

Abiding in Him

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Date: 11 May 2025

Preacher: Rev Calum M Smith

[0 : 00] I'm going to begin our worship by singing to God's praise in Psalm 1 in the Scottish Psalter Psalm 1. We'll sing the whole of this Psalm together, page 200 of the Psalm books.

That man of perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray, and counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinners' way. And then verse 3, it says, He shall be like a tree that grows near, planted by a river, which in a season yields his fruit, and his leaf fadeth never.

This evening we're going to be thinking of the theme of abiding in Christ from John 15. And this Psalm just outlines the fruitfulness of abiding with him.

So Psalm 1, we'll stand to sing the whole of this Psalm. That man hath perfect blessedness, who walketh not astray, In counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinners' way.

Nor sitteth in the scorers' ship, and which set his delight.

[1 : 30] Upon those all had meditated on his low day and night.

He shall be like a tree that grows near, planted by a river, Which in his season yields his fruit, and his leaf fadeth never.

And all he does shall prosper well, the wicked are not so.

But like they are, run through the chart, which wind drives through and fro.

In judgment therefore shall not stand such as ungodly are, Nor in the assembly of the just shall with heaven appear.

[3 : 09] For why the way of godly men unto the Lord is known, Whereas the way of wicked men shall quite be overthrown.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, as we continue in worship of you this day, we thank you for the beauty of it.

We thank you for the peace we enjoy. We thank you for the blessing of being able to worship you with praise on our lips, And a sense of rejoicing in our hearts that you are God, that you are with us, that you are for us.

And we recognize, Lord, as your word teaches us, that apart from you, we can do nothing. And so help us this evening and each day to be a people seeking to abide in you, And to know what it is to be fruitful through you, Bearing fruit in our lives and in our congregation and our communities, And seeing fruit being born throughout our land and throughout the nations of the world.

We thank you that you are God who is building his church. We thank you that in all that goes on around us, that we can be assured that you are the one who reigns on high.

[4 : 47] That you are the one who has every nation, every people in the hollow of your hand. Lord, you are mighty and powerful. You are full of grace and mercy.

But we see, too, Lord, your wrath at times in our experience. And it is something we should be so afraid of, so fearful of. When we think of the terrors of this world.

When we think of the horrors of war. And yet, O Lord, when we think of your abandoning your people. There is so much more to that, Lord, than we can even imagine.

That we would know you with us, Lord, as our desire and our prayer. That your light would be with us. That your light would be upon us. And that you would light the world, O Lord, for your glory.

For we see, O Lord, an evil around us in so many different ways and places. Even in this last week, O Lord, how we have seen troubles arise in nations of the world.

[5 : 48] When we think of India and Pakistan and the events there. And how quickly things can escalate. We do pray, Lord, that a peace would come. As we think of the Middle East and the Ukraine and Russia.

And so many other nations in the world where there is fear of war. Or rumor of war. Or war going on. We know, Lord, that it brings with it so much pain and suffering.

So much sorrow. And we cannot enter into it. Perhaps ourselves, many of us. But, Lord, as we have remembered a day of peace coming to our land in the past.

As we remembered 80 years since VE Day this week. We do pray, Lord, that the days of peace and times of peace that were enjoyed then. That they would be enjoyed in many other lands today.

And above all, Lord, we pray for your peace. The peace of God that passes all understanding. So that even in the midst of trouble.

[6 : 48] We can know that you are God who is able to help us. And able to watch over in a way that we cannot. And so we thank you, Lord, that you have your people today.

Praying all over the world. Praying for your goodness and mercy to be with us. And your, Lord, lasting peace to be over us.

And we thank you that together we come with that prayer in mind as well. To know peace in our own hearts. To know the peace and joy of salvation.

And to know the wonder of Christ as our Lord and as our God. To know the grace of God that is able to satisfy our every need.

The grace that is always sufficient for every need that we have. And we know, Lord, that every need is very personal to us. And can seem, sometimes in many ways, insignificant.

[7 : 47] And maybe even there's things that we don't feel like we can pray for. When we think of other people or situations around us. But, Lord, you desire us and you delight in us coming to you in prayer.

For we are dependent upon you for all things. From the very smallest of things. To the enormity of the peace of this world. And everything in between. Lord, we are dependent upon you for all things.

And so we come to you with thanksgiving. Thankful that you are one who is able to help us bear fruit. That you are the one who is able to nourish us and strengthen us along the way.

That when we do abide in you, O Lord, that we have that fruitfulness that comes from you. And we pray that we would experience it and know it personally and collectively.

That as we think of every need of our congregation. As we think of all that goes on in our communities, Lord. That you would hear our prayers. And that you would bring fruit into our midst.

[8 : 47] That we would see a day of rejoicing in you as Lord and God. That we would see a day of blessing upon us. A day of seeing your hand building up the church near and far.

