

Let Love Abide

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Preacher: Mike Salvati

[0:00] Amen. You may be seated. Kiddos, you are excused to your King's kids' classes. And as they are on their way, would you open up your Bibles to John chapter 15.

! We're going to be looking at verses 1 through 17 this morning. It's on page 1071 of your pew Bible. Earlier this summer, Jenny, Mary, our youngest daughter, and I, we visited some dear friends in the state of Washington.

The Tullys, many of you know the Tullys. They're doing well. Well, one particular day, we decided to go berry picking. So we went to this berry farm. And they had a variety of berries.

They had blueberries. They had blackberries. And not only did they have raspberries, they had a variety of different kinds of raspberries. It was amazing, the options that they had.

But what was most remarkable was how heavy laden the raspberry vines were. I mean, they were just wanting to give of their fruit.

[1:11] They, it was, you just felt this heaviness of fruit as you're walking through aisle after aisle of raspberry vine. You'd pick two, put in your bucket, and then you'd pick two, and you would eat them.

They should weigh you going in and going out because you eat a lot on the way. It was, there was much fruit, much abundant fruit.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to bear much fruit in Christ. We are to be fruitful with a different kind of fruit than raspberry fruit because we abide in a different kind of vine than a raspberry vine.

We've come to a passage that is familiar to many people in the room. Jesus says, I am the vine. For some of you in the room, this may be new.

So I'm going to ask and answer two questions from this passage. How do we as Christians bear fruit? And what fruit are we to bear?

[2:26] Is there a particular fruit that the Lord Jesus is eager for us to bear? So how do we bear fruit?

Well, you're going to see it's by abiding in Christ. And what particular fruit are we to bear above all else? To love one another. We love one another by abiding in Jesus.

So let's dig in. Let's look at this first question. It's going to be answered from verses one through eight. So how do we bear fruit? Let me just read that for you. Jesus says in 15.1, I am the true vine. And my Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes that it may bear more fruit.

Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine. Neither can you unless you abide in me.

[3:34] I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing.

If anyone does not abide in me, he's thrown away like a branch and withers. And the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

By this, my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and prove to be my disciples.

Notice there's an emphasis. There's something repeated throughout this passage. It's bear fruit.

Verse 2, And he prunes that it does not bear fruit.

He prunes those who do bear fruit so that they bear more fruit. Verse 4, Cannot bear fruit, but implied you bear fruit if you abide in him, Jesus. Verse 5, He it is that bears much fruit.

[4:35] For apart from me, you can do nothing. You can't bear fruit. Look down at verse 8, By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

This passage is about bearing fruit. And what we have here is what's called an extended imagery. It's almost like a parable.

But unlike a parable, where parables tend to tell stories, this is just an extended image. And we have four characters in this image, four kind of like pieces of this image.

We have the vine, and we have the branches, and we have fruit, and we have a vine dresser. And so I just want to be clear, make sure we're all on the same page in terms of what this fruit bearing that Jesus is talking about really is.

What he's talking about is Christian growth. He's talking about change. He's talking about producing things that pleases him.

[5:44] It's about transformation. It's about sanctification, if you're familiar with that term. It's the process of becoming more and more like Jesus. Now, just to be clear, you don't become more fruitful in order to be saved.

It doesn't work that way. First, you are cleaned. You're cleansed. You're made right through the blood of Jesus. You're saved in order to bear fruit.

It's very important to get that sequence right. But in order for us to answer the question, how do we bear fruit, not only do we have to know what these parts are in this extended imagery, we need to know how they relate to one another.

So, let's start with the vine. Jesus says in verse 1, I am the true vine. Jesus says in verse 5, I am the vine.

Now, you may be thinking, man, Jesus is an awesome teacher, so culturally relevant. He knows his audience. He knows he's an agricultural society that uses a lot of grapes of the vine for drinking wine and loving on grapes.

[7:03] And one could say, well, he's just a very effective communicator, and you would be right. But there's actually more going on here. When Jesus says, I'm the true vine, this is what he's saying.

Anybody seen a Western? Cha-ching, cha-ching, cha-ching. There's a new sheriff in town. Ever seen anything like that?

When Jesus says, I'm the true vine, it's kind of like, everybody, there's a new vine in town. But the old vine is gone. The new vine is here.

Because if you read Isaiah chapter 5 and Psalm chapter 80, you're going to start realizing one of the themes throughout the Old Testament is that God's old people, Israel, he called them the vine. But the thing about Israel that brought about God's judgment again and again and again is that they were a fruitless vine. They didn't trust God.

