

John 15: 1-11

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Preacher: David Moynihan

[0:00] Isaiah 5, verses 1-7. Isaiah 5, verses 1-7 says, And men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.

What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I tell you, what I will do to my vineyard, I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured.

I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste. It shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting. But he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed.

For righteousness, but behold, an outcry. This is the word of the Lord. Good morning.

[1:58] If you would, kindly turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 15. We're going to be looking at verses 1 to 11 today. If you've been following the series, you remember that the Lord has been somewhere in Jerusalem at this time.

Many refer to chapters 13 through 16 as the upper room discourse. However, I doubt that that which took place in this chapter today was there in the upper room, because if you remember back at the end of chapter 14, his last words were, Rise, let us go from here.

So some folks believe that chapter 15 took place just as he was getting up and leaving. Others said, well, no, perhaps it was taking place when he was going on his way to the Kindred Valley and the Garden of Gethsemane.

We don't know for certain it's really not all that important. In chapter 15, however, we find that Jesus moves from his tone of comfort and encouragement of chapter 14, that he begins now to focus on instructing his disciples on the key to a productive life and ministry, even in the face of persecution. Now, as we delve into our study of verses 1 to 11, I'd like to give some preliminary observations that I believe might help us in our interpretations. Number one, this passage here is for believers only.

[3:31] Jesus is not looking out as to how to become a Christian. Rather, instead, he's talking about how one is to live as a Christian in a productive way as they trust the Lord.

Number two, to do this, Jesus uses the metaphor of a vine and its branches to emphasize the central theme of a vital union with him.

And rather than how one becomes a Christian, this is how he lives in a productive way for the Lord. We find also that the word pictures that he uses here, namely the vine and the vineyard, was something that would really resonate in the soul of the Hebrews.

The vine and the vinedresser. And we see that scattered throughout the Old Testament. It's God's reference of God being the vinedresser and Israel being the vineyard.

Number three, the main subject of this passage today is that of abiding. He uses the image of fruit, not seed. A seed that's taking root.

[4:42] He's not talking about becoming a Christian and how to do that, but rather how to become a productive Christian. Number four, the result of abiding is fruit-bearing.

Not once is the believer ever commanded to bear fruit. Instead, he's commanded to abide, and therefore, if he does that, he will bear fruit.

So as we examine the picture that Jesus paints for us today, I want to begin by pointing out that he has four basic symbols from the vineyard. There's the vine, the vinedresser, the branches, and the

fruit.

Let's begin by looking at the true vine and the vinedresser. He says there, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.

Now, the image of the vine and the vinedresser was painfully illustrated, or illustrated God's special care for the nation of Israel. And it provided, in many ways, a very poignant image for various prophets, and we happen to listen to the prophet Isaiah today in his rebuke of Israel there in Isaiah 5, verses 1-7.

[6:05] You see, God originally planted Israel to be an example to the world of what God would do to a nation or a people that would live in obedience to his righteous law.

But they failed miserably. They sinned, they apostatized, and they did not fulfill their purpose of why God had selected them as his special people.

In contrast, Jesus declares himself to be the true vine. He would be the authentic vine, the genuine one, who would be the only true source of spiritual life for the branches, for producing fruit in the lives of his Christians.

Now, one of the interesting things about the grapevine is that its wood, no matter how big it is, is useless, except for producing grapes.

You see, it's a very soft wood, and its grain is entirely irregular, and you really can't make anything out of it. It's really useless.

[7:20] The only thing you can do with it is that if it's pruned from the vine, you throw it into this big pile and have a bonfire. That's about all it's good for. And it wasn't even accepted in the temple because it burned too fast.

It was useless. The prime purpose of the vine was to supply life to the branches so that they might then in turn produce fruit.

Which is reminiscent in many ways of some different statements that you might recall from our study of John. You might remember back in John 10.10, he says, I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly.

And in that same chapter, John 10.28, he says, And I will give them eternal life, and no one will take that from them. Now, just as the vine is the source, the only source, really, of life for the branches, so Jesus is the only true source of life for Christians.

Jesus said that he is the one that gives not only life, yea, he gives eternal life for us who follow him.

[8:36] Now, we need to settle in our heads this morning, before we go further, or at least ask the question, is am I connected to Jesus Christ? Jesus, the true vine.

I'm not asking you this morning, do you believe that God exists? If you don't do that, the Bible says you're a fool. The fool says in his heart, there is no God.