A day of blessing upon us. Lord, we long for it. And we pray, Lord, that personally and collectively too. That we would just have that longing in our hearts.

To be near to you and to be with you day by day. Bless us as homes and families, Lord. We pray for our young people as they continue to go through exams.

Just now thankful for those who have already sat exams. And come through times of studying. And praying for others, Lord. Who are continuing in their studies and exams coming up in the weeks ahead.

Help them, Lord. Prepare them for it. And help them not just to be busy studying for exams. But to find times for rest as well. And especially, Lord, to find time for you.

[9 : 49] To commit you into their lives. And into the direction that their lives are going. That they would seek you in their young years. That they would pray to you, Lord. Asking for help.

For guidance. And for your leading in all of these days. We pray for our schools, O Lord. We thank you for the teachers and staff. And all the pupils.

It's a busy time of year again for them coming up to the holiday period. We pray, Lord, for all the children who will be moving from primary to secondary.

And all the children who will be leaving secondary school. Moving on to studies and work in different places. Lord, we pray for your guidance to all. And that you would help them and bless them.

We thank you too for our Sunday school. And for all the work done there. And the work with our young people through the week. And the toddlers. And the explorers groups as well.

[10 : 43] And the youth club in the YF. We thank you, Lord, for all the activities and connections we have with our young people. And we pray for our upcoming holiday club as well.

As we make preparation for that. That you would guide us in all that's to be done. Thankful for the connections in the past with so many different families. And pray, Lord, to see these grow and develop in the weeks ahead as well.

And we thank you too for the Scaladel camp last weekend. For the blessing of young people together there. For encouraging news of the numbers there. And the conversations that we've had. Thank you for the seed that's been sown. And pray that you will give it a blessing and increase. We think too of our camps as well. Thankful for the blessings that they've been for many years to our denomination. And for the many young people who have been blessed by them in the past. And as preparations are made for this year.

[11 : 39] We pray for help and blessing in it. As we think of the Westry camp in July. That's looking for a leader. We pray that someone would come forward to help with that.

And that they would see and know your hand in all of these things. We pray for our nation as well. As we pray for our rulers. We pray for parliaments and our royal family. We ask your blessing and your wisdom to them. And we think especially of the parliament in Hollywood. As they meet this week. For the discussion and debate to take place on Tuesday. We pray for your wisdom. And for your guidance in the assisted dying bill. We see oh Lord that so many things that can be meant for good. Are so evil in themselves Lord. They can be turned on their head and cause so much devastation. And we just pray Lord that you would overrule in these things. That you would see. We would see the gift of life as being held precious.

[12 : 41] Whether it's at the beginning of life or end of life. That we would see oh Lord. And a view of life that is from you. And precious from you.

So we pray Lord for your wisdom and your help to the MSPs as they discuss. That your spirit will be in the midst of it all. So we pray that for our nation as well Lord.

That we would see your spirit in all that we see around us. That we would see a turning of the tide of secularism and atheism. And all the other agendas against your word and your will.

Oh Lord we pray a mercy upon us. And turn us. Revive us again. We pray then for your goodness to us this evening. Bless your word to us as we read it.

As we share from it. That it would be a word that goes with us even in the week ahead. To guide us and to help us along the way. So Lord bless us. Now hear our prayers.

[13 : 40] Continue with us. And we ask all with the forgiveness of our sins. In Jesus name. Amen. We're going to sing again to God's praise.

This time in Psalm 43. Let's sing Psalm's version. Page 54. Psalm 43. We'll sing the whole of this Psalm.

Page 54. Come vindicate me oh my God. Against this nation plead my cause. Deliver me from wicked foes and hypocrites.

Who break your laws. We'll sing the whole of this Psalm. To God's praise. Come vindicate me oh my God.

Come vindicate me oh my God. Against this nation plead my cause.

[14 : 40] Deliver me from wicked foes and hypocrites.

To break your laws. You are my stronghold and my God.

Why then have you rejected me? Why must I go about in grief.

Outthrodren by the enemy. Oh send your eyes forth.

Forthong your truth. Let them direct me in your grace.

[15 : 48] And bring me to your holy hill. Into your sacred dwelling place.

Then to God's altar I will go. To God my joy and my delight.

And I will praise you with the heart. O God you are my God of might.

Why are you downcast oh my soul. Why are you so distilled in me.

Trust God for I will praise him yet. My Savior and my God is he.

[17 : 18] Amen. Amen. We will turn to read God's word together now in the Gospel of John chapter 15. John chapter 15.

Reading from the beginning of the chapter down to verse 17. You will find it around page 1087.

John 15 at verse 1. I am the true vine and my father is the vine dresser. Every branch of mine 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.

