

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The word of God for this morning is found in the Gospel of John 15:1-8.

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

So far our text. Dear fellow redeemed.

The relationship that we have with our God is pictured for us many ways throughout Scripture. We are described as sons adopted by our God. We are described as a bride and Jesus is the groomsman. The one that we have before us today is equally as familiar to us. We have many grape orchards in our part of the country. On my first trip to Walla Walla I came across many grape orchards associated with the wineries beside the road.

The neighbor behind the parsonage has planted a couple vines for the purpose of creating a screen for her skittish dogs who bark at most anything that moves.

But the Lord used the example of a grape vine and branches, as well as the one who tends the vine as a spiritual lesson for us. Many have taught that through their own sufficiency, even as a Christian, comes from within themselves. But the Lord teaches us in our text for today that, **"Without Me you can do nothing."**

Jesus begins by using the picture of Him being a Vine and the Father being the Vinedresser. But Jesus adds a word in to describe Himself as the 'true' vine. If we were talking about actual plants this could never make sense. A vine is a vine. One is no more 'true' than another.

Jesus here is speaking of Him and Him alone being able to supply the branches with the ability to bear fruit, true fruit. Because **"Without Me you can do nothing."**

What makes Jesus the True Vine begins before the creation of the world. Jesus being God and the Creator of all things visible and invisible makes Him the True Vine. Jesus is also the True Vine because He Himself is the only One sent by the Father. The Father gave no one else the commission to die on behalf of all mankind. Jesus showed Himself as the True Vine by fulfilling all the prophecies of the Old Testament.

Others came saying they were the Christ. Trying to pass themselves off as the True Vine. In not having the qualifications that Jesus had separates them from Jesus, the True Vine.

"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

As a disciple or branch of Jesus our sole mission is to glorify Him. As a real branch upon any kind of plant, its purpose is to produce fruit. The gardener will observe a plant while it's being tended. If he notices that branches aren't producing, out come the sheers to remove that fruitless branch. There is no point in having a branch remain if fruit isn't being produced.

A branch that doesn't produce fruit cannot turn and blame the vine. To do so would be calling our Vine Jesus unfaithful in being the True Vine. We would be accusing Him of not being able to provide us the nourishment that we need to bear said fruit.

Through the hearing of His word we are provided the nourishment to bear fruit. The Holy Spirit comes to us through the hearing and study of the word and fills up the branches. The living water of Christ comes to us through Him, the True Vine, because **"Without Me you can do nothing."**

Now if a branch through the hearing of the word bears fruit our Heavenly Father comes and prunes us. Proverbs 3:12 **"For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son *in whom* he delights."** The pruning of the branches comes by the Lord sending us different trials in life. An earthly vinedresser will come and prune away some of the shoots from the branch so that more of the nourishing water from the vine will produce greater fruit upon lesser shoots.

How the Father comes to each one of us individually to prune us will be different. But the sole intent of the Heavenly Vinedresser will be that we bear more fruit so that we may glorify Him.

"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me."

The mixture of literal vs. picture language continues in our text. The statement of Jesus to the disciples of already being clean is a literal statement. We are all clean because of what Jesus did in His perfect life and innocent death. We are clean and bear good fruit because we are justified by His blood.

But the branch needs to be reminded what kind of branch it really is, **"Without Me you can do nothing."** Another picture that Jesus used is the grafting in of branches into Himself, the True Vine. In our God calling us to faith we are grafted into the Vine. But if we on our part choose to choke ourselves off from the Vine we will die and be cut off.

"I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

The importance of the branch abiding in the Vine is paramount. No other vine outside of Jesus will allow us to stand before the Father at judgment and say I should be granted heaven. Every other kind of nourishment will only lead to death. The study of God's word privately at home, coming to Bible Class

and bringing your children to Sunday school are ways to receive the nourishment that you need to bear fruit.

"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned."

As certain as the branch which remains in the word of the Vine will prosper, so it is that the one who starves himself from the word will die. The kind of death pictured for us in our text is one of finality. Jesus pictures for us a branch that has a permanent end. A branch that is cut off can be grafted in again. But one that is cut off, set aside to wither and die and then used for firewood can never be grafted in again.

Our Heavenly Vinedresser is one who has patients with the branches. He will prune them and work on them until He sees no other course of action than to remove the branch. This time of grace that we find the Lord giving us is one of love and enduring patients because **"Without Me you can do nothing."**

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

Understanding this Scripture is to remember what was said earlier. We are here as branches to glorify the Vine. If we think we can ask for anything, anything whatsoever and have it be granted to us just because we are branches is one that could lead us to despair.

When we ask and ask it in His name is to ask for things that correspond to His will. The Lord will never refuse a repentant heart the forgiveness of sins in Jesus. The Lord will never refuse to grant you a full measure of the Holy Spirit that you may go out to glorify the Vine Jesus Christ.

And when we do ask for other things ask in a way that leaves the doing of said requests in the hands of the Lord.

"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

Although I prefer computers over yard work I put in several hours this week on the yard. After I was done I saw the outcome of my work and was very satisfied in it. I want the yard to be free of weeds. I want the flowers to bloom brightly and give off their fragrance.

And when I prune the fruit trees this fall I want them to bear much fruit because of all the work that I will put into trimming them.

Our Heavenly Father has sacrificed Himself for you the branches in the most costly way. He sacrificed His Only begotten Son so that we may be grafted in and bear much fruit, glorifying our Father in Heaven.

Remain in His word that you may be a true disciple indeed. **"For without Me you can do nothing."**
Amen.