

**Scripture**

**John 15:5-17**

We are continuing our journey through this important chapter, John 15. Jesus and his disciples have met together in the Upper Room for the Passover Meal. They are now walking from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane where He will be betrayed, arrested and taken into custody. He has told them plainly that he is leaving them. He knows that on the next day, He will be crucified. He also knows that He will be resurrected and in a little while will return to heaven. But His followers will remain in the world. The teaching in this chapter is to instruct His followers about their life during the “In Between” time – the time between His Ascension into heaven and His return to earth at the end of the age. As we are living in this “In Between” time, how are we passing the time? Are we just passively sitting around waiting till the end. Or are we staying faithful to our calling to bear fruit.

This chapter begins with this word picture or parable of the Vine and the branches. Jesus has identified Himself as the true vine. His Father is the Vinedresser, or Gardener. And we are the branches. Our purpose as branches is to produce fruit for the Gardener. The secret to our productivity is to remain attached to the vine. Jesus does not give any explanation about how a person becomes attached to the vine. He is talking to disciples, people who had **made a choice** to follow Him. They had turned from their previous life and were now with Jesus. They had an encounter with Jesus. They responded to His invitation to come and follow Him and become Fishers of Men. That is where our life as a Christian begins. It begins with a spiritual experience with Jesus where we decide that He is the Son of God who came to be our Savior. We yield control of our lives to Him. You are not a Christian without making that choice.

As we looked at the vine parable last week, the emphasis that Jesus made is that **we must remain in Him**. If we are going to fulfill our purpose, we must stay connected to Him. As we move to this new paragraph in the text, Jesus continues to emphasize that theme – **Remain**. But now he adds some further depth to that command – **Remain in my Love**. He says it twice times. So we need to think about what Jesus meant by that.

Jesus begins this section by affirming to His followers that He loves them. **Vs. 9: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.”** Jesus lived with an assurance that He was loved by the Father. When Jesus was baptized, as He was coming up out of the water, a Voice from heaven spoke – **“You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22)**. The awareness that He was loved, enabled Jesus to face storms, Satanic attack, demons, opposition, rejection by people, arrest, beatings and eventually crucifixion. We can only imagine the depth of love that God the Father has for Jesus – the Son. In all that Jesus went through, He knew that He was loved. And now Jesus says, in the same way that the Father has loved me, I have loved you. **Remain in my love**. Live in the confidence that you are loved by Jesus. We may know people who do not have a sense of security or peace, because they are not certain of being loved. Love is given as a reward, or withheld as a punishment. I believe that Jesus wants us to **live with an assurance that we loved, no matter what**.

Jesus knew that His followers were **about to enter a hard time** in their lives as His followers. They would watch as He is betrayed, tried, beaten and put to death. After His death they would live in fear that they could also be arrested for being His followers. Jesus wants them to **live with an assurance that they are loved**. He wants them to have the same assurance that He lived with, that no matter what happened, they would know that they were loved. Knowing that they are loved would carry them through the most difficult experiences. Their outcome would be assured. Sometimes our lives become difficult and hard. We also must live with the certainty that we are loved.

Living or remaining in His love will have several outcomes. **First of all**, Knowing that we are loved will result in a life of obedience that pleases God. **Vs. 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**. Because Jesus knew that He was

loved, He was willing to do His Father's will. Later on this night, Jesus will wrestle with whether to go forward with the Father's will. As He weighs the reality of His coming crucifixion, and that time on the cross when He would be alienated from the Father, He prays "**Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done.**" **Luke 22:42.** That is what obedience that is prompted by Love looks like. And that is what Jesus desires from us. Sometimes the commands of Jesus are difficult. Resisting His commands, disobeying Him will result in being alienated from Him. But **as we obey, we remain in His love.**

A second outcome of knowing that we are loved is that we will experience joy. **Vs. 11: "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."** Jesus experienced joy as a result of his obedience and he promises that same joy to us. Joy is an attitude of **contentment.** Jesus' desire is that our lives as His followers will not be burdensome, but filled with contentment about our current situation and about our future. We don't live with a sense of doom or despair. We experience Joy.

A third outcome of knowing that we are loved will be evident in the way we interact with others disciples. **Vs. 12: My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."** Do you catch the pattern here:

- I am loved by the Father....
- You are loved by me, as the Father loves me...
- As I am loved by the Father, I love you, so YOU love each other.

The pattern for our love for each other, is the love that we have experienced from Jesus. **Love as You are Loved!** One of the important themes of Jesus' ministry to His followers in these chapters is Love for Each Other.

- **Jn. 13:34 – A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."**

Now he comes back to it again in chapter 15. He mentions it twice in this paragraph (vs. 12, 17). What has Jesus noticed among His followers that would prompt him to emphasize this command to love each other. We learn that there is bickering and jockeying for position, power and influence among the disciples. After Jesus is gone, He knows that they will need to support and encourage one another. They cannot be divided. So he emphasizes the importance of loving each other.

And now he tells them what that love looks like: **Vs. 13 - "Greater Love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."** They will soon see this level of love in the life of Jesus as He is willing to sacrifice Himself for the world. And he desires that his disciples will follow His example.

We are living in a day when there is deep division among people. Sadly we see this division also on display in the Church. There are sharp disagreements between believers. And it is not just differences between liberal and conservative. It is differences in politics. And those differences have resulted in hatred of brothers and sisters. Those differences prevent believers from working together to provide care for people in our world. We are under orders from our Savior – Obey my commands, and here is my command – Love one another!

Remember again what Jesus says in 13:34 – "**By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**"

Remember, we must **LOVE as we have been LOVED.**