

John Ch15v1-8 - Remaining In Jesus

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[0:00] I'm going to read John chapter 15 verses 1 through 8. You remember that this is part of a whole section going from chapter 13 through to the end of chapter 17, which covers about 24 hours as Jesus meets and speaks with the disciples specifically and prepares them for him going back to the Father and how they should live as they wait for the Lord's return.

And so we are also in that time frame of where we're waiting for the Lord to return. And so these words instruct us today as to how we should live.

So let's read verse 1. I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener.

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me as I also remain in you.

[1:22] No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

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. 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.

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Well, let's pray. Let's pray. Lord God, we are grateful and thankful for your word.

[2:38] It is the truth, and we trust it. And we pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit, your word would do a pruning work in our life right now, and that through this morning, we will become more fruitful.

May this be for our good and for your glory. Amen. Amen. Well, one of my summer chores as a kid was to pick the fruit in our garden.

Not a pleasant job, if you're wanting to be outside playing football and doing other things. But nonetheless, it was what I had to do. We had red and green gooseberries, red currants and black currants, raspberries and strawberries, so there was no end to the work that had to be done.

Every year, they would just produce buckets of fruit. Now, of course, that's just not a surprise, is it? Because that's what fruit trees do.

Fruit trees produce fruit. Well, if you are a disciple of Jesus, you also produce delicious, sweet fruit.

[4:10] Look at verse 8. This is a key verse in our text. This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Of course, this shouldn't be a surprise to us because fruitfulness is the mark of a disciple. It's the sign or the evidence of following Jesus.

But it also means that if we claim to be a disciple, but have no fruit, bear no fruit, then we are not a disciple.

You see, there is only one kind of disciple, and that's a fruitful disciple. Did you see that in verse 8?

This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

[5:22] So this morning, we're going to think about what it is to be fruitful. We're going to ask two questions of the text. What is the fruit, and how can I be more fruitful?

What is the fruit, and how can I be more fruitful? So first, what is the fruit? Well, I'm going to tell you straight up.

It's Christ-likeness. Christ-likeness. But we want to spend a bit of time thinking about that because as we go through, we'll learn some foundational things.

We see what the fruit is from verse 1. Jesus says, I am the true vine.

So this is the seventh time Jesus has used this phrase, I am, to teach us who he is. He's saying something about his identity.

[6 : 24] I am the true vine. A vine, or a vineyard, as we saw from Psalm 80 this morning, was a symbol for God's people Israel.

Just like a shamrock is a national symbol for Ireland, so the vine was a national symbol for Israel. The problem was, that's all it was.

It was a symbol. It never produced any good fruit. Keep your finger in John's Gospel and go back to Isaiah chapter 5.

Isaiah chapter 5. Isaiah chapter 5.

Here God is speaking through the prophet Isaiah and he gives us a picture of a vineyard and then he explains the meaning.

[7 : 40] So we have a picture and then we have an explanation. So chapter 5, verse 1. I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard.

My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug it up, cleared it of stones, planted it with the choicest vines.

He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes. But it yielded only bad fruit.

Literally, stinky fruit. So there's the picture. Now we get the explanation in verse 7. The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel.

And the people of Judah are the vines he delights in. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed.

[8 : 50] For righteousness, but heard cries of distress. Let's keep that in mind and go back to John chapter 15.

The fruit they were to produce was the sweetness of righteousness and justice. But instead, they produced bitter fruit, stinky fruit, injustice, and unrighteousness.

You see, they were called to reflect the beauty of God's character, a life of obeying God's good commands. Instead, they produced smelly, stinky, bad fruit.

Now Jesus says, chapter 15, verse 1, I am the true vine. In other words, he's saying, I am the only one that produces good fruit, sweet and delicious fruit.

Where Israel have failed, Jesus has been faithful. And it isn't just confined to the nation of Israel, it's for all people throughout all ages and all times, we have all failed to produce the fruit we were made to produce.