And I want to stress that it's not enough to believe that God exists. James tells us, in chapter 2, verse 19, that even the demons believe that and tremble.

Now, what we're talking about here is not that God exists, but rather, are you trusting in him? Are you trusting in his son, the Lord Jesus Christ? Because that is where we get the true connection for life.

It's through Jesus. Jesus says that I am the vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. He goes on in verse 2, on into 3, to summarize what is the care of the vine dresser.

[9:54] Let me put that up. He says there, every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away.

He begins by talking about the vine dresser's role in his relationship with the fruitless branches.

Now, a lot of people have different opinions on what does that mean, that he takes it away.

Some think that he's speaking about a false professor, a false professor of the faith. Someone's only pretending to be a Christian. Someone maybe like Judas. But I want you to take note that it says there, the branch in me.

That is a key little phrase that is used in scriptures, particularly by the Apostle Paul, where he refers to being in Christ to refer to a true believer.

So whatever we're talking about here, we're talking about some that was a true believer. Others think that it may be a true believer who loses his salvation because he's failed to bear fruit.

[11:01] Now, I don't believe that that's really possible because there's just, frankly, too many verses in scripture that talk about that a true believer has eternal life.

It's eternal because it's eternal. If you have that life, nothing can be taken away from you. So I tend to believe that it's a true Christian who is a backslider.

He gets away from the Lord because he gets interested in the things of the world and it chokes out the fruit in his life. Jesus talks about that in Matthew chapter 13.

You might remember of where he talks about the seed that was sown among thorns. And he says that when it gets sown among thorns, the cares of this world and the traction of the riches that chokes out the fruit.

Now, what the Father does with that fruit really depends on what and how you translate the word *iroh* or that which is, you look at the word, takes away as it is in most translations.

[12:15] The Greek word is *iroh*. And it can be used in a number of different ways. For instance, in John chapter 1, you remember that it talks about John the baptizer.

He says, Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. That's the word that's being used here. It's John using it in that fashion.

But John also uses it in another way. He says there in John chapter 8, verse 59, he says, And the Jews picked up stones and threw it at them.

And so that word *iroh* is used even by the apostle John in different ways. Now, if it's used, if what's meant here is that he takes it away, then I would suspect that it was referring to a physical type of discipline of physical death.

And we read about that at times. We hear about it when we have communion sometimes in 1 Corinthians 11. We're oftentimes warned not to take of the cup or the bread in an unworthy fashion, lest we eat and drink judgment unto ourselves.

[13:40] He says, For this reason, many of you are sick and some of you are even dead. God will discipline his children if there's not a repentance that's going on there.

And yet, at the same time, I believe that it means to lift up, even though that's not the way it's translated there. And the reason for that is a couple things. One, it's the predominant use of that word in the New Testament.

It occurs some 66 times in the New Testament and the majority of the times is a lifting up or taking up as opposed to to take it away. The second reason, I believe, is because I think it better fits the picture that Jesus is describing here.

Why? Because the first thing that a vine dresser does is to lift up sagging branches when he goes into the vineyard. He goes through there and he has strings and he lifts them up and puts them on the trestle so that they may gain more light, more sun, and hopefully bear some fruit.

And isn't that the way that our good father oftentimes acts and works? When God first sees a person, he doesn't begin by dealing with them in judgment.

[14:57] Instead, he works by grace drawing that person to Jesus Christ. And then he lifts up that new believer and puts them in a place where he's going to be exposed to the scriptures and to fellowship and to service so that he can become a fruitful Christian.

However, if it doesn't happen, you know, all that work that God does in that believer's life, it may come about where he takes them away in death as described in 1 Corinthians 11.

I now want you to look at his relationship to the fruit-bearing branches in the second half of verse 2 where it says, every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit.

Now, no matter what kind of fruit you're dealing with and what kind of tree or vine that you have or whatever, you probably know that the more you trim it properly, I've been inclined to trim bushes and stuff like that and then they don't flower that spring and summer, but if you prune it properly, it will gain more fruit, more beautiful fruit.

And so, the question is then, is that if he's going to prune those that are already bearing so that they bear more fruit, how does he go about doing it?

[16:22] Well, look at verse 3 there. He says, already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Now, here Jesus is saying

to his 11 men, remember, Judas is no longer there and when he was with them in chapter 13, he says, not all of you are clean.

Now that he's gone, he says, all of you are clean. He says, you're clean now, you're spiritually ready to begin to take in the, that life that I'm giving you, take in my word and begin to minister in a fashion that will be profitable for you and for others.