[8:06] They didn't become the people he wanted them to be. And so God judged them. And so now here Jesus is walking in and he's like, there's a new vine in town. So what we're talking about here is this are hints of the new covenant of Jesus coming and establishing a new way in which God will relate with his people, a new people who are in Christ and who will now abide in that vine and produce fruit.

So there is a little bit more going on here than just very kind of savvy teaching. Jesus is making a claim. The fulfillment has come.

The true vine is here. And this vine is no other than the great I am incarnate. The new vine is on the scene and he's the source of life.

The vine is the basic source of life for a grape vine. For grapes to grow, a branch needs to be attached to the vine.

And so what Jesus is doing here, among other things, he's setting up a relationship. So we move from Jesus is the vine to now talking about the branches.

[9:29] In verse 15, 5, Jesus looks at his disciples and he's very clear. He's like, let's just get these straight guys. I'm the vine, you're the branches. And that applies to every Christian in the room.

You are not the vine. You're a branch. I'm not the vine. I'm a branch. And what this means is there is a dependent relationship that Jesus is getting, establishing through this extended metaphor.

He wants us to realize that we need him. The branch is dependent on the vine, not the other way around.

What Jesus is getting at here with this particular image is a picture of dependency. Look what he says in verse 4. Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself.

Look at verse 5. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing. You can do nothing.

[10:38] And the context is, you cannot bear fruit apart from me. Does anybody else have the same default position I do when I wake up in the morning?

I wake up in self-dependent mode. Self-abiding mode. I wake up, my systems come on, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep.

And I'm like, what do I need to get done? What's next? Let's get it done. And I wake up in a posture of thinking that I am the source of the life and of the power I need for that day.

And it couldn't be further from the truth. And what Jesus is saying here is it's like, let's be clear.

Every morning you wake up, you wake up dependent on me.

I'm the vine, you're the branch. It's this vitally dependent relationship. Here's where I'm going to want to land you later in the sermon.

[11:44] We can just, we can wrap it up right here. And you can start every day this week with a confessional prayer that goes something like this. Jesus, today I confess you as the vine.

You're the great I am. I'm a branch. Today I need you. That's how it starts.

Every day. You're recognizing the reality of things. I define humility as living in reality. You're just living in the reality of the way things really are.

And what Jesus is saying, if his word is abiding in us from this passage, it's he's the vine, we're the branches. We're going to live in that reality. And reality is our friend. That's good to recognize that.

He is the source of the life power we need to bear the kind of fruit that pleases him. I just want to say it one more time.

[12:55] Brothers and sisters, you cannot produce the fruit that Jesus is calling you to here without abiding in Jesus. You can't do it on your own.

This is humility. humility. This is at the heart of a dependent relationship with the living God. It's in order for us to connect and abide in Jesus.

We must humbly come in to him. We need him. You know, anybody see any mums on sale? A lot of mums.

If I came up to your door and I had mums in a pot on my left hand and a bouquet of roses in the right, which would I be giving you that is alive?

The mums. Because the roses, they're as good as dead. They've been cut off from the vine. It just doesn't matter before they wither.

[14:03] Not the mums. They're connected to life. They produce beautiful, multicolored blossoms.

Which brings me to the fruit. So, Jesus is the vine. We're the branches. There's a vital dependent relationship of us on him that's marked by humility, dependence, and now the fruit.

Bear fruit. Bear more fruit. Bear a lot of fruit. Bear fruit that glorifies my Father in Heaven. Be fruitful.

What kind of fruit? Well, in verses 9 through 17, Jesus is going to narrow in on a particular fruit.

But not exclusively. There's all sorts of fruit that the Lord Jesus wants us to bear. fruit. And we can generally categorize them in two ways.

There's personal fruit. Think of the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5, 22 through 23. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.

[15:21] These are Spirit-produced fruit in us that pleases God. And they all have this relational aspect to them.

When you are bearing the fruit of the Spirit, you are doing good to a church. but there's also another kind of fruit in its ministry fruitfulness where we are ministering to one another and it is fruitful.

People are experiencing change because of it. They're being built up. They're being saved. They're being sanctified. They're given hope. They're helping to endure hard things.

So we have the vine, Jesus, and I'm about to talk to you about the vinedresser who's God the Father. Do you know who is the power, the pulsating power of God that is present in you in order to produce this fruit?

It's the Holy Spirit. It's what Jesus says. He was just talking about him in chapter 14 and he's going to talk about him more in chapter 16. He's personal.