[10 : 16] But Jesus has been faithful. You see, Jesus lived as we should have lived. Jesus produces the fruit that we should be bearing in our lives.

Jesus lives a fruitful life, a beautiful life, a pleasing to the Father kind of life. Look at the end of chapter 14, verse 31.

The end of verse 31, Jesus says, I love the Father. I love him. And I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.

The Son, Jesus, delights and enjoys doing what is right and what is pleasing for the Father. I love him. So what is the fruit of a disciple?

Well, the fruit of a disciple is Christ-like character. A life of loving and enjoying and desiring the Father and obeying his commands.

[11 : 35] What a beautiful life that is. So very simply, what is the fruit? Well, it is the fruit of Christ-likeness.

The second big question we're going to ask, and this will be a bit longer, is, well, how can I be more fruitful? How do we, how do I become more Christ-like?

because throughout the text, it's telling us that we should be bearing much fruit and becoming more fruitful. Well, first, if we're going to be fruitful, we need to be connected to the vine.

While it's not stated, it's implied in the text. A key word, which we'll be looking at in a minute, throughout the text, is remain, or some of your translations may say abide.

If you are to remain, it implies that you are, that you are already in. Okay, if you're in something, you are to remain in it.

[12 : 49] So we need to be first connected or joined to the vine, or to use the horticultural term, we are to be grafted in to the life of Jesus, who is the true vine.

And the way in which we get grafted into the vine is by faith in Jesus. As we believe in Jesus, as we place our trust in him, so we are joined and united to the true vine, the one and only Lord Jesus

Christ.

You see, Jesus is the true vine. He is the true people of God. He is the only one. It's not about becoming part of Israel or becoming part of any nation.

It's about being part of God's true family. The people who have faith in the Lord Jesus. So trusting Jesus as the true source of life connects us and grafts us in to the vine which is full of life and leads to fruitfulness.

So we need to be grafted in. And once we are in the vine, well then we begin to live as Jesus lived.

[14 : 19] That's part of our new nature. As the Lord Jesus changes us and transforms us as we are empowered by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then we begin to bear fruit.

But here's the thing. We don't stop at being fruitful. We are to become even more fruitful, more sweet, more delicious.

fruit. So here are two ways God makes us more fruitful. Two ways in which God makes us more fruitful.

Because we cannot make ourselves fruitful, this is a work of God the Father and God the Son by the Holy Spirit. So how do we become more fruitful?

fruitful? Well first, the Father prunes fruitful disciples. The Father prunes fruitful disciples.

[15 : 26] Look at verse 1 with me. I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit.

While every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. Now did you notice verse 2 there's two things that the Father does.

First the Father, verse 2, cuts off every branch in the vine that bears no fruit.

These branches, I think, are people who claim to be disciples but produce no fruit and are simply cut off the dead stuff, cut away.

It doesn't belong in the vine. Jesus says something similar in verse 6. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers.

[16 : 39] Such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. It's talking about judgment day where God the Father will judge and look for fruit.

And if there is no fruit, it will be cut away and separated from him forever. Isn't that what happened to Judas?

Do you remember back in chapter 13? He was dead wood. Look back at chapter 13, verse 21.

Jesus is speaking with the disciples.

They'd been following him over three years, done so much together, and then during the meal, verse 21, Jesus says, very truly, I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.

Well, we're disciples. Who's going to betray us? Well, look at verse 26.

[17 : 48] Jesus answered, it is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish. Verse 30, as soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out, and it was night.

Judas had claimed to be a disciple. Judas appeared to be a disciple. He was amongst the disciples, but the fruit of his life revealed that ultimately he was not a disciple at all.

He was cut off. He didn't belong in the vine. some of you, I'm sure, or all of us will be aware of the recent trial of Geoffrey Donaldson, an MP, who had been charged and found guilty of 18 sexual offences to minors.

But as Geoffrey took the stand for the trial over those number of days in his clean pristine navy suit, on his lapel was a little fish, a symbol of Christianity.