That's why God wants us to be in his word. He says there that if you take a look at that passage again, he says, you're clean, clean. Why?

Because of the word that I have spoken to you. That is, the word is a cleansing agent in our lives. Some of you may be familiar with Psalm 119, 9-11.

How can a young man keep his way clean? By keeping it according to thy word. Thy word have I hid in my heart that I would not sin against you. Paul also says in Ephesians 5, 26, he speaks of how Jesus seeks to sanctify and cleanse the church with the washing of water by the word.

[17:43] And so it's absolutely essential if we're going to be clean and be pruned on a regular basis that we're in the word of God and let the spirit of God apply that to our lives and hearts.

But I believe there's a second method that is often used by the divine vinedresser as well. that he prunes some undesirable things that might be in our life. They may not even be sinful things but they're things that are holding us back from being all that God wants us to be.

And that's found in Hebrews 12, verses 5 and 11. It talks about how God disciplines his children from those things that are undesirable.

His children whom he loves. And verse 11 says this. He says, for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

My friends, God does use painful trials and difficulties at times in our life to purge us of things that aren't just quite right there that are hanging on us that are slowing us down.

[18:56] Again, it may be sin but it may not be sin per se. It may be a case of nothing wrong with going golfing but if you're going golfing five, six, seven times a week and never making it to Bible study to church there's something that's wrong there and he may begin to touch that in your life.

He uses those difficulties not so much to punish us in judgment in any fashion at all but rather to cleanse us to bring us closer to him to pare those things away.

while we're talking about that I guess I would just raise the question for you and that is where you are today do you sense in any way that God is pruning your life right now?

He's pruning away at some things and if so you know it can be very painful it can hurt actually and you'll probably bleed more than bear fruit at this time in your life right now but what I want to do is encourage you to know that this is being done by the hand of a loving divine vinedresser a heavenly father who wants you to become all that he designed for you to be so I want you to take hope God is lovingly doing that so that you ultimately will bear more fruit yea it says even much fruit along the way both for your good and his glory I want you to take a look at the next couple of verses verses 4 and 5 where Jesus begins to spell out we've talked about the vine and the vinedresser we're going to look at the branches now what are the responsibility of the branches he says 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 and I in the vine you are the branches again the context clearly points out that the branches are clearly believers in a grapevine the branches have to maintain have to maintain a life-sustaining connection with the vine if they're going to be able to produce any kind of fruit in this figure here the maintaining of that connection is called abiding which is really the central idea of this whole passage he says there abide in me and I in you in other words branches are given the responsibility to abide in Christ and as you look at that it's really a volitional thing not an automatic thing it's a volitional because it's a command he commands us to do it's not just something that happens because we're a Christian we're commanded to abide in Christ if you're a saved person here this morning you're a branch according to this little figure and your responsibility is to abide so that you can in fact bear fruit now the fruit that's produced there is a result of the life changing flow of vitality that comes from

Christ flowing through you take a look at the second half of verse 5 it says whoever abides in me and I in him he is the one that bears much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing now perhaps

you've noticed as we've gone through this passage that not all branches bear the same amount of fruit in chapter or verse 2 the beginning of verse 2 it talks about bearing fruit the end of verse 2 it says more fruit and now in verse 5 it talks about much fruit so it is with Christians that there are Christians that will bear fruit there will be those who will bear more fruit and there will be those who bear much fruit for the kingdom of God so what are we talking about when we talk about fruit let me state very plainly from the beginning we're not talking about works for the Lord that's often times what we think but rather we're talking about what I believe is Christ like character character that's described like for instance in Galatians chapter 5 verse 22 and 23 of the fruit of the spirit and the fruit of the spirit is love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness self-control and if you stop and you think about those in a meditative sort of way you realize those are character traits of the Lord Jesus Christ that he wants us to have and as we are filled with spirit and walk in the spirit and the fruit of spirit is displayed in us we begin to exemplify the character of Jesus many are familiar with Romans 8 28 and 29 where it talks about what God's purpose for us is it says there and we know that all things work together for good for those who love God who are called according to his purpose and what is his purpose in verse 29 it tells us for we know that he for whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son