[16:41] The Holy Spirit's not an it. He's a who and he's present and he empowers. He brings peace. And he's the one that is going to be bearing fruit in us.

He was given in large part so that we would obey Jesus' commands. God's So we have the vine, Jesus, the source of life.

We have the branches, us, who need his life. The fruit, that fruit's not your fruit. If you begin bearing fruit by the Holy Spirit and you're like, look at me, look how self-controlled I am.

You're making a terrible mistake because you should have an asterisk on that. You should have a footnote on that that says something like this. I was really lacking self-control and then God by his Spirit produced this self-control in me as I was abiding in Christ's word.

Changed me. And that's the kind of fruit that brings glory to God the Father because there's no question who brought about this change in you.

[18:01] So we have the vine, the branches, the fruit, and now the vine dresser. Look at verse 1. Jesus says, I'm the true vine.

Cha-ching, cha-ching, there's a new vine in town. And my Father is the vine dresser. What is a vine dresser? It sounds fashion-related. It's like a vine farmer.

A vine dresser is a person who tends vines. And look what this vine dresser does in verse 2. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, I think Jesus right there is speaking of people who profess him but aren't necessarily truly Christians.

Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. The vine dresser takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit, dun, dun, dun, he prudes.

that it may bear more fruit. Look down at verse 6.

[19:07] If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers. And the branches are gathered by who? the vine dresser.

Thrown into the fire and burned. That's a sober warning. It's the kind of thing that goes something like this.

If you're a professing Christian and you're like, I agree with everything you say, Pastor Mike. I agree. I need to be fruitful. That's right. It's possible you can leave here and think that was an okay sermon.

And I agree with what he said, but you do not bear fruit. You don't abide in Jesus. There's warning here.

If you're not being fruitful, you're in danger. You need to ask some hard questions. Am I genuinely saved?

[20:12] Have I been born again? it's this really healthy step just to be able to make sure that you belong to Jesus, that you're in the faith.

But what the vine dresser also does, it not only addresses fruitlessness, he prunes the fruitful. He makes the fruitful more fruitful because he is glorified by those who bear much fruit.

fruit. He wants us to bear fruit. So our father loves us with the pruning shears, that we be more fruitful for his glory, that we can give him the credit for what he's doing in our lives.

So now the question we have is, well, how do you bear fruit? We know the different pieces of this extended metaphor, how do you bear fruit?

Well, it's the word abide. You abide in the vine. The fruit that is born in you is not your fruit, it's the fruit of God, the Spirit. So how do you abide in the vine?

[21:28] Well, it's here in the text, it's in verse 7. We see, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, those just aren't like Bible memorization abiding in you, what those are, you're actually doing the words of Jesus.

You're acting on them. You're obeying his commands, chapter 14. They're abiding in you. They're making a difference. And again, you don't abide in his words in order to be saved.

No, you've been saved to abide in him. It's this really interesting relationship that our obedience to Jesus actually helps us stay abiding in Jesus, trusting him, loving him.

And so, his words abiding in us is not just a pile up of memorized scripture. It's you being a doer of the word, not just a hearer of the word.

And then we pray. If you abide in me and my words and you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

[22:42] And that whatever you wish is qualified by his words abiding in you. You're going to want what he wants. Of course he's God the Father. I'm like, yeah, you got it. You want to bring glory to my name?

Sure. Let's do it. So we abide by faith, by obeying his words, and by asking God frequently to do things for his glory.

That's what it means to abide. And now, let's ask the second question. What fruit are we to bear? We've answered the first question. How do we bear fruit? Will we abide in Christ? Now, what fruit are we to bear? Verses 9 through 17. Let me read them.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 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.

[23 : 43] These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends. For all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

These things I command you so that you will love one another. What's interesting about verses 9-17 is Jesus uses a lot of the same language as he does in verses 1-8, but he narrows the focus. In verses 1-8, he starts generally. In verses 9-17, he gets more focused. So for example, in verse 9, he talks about abiding in me, and then, or earlier, abiding in me, and in verse 9, he's now talking about abiding in my love.

[25 : 11] That's a movement from general to specific. And then, where he's been talking about bearing fruit, in 16, he starts talking about bearing a particular kind of fruit, to love one another.

Now, notice how Jesus talks about this love. In verse 9, he says, as the Father has loved me, so I have loved you, abide in my love, dwell in my love, reside in my love, do my love.

love, it's like a chain reaction that we're seeing happen here. It's God loves the son, and then the son loves his disciples.

