

Live In Jesus

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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 away¹; 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 will¹ 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.

In this parable Jesus teaches us that those who make use of his word grow strong in faith. Those who do not wither and die.

2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away;

We often speak about heroes of faith, but Jesus speaks here about the opposite, anti-heroes. He speaks here about people who knew the Lord and his grace but simply withered and died because they despised his word. Later on in verse six he repeats this same warning.

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.

This is what happens to those who neglect God's word. People like Saul who was filled with the Holy Spirit but slowly little by little grew farther and farther from God's word. People like Hophni and Phineas who were priests of the Lord but didn't really care at all about God or his word and instead used their position to rape and steal from those who came to worship at the temple. People like Cain, or Esau or Rehoboam or Jeroboam or many others.

In Hebrews chapter 11 we are reminded of the great heroes of faith. Those who overcame floods, and fires and slavery and lions and even death by faith. Hebrews 11 says these are an example to us, a reminder to us of the power of the risen Lord and what we can accomplish through him.

But 1 Cor 10:13 reminds us that their opposites, Saul and Cain and Esau are also an example for us.

1 Corinthians 10:11-12 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

They are a warning for us because if God cut them off, do you think that God will not cut you off if you fail to bear fruit?

Gary Richmond tells the story of his friend who thought a little baby raccoon would make the cutest pet. Raccoons when they are young are cute and playful and affectionate. Gary tried to warn his friend at 24 months they change overnight and become unpredictable and vicious. Gary's friend wouldn't listen. She kept saying it is different with them. She was convinced her raccoon would always love her. She ended up in the hospital, having plastic surgery because of the deep lacerations on her face.

We always think it's different. That won't happen to me. God's word warns us over and over again, but we always dismiss it. We might think, I'm a Quade, or I'm a brown or I'm a Ude. We might think my grandfather built this church, or my father is/was a pastor. In this way we take pride in whom our ancestors were rather than living in Christ.

Esau was the son of Isaac who was sacrificed on Mount Moriah as a picture of the Christ who was to come. Yet Esau was cut off from the congregation of God's people because he despised the promise and sold it for a bowl of stew.

There is only one thing that matters, and it isn't who our ancestors were or who we are, but who Jesus is. Those who do not abide in Jesus will not remain, they will die and fall away. It can sometimes take a while, but it will happen. Those who live in him will live forever.

3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

This is a very serious warning that Jesus gives in verse two, but he does not leave us frightened under that threat but immediately reassure us.

"You are clean because of the word"

Terrified by the serious warning in verse two and six we might be tempted to try to produce fruits so that we do not end up like Saul or Esau.

Jesus interrupts such thoughts with the words of verse three. He makes it clear that anyone who thinks that way was not listening to what he said. What Jesus said was, "abide in me," he did not say "produce fruits."

In these verses Jesus speaks in a parable. A parable about vines and branches and fruit, but no parable or analogy is ever

perfect. Jesus makes this one point very clear. When the father comes to remove the dead branches, he does not cut off based on which branches hold the best fruit. Just as the the angel passed over the houses with the blood of the lamb, so also the Father passes over the branches for the sake of Jesus' blood.

Jesus says you are clean because of my word.

This is the unthinkable grace of our Father. He comes walking as the owner of the vineyard. He finds us as poor wilted dry fruitless branches. Yet where any other farmer would cut us off, the Father does not.

Rather he says, "be clean," and we are clean by virtue of his word and through baptism.

He says, "be strengthened," and we are strengthened by virtue of his word and communion.

He says, "bear fruit," and we do bear fruit even though it be little and pathetic, but that fruit is not what makes us clean.

We mentioned Esau and Jacob earlier. This is the difference between Esau and Jacob. From all outward perceptions Esau was the more righteous, and Jacob the more sinful. Esau was honest, and obedient to his father, and even forgiving when Jacob returned home. Jacob was deceitful and disobedient.

But Esau threw away God's word of promise. Jacob through all his other sinfulness never let go of God's promise.

It was not the one who did the best job or who produced the most fruit who was saved, but rather the one who held on to the promise of God.

This is what Jesus wants us to understand when he says, "abide in me," that we never let go of the promises that he has given to us, and especially the promise of his resurrection. This is what Jesus wants us to understand when he says, "you are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."

Those who hold on to his promise are clean by virtue of his word of promise. We are forgiven through his promise.

For this reason, also Martin Luther writes in his catechism concerning the Lord Supper: "He is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words 'given and shed for you.'" We are clean and ready to come to the Lord's Supper through faith.

and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

We might wonder why if our fruits are nothing, and if we are saved by God's word of promise, then why does Jesus speak so much about fruit and producing fruits?

There are three things that Jesus wants us to understand from this parable. None of them are that we are saved by how much fruit we produce.

The first is the warning that if we remove ourselves from his promises and his grace we will wither and die.

The second is that if we remain in him, that is hold on to his promise and use his word and sacraments, then we will live and grow in his grace. We talked last week in Psalm 23 verse 6 about his "goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life."

The third is that because of his love for us the Father will at times prune us.

Therefore, if we have trouble or suffering in our life, we should not be afraid or think that God has forgotten us but trust that God has a plan and find strength in his word.

Joseph told his brothers "You meant it for evil but God meant it for good."

A few weeks ago, we talked about the pastor Polycarp who was a student of the apostle John. Another of John's students was Ignatius. Ignatius when he was older was thrown into a roman arena where he was torn to pieces by wild beasts.

On the way to this gruesome death Ignatius said, "Let them come! I am God's kernel of grain. He must crush and grind me in the mill before He can use me."

Our text this morning is what Jesus said to his disciples on Maundy Thursday after the Lord's supper on the way to the garden of gethsemane. He knew the suffering that he was about to face. He knew the suffering that his disciples would face. He knew the suffering that we would face in our lives. He also knew the resurrection which was to follow that suffering.

Therefore, he said to them and to us. Do not fear this suffering is only the Father pruning the branches, in order that something much more glorious may follow. We wait for the glory that is to follow.

We are saved by God's grace not by our works, when we live in that grace Jesus not us will produce fruit in our lives. Amen