[24:51] God's purpose for you and for me as believers is to be conformed to the image of his beloved son there may be folks here today that don't really know what God has for you at least at this time in your life you don't know by way of a life partner you don't know by way of perhaps a career you don't know perhaps by way of what you're going to do for your finances all those things are out there and it causes anxiety and you don't know exactly what he wants for you but one thing you can know based on that Romans 8 28 and 29 is God's plan God's purpose for you is for you to be conformed to the image of his son to begin to show his character out to the world and as that happens you can begin to know that regardless of what you're experiencing on a day to day basis in your circumstances

God promises to use those things in your life good and bad to conform you to his son begin to knock off some of those rough edges on the shoulders and things like that or attitudes or whatever that we might begin to show Jesus more and more like the Savior now there are those that would insist that the fruit that Jesus is talking about here is soul winning and soul winning is a wonderful thing it really is but I want to point out something here of all the times that the word fruit occurs in the Bible there is only one time that I find that it is clearly talking about soul winning and that's in the Gospel of John again chapter 4 verses 35 and 36 where you might remember this is Jesus dealing with the Samaritans the woman at the well and everything and as they start coming she goes and tells the town and they come back and he points them out to his disciples and points out the fact that they have been on the advantage of having people preach they're going to be reaping and they're all going to have joy but he says there's talking he talks about the fruit that clearly in the context is souls one for the Lord on the other hand having said that if we're growing in Christ like character we're going to love the lost just like Jesus did we're going to be seeking the lost just like he sought them we're going to be giving ourselves to praying for ministers of the gospel just like Jesus did you might remember but we'll get there in John chapter 17 and so these two ideas of fruit meaning

Christ like character or soul winning are really not mutually exclusive in fact they in many ways aid in a bit the other now the heart of the passage is the responsibility of the branches to abide in the vine and you take a look at that in verse 5 he says I am the vine you are the branches whoever abides in me and I in him he is it is he that bears much fruit for apart from me you can do nothing now that last phrase should impress us with the seriousness of what Jesus is saying apart from me you can do nothing it's a very strong and absolute statement you know there can be a lot of activity among God's people but still no fruit there can be a lot of talk among God's people but still no fruit Jesus says apart from me you can do nothing of eternal value it's the responsibility of the branches true believers to abide in the vine in fact Jesus commands his followers to abide in him it's a command and he tells us that this is a volitional choice here the branch has to choose whether or not he or she will abide in Christ talking about abiding you may want to wonder what that's all about I came up with a definition I'm just going to pass on to you that I thought was pretty good abiding is

the conscious deliberate choice and determination on the part of the believer to humbly maintain a vital and dependent connection with Jesus Christ it's the conscious deliberate choice and determination on the part of the believer to humbly maintain a vital and dependent connection with Jesus

Christ this is not a passive thing friends this is an active thing that we might need to be involved with it's a command for you and for me to obey so how do I abide how do I abide in Jesus Christ well in first John chapter 2 verse 24 the apostle John again now in his his epistle says this he says let what you heard from the beginning abide in you if what you heard from the beginning abides in you then you too will abide in the son as well as in the father what's what's John saying here he's talking about the word of the living God he's saying that if that word which believers heard from the beginning remain with them abides with them he says that they will in fact be abiding in Christ he says if you abide in me by remaining in his word if by hearing it believing it trusting it obeying it all of that he says then you'll know that not only that that word is in you but I will be in you as well he says there and I in you you will begin to know and to sense my presence now we might know mentally or theologically that when we come to Christ

[31:56] Christ lives within us but how often are we consciously aware that Jesus is with us in us on a moment by moment basis that's what he's talking about here and as we meditate on God's word throughout the day not just have our morning devotion and walk away and forget what we read a few hours later but we eat the word meditate on chew it on it like a cow chews its cud so to speak keep it with us he will begin to work in us in such a way that we will have that sense that Jesus is there with us if we abide in Christ by regularly taking in his word as he says there when we do that there's and we need to do that because there's no way we can spiritually survive I don't care how long you've been a Christian and how many things that you know how many classes you've gone if you're not in the word on a regular basis you're setting yourself up for failure you're setting yourself up for a fall you need to be in

God's word you want to let that God's word come into your mind and let that go from your mind down into your heart and into your will so that it works its way out into your life the apostle John again sheds light on this whole concept of abiding another chapter later in 1 John 3 verse 24 where he says this now he who keeps his commands abides in him and he in him and by this we know that he abides in him or us I should say by the spirit whom he has given in other words if we're abiding in Christ by obeying his word constantly determining to obey his word and have that a part of our life the Holy Spirit will activate if you so to speak the reality of Jesus Christ in our lives so that we will walk moment by moment with the full assurance that we are truly children of God again I'm not talking about the answer that you give in a