And so there's a chain reaction of love going on from father, son, to disciple. Another way that you can talk about it is, it's like a multi-leveled waterfall, waterfall, where you have this life-giving water flowing over the top of a waterfall.

Jenny, Mary, and I, a few years ago went to this wonderful state park, Yosemite. And they had this massive waterfall that had multi-levels on it.

[26 : 34] And so water would rush over the top of these boulders, and then it would pool, and then there was not enough volume to be held, and so it overflowed down on another waterfall into another pool, and then that overflowed because there's so much water coming over, and that overflowed into another pool, and it just kept on going because there was no end to the flow.

No end. And so what we have here is a love cataracts, a love flow, a love fall from God the Father to God the Son, and from God the Son to His disciples.

Do you see it? It's a chain reaction. It's a multi-segmented love fall, and the way that we abide under the love fall of Jesus is by abiding in His word.

We position ourselves under His love fall. It doesn't earn His love. It positions us to experience the goodness, the joy of it, the joy of obedience, the joy of being filled up, the joy of doing what we know is to be pleasing to God.

God, and He uses His own example in verse 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.

[28 : 16] He knows. He knows the goodness, which makes verse 11 really interesting. These things I've spoken to you, that my joy may be in you.

What joy? The joy of abiding in His Father's love by obeying Him. That my joy may be in you. I want you, disciple, to experience the joy of obeying me underneath my love fall.

I want to fill you up. I want you to experience that joy to the full. I want you to experience all of my goodness and that requires you to be trusting me by obeying my word.

The love of Jesus for us is like Niagara. So the love fall falls from the Father to the Son and from the Son to us.

It fills us to the full even to overflowing. And so now we read verse 12. This is my commandment.

[29:33] That you love one another as I have loved you. You see what's going on? Father to Son, love. Son to the disciple, love. Disciple to disciple, love.

It's a love fall vertically, horizontally. God loves us, Father, Son, and then we are like His love is amazing.

I want to obey Him and I want you to experience the same brother, sister in Christ. I want you to experience His goodness. He commands us to bear this fruit.

It sounds strange. This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. We've heard this before in 13, 34, through 35. A new commandment I give to you that you love one another just as I have loved you, you love one another.

And by this, this love, all people will know that you're my disciples. This is, this is the high, high, high fruit of the Spirit, the first one, love.

[30:45] And it's a certain kind of love. It's not loving like the world loves. Look at verse 13. 13. It's a gospel love. Verse 13, greater love is no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus spoke that just hours before he would be hanged on a cross. He knows what he's talking about. And we are to love one another with this kind of gospel love which is sacrificial in its nature. It's a love empowered by the Spirit that wants others to experience the fullness of their joy in the waterfall of Jesus.

Let me try to put it this way. The kind of love that we're talking about that distinguishes Christians from everybody else is sacrificial.

It means giving yourself for the good of someone else. It means that you suffer like Christ, you suffer loss like Jesus in order that someone else would experience Christ's exalting gain.

[32:04] It's that kind of love. And when you have a church, a bunch of regular people who've been filled by the Holy Spirit, who are abiding in Jesus, who are loving people one another this way, that gets noticed.

And we get to say things like, yeah, that's not me. I would not love people like that. That's because of what God is doing in us.

this is the command. This is the high premium fruit that we are to be bearing.

It requires cost. It requires discomfort. It means inconvenience. It means doing things that you normally wouldn't do, moving towards people you normally wouldn't move towards.

But that's just Jesus in a nutshell. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. In verses 14 and 15, you may have noticed this language where you are my friends if you do what I command.

[33:17] No longer do I call you servants for the servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends for all that I have heard from my father I have made known to you. What is this servant to friend kind of shift going on here?

It's a similar shift that we saw in verses 1 through 8 where Jesus is like the new vines in town, new covenant is rocking. This is a new way in which God himself is relating to his new people in Christ. No longer servants, friends. That's incredible. This gospel love that we see in verse 13, it's a love that makes friends.

God, through Christ, made you an enemy into his friend. He wants to be with you.

He wants you to be with him. He wants you to bear all to him, to give everything you got, to trust him fully, to bear your soul to him.

[34:29] he loves you as a friend. It's a different way in which God relates with us.

It's a new covenant way of relating with God's people. But, look at verse 16, you did not choose me, but I choose you, and pointed you that you should go and bear fruit.