[18:15] 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 is 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 word abides 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 so prove to be my disciples.

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.

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.

[19:15] Greater love has no one than this that someone lays 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 do 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. And so on and may God add his blessing to that reading from his word.

We're going to sing again before we turn back to this passage in Psalm 80a. Sing Psalm's version. Psalm 80a. Sing in verse 7 to 15.

[20:21] Psalm 88 verse 7. We'll sing from verse 7 down to verse 15 to God's praise.

We stand to sing. Look on us, O God Almighty.

Let us see your glory bright. Turn us once again towards you.

Come and save us. Give us light. Once you brought a vine from Egypt.

Throw our kings with mighty hand. Set the vine in ground made ready.

[21:38] It took root and fill the land. So its branches. So its branches.

Floth the mountains. Shading every cedar tree. Spreading from the great Euphrates.

To the mighty western sea. Why did you break down its fences. Why did you break down its fences.

So that all may pluck its fruit. Creatures of the field devoured.

Wild poor stir it. Wild poor stir it from the root. Turn to us, O God Almighty.

[22:40] Look and see from heaven above. In this vine your hand has planted. And the sun you raised in love.

Into heaven in love. Well, we can turn back to our reading in John chapter 15.

We're looking at this section where Jesus is speaking about himself as the vine, the true vine. You can read again 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.

I am the vine, you are the branches. One of Jesus' I am sayings.

[23:48] This is his last one in the Gospel of John. And as you look at the I am sayings, they're always connected to teachings about what Jesus is either seeing around him or what's going on in different ways around him.

And the people can understand what he's saying to them as he speaks about whether it's the shepherd, the light, whatever it is, the I am sayings that he is saying. He's talking about things that the people can understand.

And the same is true for this saying as well, I am the vine. When you think of many nations in the world, they so often have a symbol that represents them.

When you think of Scotland, you think, well, what represents Scotland? What makes you think of Scotland? Well, it could be the Scottish Salter or the Thistle or the Lion Rampant.

It could be any of these things and you think that's representing Scotland. You think of England and it's maybe the English Rose. Or Wales, it's the Welsh Dragon.

[24:51] Or America, it's the Eagle. So many different nations in the world, they have symbols that represent them. And when you look in the Word of God, you find very often God's people, Israel, whether it's in the Old Testament or whether we're coming here into the New Testament in Jesus'

own day, a symbol that represented them was the vine.

The vine that grapes would come from, that they would bear fruit for them. And it's something that you see running throughout the Old Testament. The psalm that we just sang, Psalm 80, it very much has that in these verses that we were singing.

Once you brought a vine from Egypt, drove out kings with mighty hand. It speaks about the branches then clothing the mountains. And then it speaks about turning, the Lord turning again and say in verse 15, Tend this vine your hand has planted.

So the vine is very much a representation of God's people there. The same is true in Isaiah, for example. It comes up a number of times here in Isaiah chapter 5, verse 1 to 7.

It speaks there about a word of warning about the unproductive vineyard. In verse 7 it says, For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.

[26 : 14] So it's talking about God's people. The vineyard, the vine, is very much a representation of God's people. And it's a representation that we see too in whether it's fruitful or not.

And disobedience against God, as you see throughout the Old Testament, the warning in Isaiah is one about an unproductive vineyard. It's not bearing fruit because they've turned away from God. But on the other hand, when you're with God, when you're looking and trusting in God, there's that sense of a good harvest, a plentiful and a rich harvest coming.

And so in John 15, that's the kind of background that the people would have understood. This saying of Jesus, I am the vine, I am the true vine.

And Jesus is here in John 15. In this section, he's with his disciples just before the night before the crucifixion. And you see from John 13 through to 17, it's this time he has with his disciples.

[27 : 24] He's using this image of the vine to show them just what is about to take place and what they need to trust in as this crucifixion is taking place.

And round about them at this time in Jerusalem would have been the symbol of the vine in so many different ways. Jerusalem would have been full, whether it's the temple, whether it's the gates going into Jerusalem, or whether it's the countryside around Jerusalem.

The vineyards, the vines would have been plentiful to see. And especially in springtime, which would have been at this time when Jesus is with his disciples, the vines would have been blossoming and blooming.

They would have been rich and ready to harvest. And fruitfulness would have been seen all around them. And Jesus is saying to them, I am the vine.

I am the one who can bring much fruit for you. Apart from me, you can do nothing. It's that time of year for ourselves when gardens are getting prepared, vegetable plots are getting prepared.

[28 : 33] If you're a good gardener, you enjoy it. If you've got time, you enjoy it. Just getting everything ready. And especially in this kind of weather, it can start to blossom so quickly.

But if you're like me, it's almost a time when you just want to cry, help, because the grass is growing too quick. The weeds are just taking over. If you don't have time or if you don't really fully committed to it, the place can just overgrow so quick.