Sunday school class whatever I mean you have that sense moment by moment throughout the day however in verse six Jesus warns what the terrible consequences are if in fact we're not abiding in his word he says if anyone does not remain or abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and dries up and they gather them and throw them into the fire and they're burned if we abide in Christ we will bear fruit if we don't abide in Christ we will not bear fruit in fact we've become barren and the barren branch as we talked about earlier is useless and those are going to be just taken away not only will be useless for ourselves but those around us may even have a detrimental effect and you have seen that in

Christians who got away from the scriptures not only are they not doing well for themselves anymore but their attitudes and their philosophies and stuff now begin to affect other Christians as well and when that vineyard begins like that the vine dresser comes in and takes action he cleans it up with his disciplinary hand I want to stress that again because I believe that this passage is talking about Christians all the way through here because it's talking about those branches that are in Christ that he doesn't remove their salvation but he does remove their reward the original Greek in verse 6 better seen in the new American standard that I have up there right now is very clear that the believer who is doing things not in the power of the spirit but in the power of the flesh is going to be thrown away like a branch useless the believer never ceases to be a Christian no matter how barren he becomes furthermore the father does not put the believer through the fire doesn't put him through a purgatory or hell or anything like that it's his works that he's done in the power of the flesh

that are burned up

Paul conveys a similar idea in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 verses 12 to 15 he says now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold silver and precious stones wood hay and straw each one's works will be manifest for the day will disclose it because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done if the work that one has done is built on the foundation survives he will get a reward if anyone's work is burned up he will suffer loss though he himself will be saved but only as through fire in other words he will be saved he'll be in heaven but the smell of smoke might be on his garments most of our lives are a mixture frankly of wood hay and straw along with gold silver and precious stones the former we just need to know

[37:30] God is going to destroy the latter he is going to bless and in verses 7 through 11 we will go through this very quickly right now are some of the results that Christ talks about for those who in fact God bless us what are the results of abiding in Christ verse 7 number one your prayers!

Now this is not to suggest that God becomes some kind of genie for us you'll notice there it's a conditional promise if you abide if we're vitally connected to Christ the vine we're going to become increasingly like him and if we become increasingly like him we're going to begin to have his thoughts his motives his desires for what the kingdom he wants to have take place we're not going to be praying in selfish prayers we're going to pray like Jesus prayed in fact that little phrase if you ask anything in my name I will do it that's not something we tag on the end of prayers some Christians they mindlessly say that at the end of their prayer friends when Jesus says if you ask anything in my name he's talking about ask as if I was asking it it's like a power of eternity that he's given to his children that you're acting on my part and if you ask for things like I would ask for I will do it and that's what he's talking about here if we're abiding him we have the mind of Christ more and more we're going to think like him we're going to ask for things like him and it will be!

done secondly the scriptures that Jesus glorified the father in all that he did throughout his life ministry such that in his high priestly prayer in John 17 he was able to say I have glorified you in all that he had done now you and I as children of God as blood bought children have that advantage that opportunity to also glorify our father just as his son had done and the question that just pierces us in some ways as we go through this is does my character and conduct cause people to think well of God you know from the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5 verse 16 he says let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and what glorify your father in heaven that's when we begin to have the character of Christ in us that's what we end up doing and my friends that's really the simplest form of what it means to glorify

God it's to cause other people to think well of them thirdly we display that we are Christ's disciples he goes on and say and so prove to be disciples as we said earlier we can talk about a lot of different things without necessarily producing fruit discipleship is one of those areas that there's been a lot of talk and there's been a lot written about discipleship and yet many people still don't know what discipleship is all about in its simplest form a disciple is a follower he's a learner the follower does what the leader does the learner is to display what the teacher has taught him Jesus is saying if you abide in me you will display that you are indeed my disciples because you'll begin to obey my commandments not the least of which is the commandment that he gave in

[41:38] John chapter 13 that we just heard that he says that you love one another as I have loved you by this all men will know that you're my disciples if you have that kind of love for one another fourthly the very kind of love that God the father has for the son will be enjoyed by us look at verses 9 and 10 says 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 and ask yourself you as well that do you pray for people who are struggling with all kinds of difficulties and trials and hurts and pains and things like that who right now just aren't able to come in touch with the love of God are you praying for them that God's love which is there would be realized by them that would surround them in their plight would