Well, symbols do not protect us. Symbols do not produce fruit. Symbols, whether it's a cross on the chain, and I don't have anything against that, or stickers of fishes in your car, I don't have anything against that either, they do not protect you.

[19 : 36] They do not bring good fruit. You see, it's possible to say you are a disciple, but not be a disciple.

It's possible to act like a disciple, but not be a true follower of Jesus. So how do we know if we are disciples? We bear fruit.

Jesus said, didn't he, that by your fruit you will know them. We display Christ-like character.

We love the commands of God. We desire to obey and please the Father and seek to do the good of others. So the Father will first cut off every branch that bears no fruit.

But the second thing the Father does is to prune. Verse 2. Let's read verse 2 again. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit.

[20 : 44] While every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. At the end of the fruit season, and I know some of you know this very, very well, my mum would cut back the current bushes and the raspberry canes and I thought, that's it, that's the end, no more fruit picking, she's cut them all down.

But to my surprise, they only grew back better and stronger. In fact, they produced more fruit. And that's the picture here. The father prunes disciples so that we become more fruitful.

And while the results are great and delicious, the process of pruning is painful. You see, there are things that we attach ourselves to that take the place of Jesus.

Rather than looking to Jesus as the true source of life, we turn to other things and other people. And that hinders our growth and our fruitfulness.

So the father comes alongside and gently confronts us by the spirit showing us our sin so that we can repent and turn in faith afresh to Jesus.

[22 : 10] Pruning is the serious work the father does by the spirit about the sin in our life so that we can cut it out as we bring it to him and confess and ask him to change us.

Pruning is purifying. It's good for us. John, the author of this gospel puts it like this in his letter.

Again, John is writing to disciples. He says, if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

So it's not about becoming perfect, but it's about owning up to our sin. And if we confess our sins, well, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and what?

Purify us from all unrighteousness. He will prune us so that we become more and more like him.

[23 : 27] None of us likes being confronted by our sin, but the purpose is not to condemn us, but to grow us. It's not to pronounce us all as failures and that we're all rotten and terrible people, but to make us more fruitful.

It's the Father's work to prune us so that we become more like his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So the Father prunes us.

Second, the Son, I've jumped ahead too much, we'll leave it there. The Son produces fruitful disciples.

The Son produces fruitful disciples. Bearing fruit is connected to remaining in Jesus. Eight times, if you're to read the text again, we're called to remain or abide!

in Jesus. So look at verse four. remain in me as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself, it must remain in the vine.

[24 : 43] Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. So remain in Jesus, abide in Jesus.

But how? How do we remain? How do we abide? Well, I think the clue comes in verse three and in verse seven.

Notice what Jesus said, verse three. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

So Jesus had spoken the word of the gospel to them. That word had cleaned them on the inside and made them disciples.

That word Jesus had spoken to them had cleaned them to be disciples so that they would bear fruit. Now look down at verse seven.

[25 : 43] If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

you see the remaining is to be connected to the word that Jesus has spoken Jesus himself and prayer.

Verse seven, if you remain in my words and remain in you, my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. So remaining is connected in to the words of Jesus and praying to him.

That's how we abide in Jesus. That's how we remain in Jesus. We keep trusting his word. As we started trusting his word, so we continue trusting his word and we continue to ask in prayer that he will do a work in our lives.

So first, we trust in his word. We believe what Jesus said about himself. It's not that we go from something else to believing in Jesus and to something else.

[26 : 59] No, we keep believing and trusting in what he has said. I am the bread of life. I nourish you and I feed you. I am the light of the world.

I show you where to go. I am the door. I am the entrance to life. I am the life.

And now Jesus says verse five I am the vine and you are the branches and if you remain in me and I in you you will bear much fruit apart from me you can do nothing.

It's trusting in Jesus and his words as the source of true life. It's believing that Jesus is all satisfied and all sufficient.

It's saying verse five that without Jesus I can do nothing. I can't produce any fruit by myself.

[28:05] I need Jesus the true vine to do that work. I cannot make myself fruitful. He is the one I trust to produce fruit in me.

