one in verse 1. Let me try to set the larger context before we look at Jesus as the true vine.
 - 1. One of the first places it was used in the OT is when Jacob blesses his twelve sons before he dies in which he says to Judah: (Gen. 49:10-11) ¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. ¹¹ Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he has washed his garments in wine and his vesture in the blood of grapes.
 - a. The vine will be so fruitful under the reign of this King that the nations will wash their clothes with wine which is as common as water. This a clear sign of prosperity under this King which lay still in the future.
 - 2. As you might have guessed, the vine was not fruitful, thus Isaiah warns: (Isa. 5:1-7) Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. ² He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. ³ And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have

not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?

⁵ And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. ⁶ I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. ⁷ For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!

3. Almost every passage concerning God's vine who was Israel, describes it as fruitless or the fruit is wild. After numerous warnings by many prophets and over many years, God cuts down the vine. The city is laid waste and all that remains is a stump.
4. The psalmist cries out to God to save the vine in (Ps. 80:7-9) ⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved! ⁸ You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. ⁹ You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land.
 - a. Let me skip down to verse (Ps. 80:14-19) ¹⁴ Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine, ¹⁵ the stock that your right hand planted, and for the son whom you made strong for yourself. ¹⁶ They have burned it with fire; they have cut it down; may they perish at the rebuke of your face! ¹⁷ But let your hand be on the man of your right hand, the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself! ¹⁸ Then we shall not turn back from you; give us life, and we will call upon your name! ¹⁹ Restore us, O LORD God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!
 - b. Who do you think this Son of Man is? Is it not Jesus?
 - c. Guess what sprouted out of the stump? (Isa. 11:1-2) There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
 - d. Jesus is this vine—the true vine and his branches shall bear fruit.
- iv. Obviously, I see the importance of showing you why it was necessary that Jesus is the true vine. If the root and vine are bad, the branches will bear no fruit. And as we have already discussed, fruitless vines are useless.
 1. What makes the branches even more fruitful, is the fact that God the Father is the Gardener. I'm certain, the One who created the garden knows exactly how to tend His garden.
 2. It says there in verse 2, "Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he (the Father/Gardener) takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes—WHY?—that it may bear MORE fruit."
 - a. I am no expert gardener, but I know how to spot fruitless branches on my tomatoes that are useless and wasting nourishment for the fruitful branches.

- b. I know how to prune them so that they produce more. Of course, that plant must grow. It cannot sustain a tomato when it is small. It must be pruned that it might grow and become strong.
 - 3. The same is true of us. Making disciples is helping each other grow and prune. The discipline of the Father/Gardener is painful at first but it yields as (Heb. 12:11) says “the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”
- v. We have already talked about being made clean but Jesus reminds them that they are clean already on account of the word that he has spoken.
 - 1. I really need to camp out here for a while but let it suffice to say these few things. Obedience to God’s command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil was their access to the Tree of Life.
 - 2. Obedience to God’s law was the way to life in the Promised Land.
 - 3. As you know, no one ever obeyed perfectly. Not even close. From the Flood to the exile, Noah to David, none were righteous...yet there is one emerges!
 - 4. In this gospel story, God is about to start over not with a flood but a new creation in the true vine. If the root and vine are good, then the branches will bear good fruit.
- c. Now, we must ask how do the branches bear fruit? The simple answer is: abide in the True Vine.
 - i. From verse 4 to verse 10, the word abide is used 10 times. That means, Jesus is making a significant point by his repetition. You might ask, what does it mean to abide?
 - 1. Well, it’s the same word we have been talking about for some time now. *Meno* means to remain, stay, continue, live in, hold on as well as follow, observe, and obey.
 - 2. But let’s hear how Jesus unpacks what it means.
 - ii. In verse 4, he commands the disciples to abide in him and he in them. In other words, we become part of the vine. A branch is attached to a vine and is part of the vine.
 - 1. Jesus states some pretty simple and obvious things concerning a vine and its branches there in verse 4: “As the vine is not able to bear fruit from itself.” Nutrients needed to bear fruit come from the vine and roots.
 - a. Therefore, Jesus tells the disciples they cannot bear fruit from themselves but rather by remaining in the vine.
 - b. Be a branch. Do what branches do. They live off of the vine and by doing so will bear fruit.
 - c. The next logical step is, that if the vine is good and the Gardener tends the vine and branch stays connected to the vine it will bear MUCH fruit.
 - i. It’s like this: (Phil. 4:13) I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
 - d. ...because apart from Jesus they can do nothing...no fruit. I know this is obvious. But if a branch is laying on the ground cut off from the vine, can it bear fruit...can it live? No!

- e. Verse 6 describes what happens to branches that do not abide in the vine, he is thrown out like a branch and dries up; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.
 - i. Let this brief quote give you an image of what God did to Israel, his vine, when they were fruitless. (Ezek. 15:6-8) ⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so have I given up the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ⁷ And I will set my face against them. Though they escape from the fire, the fire shall yet consume them, and you will know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them. ⁸ And I will make the land desolate, because they have acted faithlessly, declares the Lord GOD."
- 2. All of those verses are saying the same thing multiple times in slightly different ways. Now abiding in Christ is described as abiding in Jesus' words.
 - a. "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you."
 - i. Abiding in the Word...abiding in the Truth...is the WAY to life!
 - b. The result of remaining in his word: if you abide in my words, then ask whatever you desire, and it will be done to you. We've talked extensively about this a few weeks ago. I don't think we need to redo that.
 - i. I will add this little gem. There are two Greek words for ask. Our English translations do not make clear their distinction. As here in verse 7, "ask" is that of an inferior seeking something from a superior.
 - ii. When Jesus said this in (Jn. 14:16) ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever
 - 1. This ask is like inquire from an equal. Like a King to a King. Jesus always maintains that distinction when he uses the word ask. That's one of those hidden gems affirming that the Father and the Son are equal in nature.
 - iii. Just remember, we are inferior asking our superior and he delights in providing them what is necessary for bearing fruit and being filled with joy.
 - iii. Now we have arrived to those purposes again. "In this my Father is glorified, THAT you bear MUCH fruit and so prove to be my disciples."
 - 1. If you do not bear fruit, you do not glorify the Father and so prove not to be Jesus' disciple.
 - a. The nearest example of this is Judas Iscariot. He faked it but he didn't make it.
 - iv. Nestled between these two amazing purpose statements stands an incredible, possibly unbelievable, statement by Jesus.
 - 1. He says this to his disciples: AS the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.
 - 2. In other words, Jesus' love for his disciples is equal to the Father's love for his Son.
 - a. Who of you needs to hear that Jesus' love for you is like that? I do.

- v. I can't help but think that abiding in Jesus is loving Jesus. (Jn. 15:9-10) Abide in my love.
¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.
 - 1. Willful patterns of disobedience say I don't love Jesus. Just as if Jesus disobeyed his Father. But Jesus obeyed and abided in the Father's love.
- vi. That final purpose is worth hearing again: (Jn. 15:11) ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

V. Response

- a. I know you want to be happy because God made you for himself and you will never be happy or satisfied until you are satisfied with Jesus.
 - i. You might ask, how do I get attached to the true vine where fruit and joy are? Turn away from seeking happiness in your sins and trust in Christ to be all you need in himself.
 - ii. Abiding in Jesus, the Word, is your only access to eternal life!
- b. For those of you who are trusting Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and bearing fruits of righteousness and joy, then your response is to keep abiding in him. As we are about to sing, may this be your prayer: More love to thee, O Christ!