God would draw them up into his bosom and they would know how loved they are it can get confusing in this world because often times there are so many things that distract but if you have that love of God and you know what it's like to be loved by God you pray for others that in their trials and difficulties and perhaps waywardness would know the love of God Jesus said if we keep his commandments that's how we show that we love him we read that in John 14 a couple weeks ago that's how we that's how Jesus says we can say oh how I love Jesus he'll come back and says are you keeping my commandments we can have fuzzy feelings about how I love Jesus he says are you keeping my commandments do you know what my commandments are you're not going to know him if you're not in his word you see they're all connected we love him by keeping his commandments we will experience the same kind of love that the father has for Jesus and lastly the real joy is going to be experienced he says these things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full now this isn't a joy that's based on circumstances that's happiness now while God's not against happiness he's far more interested in our holiness and our Christ like joy the joy that is spoken of here is the kind of joy that Jesus had that pervaded his personality throughout his ministry throughout all of the crushing whether it's disappointments and rejections and trials he was focused on the results of what his life and death was going to accomplish there on the cross of Calvary we read in Hebrews chapter 12 it says who for the joy that same word who for the joy that was set before him endure the cross despise and shame so in the midst of all that suffering he had a joy unspeakable dear friends no matter what kind of circumstances you might find yourself in right now understand that that truth the truth of what

Jesus is talking about here of that joy doesn't change it doesn't matter how you're hurting how you're struggling you can know that as a child of God because of what he did for you on the cross that you're on your way to heaven into the Father's house you're going to be present with the Lord who loved you and died for you Jesus told us that we might experience deep inner joy that's not subject to changing circumstances but we'll be able to abide have that joy abide in us remain in us regardless of what's going on around us that's not happiness friends that's divine joy so much today has been said on abiding in Christ but as we close out here I want to underscore that before you can abide in Christ you need to be in

Christ and that comes through trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and so I just would ask you because I don't know all of you here today have you done that yet have you come to the point in your life of realizing that you aren't good enough to get to heaven that you need a Savior and that God provided that Savior in his son the Lord Jesus Christ Jesus said I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep that means the good shepherd the Lord Jesus Christ he went to Calvary to pay for your sins and mine so that we wouldn't ever have to pay for them what an awesome Savior we have and because he's paid the price for our sins he can give you and me and all of us here the kind of life that's described here in the motif of the vine and the branches and the fruit but something that I would stressing when we've been talking about abiding is also to abide in

[47:42] Christ you have to choose to do that to be in Christ you also have to choose to do that have you chosen to put your trust and faith in Jesus Christ he tells us that it's your choice as an unbeliever to receive or to reject Christ I just would exhort you today that if you're here and you've never done that please don't leave here without receiving him speak to me one of the elders whatever please don't leave here without having Christ in your heart that you know that you're in Christ because you trust in him but it isn't just the choice given over to a non believer it's also given to believers that we have a choice that we can either live bountifully as we abide in Christ or we can live carelessly in the flesh doing our own thing he gives us that choice so we need to begin to ask ourselves even again as we're closing down am

I a fruit bearing Christian in other words am I exemplifying more and more the character of Jesus Christ I'm not talking about activity in the church or anything is my life becoming more and more like Jesus have I gotten victory over some besetting sin in the past year with others around me say I'm more loving and more patient am I kinder than I used to be is there a joy in my life right now that no matter what the world throws at me it's abiding it's not going anywhere because that is what God

has placed in my heart and I'm experiencing through the Holy Spirit as I abide in him Jesus said in John 10 10 again he says I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly are you experiencing that abundant life that

Jesus came to give us you see abiding in Christ is the master key for such living it will enrich your life and those around you and bring glory to our God and Father and our master Jesus Christ let's pray our dear God we confess that very often our hearts play tricks on us when we talk about matters like this we can justify and excuse ourselves so easily but we're asking this morning that you help us to look very candidly into our hearts and to see if that desire to be totally dependent or obedient I should say on Jesus is there and hence abide in him oh

God will you create within us a fresh love for your word and give us a glimpse of what it's like to be connected with abiding in Christ please give us a desire as believers to live abundantly not barely create in us a passion to be growing to know more and more by experience what it is to have Christ abiding in us because we've chosen to abide there and finally Lord I would just pray again for those who have never received Christ as their Savior that they might today in fact understand their peril may understand just how empty their lives are apart from Jesus and how lost they really are and we pray that they would put their trust in him as their Lord and Savior and begin to obey his word and learn to abide in him we ask all these things in Jesus most precious name

Amen Amen