So we trust in his word and we depend in prayer. Again look at verse seven. If you remain in me and my words remain in you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

So what do you want? Just ask him for it and he'll give it to you. Want a new car? Ask him. No? Well, it doesn't mean that we get whatever we ask.

Context is key. You see, it's the desire of Jesus that we bear fruit. So as we come to him in prayer and ask of him anything that we ask of in terms of producing fruit, he will do that work in us.

He will. Isn't that good to know? That whatever we ask in relation to fruit bearing, he will produce that within us.

[29:25] Delicious, ripe, sweet, fruit, Christ likeness. Go with me please to Psalm 1.

Psalm 1. In your Bible, Psalm 1. here is a picture of ongoing trust in God's word and depending upon him in prayer, all of which leads to a fruitful life.

A picture of trusting in God's word, trusting what Jesus says depending on prayer which leads to a fruitful life.

Look at verse 1. Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers.

God they're listening or trusting in the words of people. But blessed is the one who meditates or whose delight is in the law of the Lord and who meditates on his law day and night.

[30:51] That person is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither whatever they do prospers.

You see that word meditating is to think deeply and reflect much and churn around in our minds the words of God to think deeply about them and to pray them into our life so that they bring about change and transformation so that we yield fruit.

Let's go back to John's gospel. So to remain in Jesus means we keep on trusting the words of Jesus.

The words that made us clean is the same word that will go on cleaning us to be more like Jesus. And we depend upon him in prayer asking him to do the work in us that we cannot do in ourselves. You see the father prunes us so that we become more fruitful and the son produces fruit in us so that we become even more fruitful.

[32:15] This is how God works in his disciples. Disciples bear fruit. The father and the son by the spirit produce the fruit.

I cannot make myself fruitful. He does that work in me so that I can bear fruit. Verse eight.

this is to my father's glory that you bear much fruit showing yourselves to be my disciples. For our honeymoon, Kirsty and I travelled to Central America and one of our outstanding memories was all the fresh ripe fruit.

Travelling by bus as we did, we were on these forever straight roads, kilometre after kilometre we passed by acres of fruit farms, banana trees, pineapples, oranges and lemons, peaches.

My favourite were the lovely big mangoes. Fresh to the core. Can you taste it? Beautiful, isn't it?

[33:28] Who wouldn't want to enjoy the produce of all those fruit trees? Well, that's a picture of discipleship.

The Father and the Son at work by the Spirit in his disciples so that we bear more and more fruit. And if you like, as people walk amongst the fruit trees of his church, so they taste and see the beauty of Christ.

A community that obeys God's commands for the good of others. A community that will help one another fight sin and trust Jesus.

A community that loves God's word and loves to meet together with others to pray. A community that delights in the Father's pruning and the Son's produce.

who wouldn't want to be part of something like that? Well, I'll tell you who wants to be part of it. It's disciples of Jesus.

[34 : 44] This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit showing yourselves to be my disciples.

disciples. Let's just take a moment to reflect on that and then we'll pray and ask for the Lord to do his work in our life that we become more fruitful for him.

Lord Jesus, you are the true vine and we thank you that by faith, by simple trust, we are grafted into Jesus and we can say that his life is now our life that as you look at us you see the fruitfulness of Christ.

Our Father God, we pray that we will become more and more fruitful that Father would you prune us this coming week would you gently show us our sin and lead us in repentance and to trust Jesus afresh.

We're sorry for the times this week we have wandered and we have not seen you as all satisfying.

Do that pruning work in us.

[36 : 51] And Lord Jesus will you continue to work in us by your word and through prayer. Your word says it so clearly without you we can do nothing.

None of us can produce any fruit but yet you will work in us. So we ask confidently and humbly Father Son and Spirit make us more fruitful that we would show ourselves to be your disciples that people will see us and see Christ like living.

Thank you for what you have done. Thank you for what you are doing and we trust you to do more and more. In Jesus name Amen.