He's like, just be clear, I'm still calling the shots. He is our master and friend. We didn't choose him, he chose us, and he chose us to bear much fruit.

The high premium fruit of loving one another. there's this aspect of prayer, so that whatever you ask, the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

This is just kind of reiterating what he said in verse 7, it's how we abide, it's how we trust him, we obey him, and we pray, God, would you help me to love?

[35:45] Help me to love others as you have loved me. I'm going to give you some practical steps in a second, but what I just want you to see is that in this section here, we can answer the question, what kind of love, what kind of fruit does God want us to bear?

Is it particular? Yes, it's love, love for one another. It separates us from everybody else. But I'll tell you what, if you're not loving others, you've actually got an abiding problem.

Do you see how that works? If you're not bearing the fruit of love, it raises the question, are you abiding in Christ? So if you're having a hard time loving others, maybe you need to ask a more basic question.

Are you abiding in Jesus? Are you obeying him? Are you praying to him? There's two questions. How do we bear fruit?

We abide in Christ. What fruit are we to be bearing? Love for one another. We've seen how this has moved from general in 1A to specific in 9 through 17. And here's Jesus, just hours away from laying his life down for his friends, for us, and of all the things that he could have said at this moment, he exhorts us to a vital dependence in him so that we would bear the fruit of loving one another.

[37 : 20] That's how much that means to him. That's how much it means to him that we'd be loving one another. It's the high premium fruit.

So the question that I want to close out with is how do we apply this to our lives? I have three prayers for you to pray by way of application.

The first prayer I call the abiding prayer. I've already hinted at this. It's taking John 15 5 and making it a confession.

Jesus, you are the vine. I am a branch. I need you. It's humble. It's dependent. It's allowing his words to abide in you and to pray it.

Trust him. It's a great way to start your day. It takes 10 seconds. In fact, you can pray that prayer wherever and whenever throughout the day.

[38 : 26] You have a hard phone call to make. Oh, Lord Jesus, you are the vine. I am the branch. I need you. Would you help me to have this conversation in love? It may be hard.

You can do this wherever and whenever. But this is the first. This is where you start. It's confessional. Could you imagine if we're doing that every day together?

We're all seeking to abide in the vine. it orders your loves. Second, the loving prayer.

If you turn to Ephesians chapter 3, there is this triune prayer that is just phenomenal that the apostle Paul prays for the Ephesian church and you just got to see what he prays.

I do know where Ephesians is in my Bible. Listen to this prayer he prays. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and earth is named that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled up with all the fullness of God.

[40 : 08] That's fullness of joy. It's that Ephesians 3 14 through 19 prayer that you pray for yourself first day by day.

Oh God would you Father pour out your spirit on me that Christ would dwell in my heart by faith that I would know your great love for me in Christ. Would you help me to experience that bear witness to my spirit that I am your son beloved.

And from there do you know what you do? You pray the same for your brothers and sisters. that God the Father would pour out his spirit on my spouse, on my life group brothers and sisters, on my ministry team folks, on the leaders of our church that they would experience the fullness of God's love.

love. It's a way the word of Christ abides in us and we pray it. The loving prayer.

The last prayer is the pruning prayer. prayer. This is when you're experiencing the pain of your loving Father's pruning shears.

[41 : 38] He's exposing things that grieve him. Unfruitfulness. He's wanting to remove it because he loves you.

Unloving thoughts, unloving actions, unloving speech. And when he's exposing it, it can be very painful. You know the song we sing, thank you for saving me?

Thank you for pruning me. What can I say? It's because he loves you. And when he's in the midst of pruning you, you say things like, thank you, thank you Father, would you train me in this so that I may share in your holiness, that I may yield a peaceful fruit of righteousness, Hebrews 12.

We can pray that for one another. Brother, I think you're being pruned by your loving Father. Let's pray. Sister, let's pray.

This is good. Ouch, but good. Three prayers, the abiding prayer, the loving prayer, the pruning prayer.

[42 : 48] Pick one. Start praying it this week. How do we bear fruit? Well, we abide in Christ. His word abiding us, we pray. What fruit are we to bear?

Love one another. It's the high premium, high premium fruit. And it brings glory to the Father when we bear much fruit.

And you know what else it does? It proves that we are the disciples of Jesus. Let's pray. God, thank you so much for these words of Jesus.

Father, we need your help even in abiding in you. Thank you for the clarity, Lord Jesus, you give us. And would you make us a church that is more and more filled to the full with the spirit, the love of God, bringing that into our experience and overflowing to others.

In your name we pray. Amen.