

Wine from the Vine

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- [0 : 0 0] So we've got a glimpse that food and drink are quite often used, certainly in the Hebrew Bible, to express deeper truths, something more about the relationship between God and His people.
- ! That Isaiah passage that I've just snuck in shows that God uses that picture of planting a vineyard and putting everything in place as a picture of Him and His people.
- And so Jesus too uses that imagery. And it's not a coincidence that Jesus says, I am the vine, when He has all that history and all that knowledge from that Isaiah passage.
- When Jesus says, I am the vine, we can be sure that He's drawing on those Old Testament images. He's carefully chosen that image because it's going to be controversial.
- Because the rulers, the scribes and the Pharisees thought they were God's special people. That they were the ones who were God's vine, God's planting.
- [1 : 2 4] And now Jesus is saying, uh-uh, I am the vine. And you've got to be joined to me to be in God's kingdom. Very courageous.
- Very controversial. And He heads it with the I am phrase. Yeah, I claim to be God. Because God is I am.
- It's powerful. It's much more than about growing grapes, however nice and luscious and juicy the grapes are. It's a powerful identification of Jesus with His Father.
- And including us into that picture. Let's have a look at a vine for a moment.
- This thing that Jesus is identifying with. It's a shrub or a creeper that produces long branches.
- [2 : 2 8] And on that picture where they were being harvested, they're usually trained onto wires so that they're easy to harvest. And grapes can be eaten fresh like we did.
- They can be dried into raisins. Or we can drink the juice. Or we can ferment it into wine. But if there wasn't somebody to tend a grapevine, they would just really produce a lot of leaves and branches.
- And not that many grapes. So it takes the care of a skilled vinedresser or gardener to get the most out of a vine.
- To know the bits to prune off. To know the bits to encourage to grow. To know the right conditions.
- The right amount of water. And then they get a great harvest. And Jesus, He is that vine. He is the core, the heart of His church.
- [3 : 3 8] Of His body. He is there as that part of the vine that is rooted in the earth. That has the ground.
- Is there to support and nourish the whole rest of the plant. Jesus identifies the branches as His disciples. Those who were with Him at the time.

But it's a promise and a picture that we can take to ourselves too. All believers are part of that vine. And what happens with a lot of vines is the wild branches aren't necessarily the branches that are going to produce the best grapes.

They're often pruned up, pruned off. And grafted in branches that they know are going to be very fruitful. And grow the true grape that the vine dresser wants.

And so Jesus grafts us into Himself. He incorporates us. He includes us. Does that not really thrill you?

[4 : 51] It thrills me that Jesus includes me. So you've got that image of the vine dresser pruning away the bits that aren't useful.

And leaving the bits, the branches, that are going to grow and produce a huge crop. That metaphor of the relationship between father, son and the disciples is so powerful.

The other side of things is that we can't grow by ourselves. We can't produce fruit by ourselves. We only are fruitful and productive by being joined to the vine.

So if we're not joined to the vine, we're just like those branches that, what's the point of them? They're rubbish. But joined to the vine. That's something.

That is where our strength and where our whole reason for being comes from. I came across a quote.

[6 : 11] I don't know the chap, but he makes a very good point. His name is Clarence Haynes. And his point is that the fruit is an outward reflection of what's happening on the inside.

If it's healthy on the inside, the vine will produce good fruit. So if we have a good and a healthy and a strong relationship with Jesus, we will produce good fruit.

And that good fruit, we find that listed in Galatians, don't we? The love, the joy, the peace, the kindness, the gentleness, all those things.

That's the fruit that Jesus wants us to bear. The fruit of life is given over to him. The fruit of life is transformed by him.

Hearts overflowing with who Jesus is and wanting to go out and tell others about him. But we need to be right on the inside.

[7 : 18] We need to be joined to the vine. And we develop our relationship with him as we read the Bible.

As we find a place of prayer and a place to have that one-to-one relationship with the Lord. But Jesus also uses the produce of the vine at the Last Supper, doesn't he?

And this is where our preparation for communion is at its most evident. Wine in the Bible symbolizes vitality and joy and blessing and prosperity.

It's the lifeblood. And so when Jesus draws on that, he says, or Matthew writes, Then he took a cup, and when he had given a cup, he gave it to them, saying, Drink from it, all of you.

This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, you will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom.

[8 : 47] So Jesus knew that this was his last opportunity to meet together with his friends, to enjoy a meal.

And what a meal. The Passover meal. With all the symbolism that is in that meal. And he's now identifying the wine of that meal with his blood that is going to be poured out in a very few hours' time.

This is all part of Israel's history in their relationship with God. That wine that was drunk at the Passover, which is usually red wine, couldn't be more appropriate as a symbol of blood.

And it reminds, it was to remind the Israelites of the blood that was splashed on the doorposts, so that the angel of death would pass over and spare their firstborn, whilst all the other firstborn of Egypt were killed.

Moses was told to sprinkle the people with sacrificial blood as a sign of their inclusion in the covenant. They were God's people.

[10 : 11] God himself was their God. They had that covenant relationship. That agreement between the two parties. God would be their God.

And they would be his people. God would be their God. But Jesus is turning that on its head now.

He's saying this is the new covenant. Not a covenant in animal blood, but in his blood. God would be their God. And that cup. And that cup.

That cup of wine is going to symbolize it. So that when his followers drink that symbolic cup of wine, they're reminded of his blood and his sacrifice.

That they have that intimate connection with him. So as we enter into that covenant agreement, Jesus is telling us that this covenant is a covenant that will cost him everything.

[11 : 28] It will cost him his very life. It's a covenant in his blood. Those old covenants where animals were sacrificed would never take away sins.

Would never deal with the sin problem in people's hearts. It took Jesus' death. Our forgiveness was bought at a price.

It was bought at such a price. He paid that price for us so that we don't have to. So that we can have eternal life.

Jesus secured eternal life for each one of us by his death on the cross. This gives eternal significance to what we're going to do next week when we celebrate communion together.

It's not just for here and now in Invergordon. It's for eternity. It's a taste of eternity. It's for eternity. Because it's an eternal covenant.

[12 : 45] It's not just a replacement covenant. It's a much, much better covenant. It's a much, much better promise. Because it's founded on Jesus.

And it's a covenant that God wants to write into our hearts. It's not on bits of stone. But it's something that he puts within us by his Holy Spirit.

He will give us his spirit. As he forgives us. All our own iniquities. He remembers us. Sin no more.

So as we share communion next week. As we taste and we see the bread and wine.

Let them help to remind you of that sacrifice. It's more than just a memorial service though. It's an opportunity to experience the reality and the closeness.

[13 : 50] Intimacy of our relationship with Jesus. It's an opportunity to experience the inclusion and the inclusiveness that Jesus wants us to know.

Jesus is our bread of life. He's our true vine. And through him God forgives us. And binds us to himself in a covenant that is eternal and cannot be broken.

Amen. Amen. Amen.