And what you really want to grow doesn't, because the weeds take over. And that's true for ourselves in the Christian life as well. And that's really the warning behind what Jesus is saying here when he says, I am the vine.

And he's talking about the gardening, the pruning. He's talking about all of these things. He's talking about the Christian life. And he's talking about what we need to take out, to root out, to get rid of the weeds, all of these things.

How is our spiritual garden, as it were? Is life taking over? Is life just going out of control for us where we don't have time for God?

[29 : 42] We were pushing him away and we're seeing another time. And the weeds are just growing and growing, taking over our lives. Do we need the gardener's help?

And do you need the gardener's help this evening? Well, as Jesus is speaking these words to his disciples and to us, he's reminding us that help is at hand.

In all the I am sayings, they're very much there to help the Lord's people then and to this very day. So there's three things that Jesus teaches us through this I am divine that we can focus on this evening.

The first thing is abiding in him. The importance of abiding in him. The second thing is being tended by him.

We see the gardener working here. And then thirdly, we see bearing fruit through him. And the three are just connected. They're all connected together.

[30 : 45] Abiding in him means to be tended by him, which leads to bearing fruit through him. So we're going to go through them in that order. First, abiding in him.

So this is the last of the I am sayings when he says, I am the vine there in verse 5. Each one had a purpose.

Each one had a teaching behind the first five I am sayings. He says, I am the bread of life. What does that mean? Well, it means he sustains us.

He sustains us. He said, I am the light. He directs us. He shows us the way to go. He lights up our lives.

He says, I am the good shepherd. He protects us. He's looking after us. He tends his flock. I am the resurrection. He is our future hope.

[31 : 47] So there's always a purpose in the I am sayings. But what's interesting about the last two is they appear here in chapter 14 and 15. They both occur in the same night, just before his death.

And they both give his disciples hope in the midst of adversity. Hope in the midst of everything that he's telling them. That he is going to give his life. That he's going to lay down his life.

And the first one we see here is in chapter 14 when he says, let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. I am going to prepare a place for you.

But Thomas has a question. Lord, we do not know the way. And Jesus comes in and says there in verse 6 of chapter 14.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. So he's giving them guidance here in the midst of the uncertainty of him going away. He says, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

[32 : 51] And then you come into chapter 15. And we have this one here. The Lord is going away. We still need him. And he is still there for us.

And so he is saying to abide in him. Abiding in him is the key. And that's what we see here when he says, I am the vine.

In verse 1 he says, I am the true vine. And in verse 5 he says, I am the vine. What does he mean here?

What is he talking about when he says, I am the true vine and I am the vine? Well, it takes us back to the Old Testament. He's really taking them through the whole of the Old Testament here.

The vine and the true vine. The very reason that he's come into the world. The very purpose that he's come is for the sins of his people. Because they have been disobedient.

[33 : 55] They have disobeyed. They have gone astray. The vine has become unproductive. The vine is not bearing fruit. The fruit that he had for them.

Because they've disobeyed. They've gone astray. And so here he is showing this is the very purpose for which I've come. That you might be fruitful.

That you might grow in me. If you abide in me, you will be fruitful. Faithfulness, he's saying, leads to fruitfulness.

Disobedience leads to being cast away. And so he's reminding them here of everything that God was teaching through the Old Testament.

That he is the true vine. If you want a question to stir up conversation. A question that we could all have a different opinion on.

[34 : 55] Is what is the greatest need of the church today? Whether we're thinking locally, nationally, internationally. What's the greatest need of the church today?

If I could give you all a piece of paper to write down your answer to that question. I'm sure there will be a whole host, a variety of different answers. And is there one right answer?

Maybe not. The greatest need of the church is many and varied. We need the word of God. We need prayer. We need mission.

We need so many different things. But maybe our greatest need is here. As we have in these verses. In 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. So the very root, the very substance of our faith is in Christ.

[36 : 01] So whether we're thinking of reading our Bibles. Whether we're thinking of understanding the doctrines and theology of the church. Whether we're thinking of learning the catechisms.

Whether we're thinking of learning verses off by heart. Whether we're thinking of our outreach, our evangelism, our discipleship. All of these things that we need in our church.

They are all rooted in Christ. Because apart from me you can do nothing. And he's not saying there do nothing.

It's the doing but by abiding in him. Apart from me you can do nothing. And so we need to abide in him.

And that's what he's saying to his disciples here. So that as they would go on from here. As they would go on to see him crucified. To meet with the risen Lord. To be together in Jerusalem.

[37 : 03] To go out to all the ends of the earth. This would be at the heart of everything that they do. Abiding in him. And that's important for every church today.

For every Christian today. To abide in him. To be rooted in him. If we want to be God's people.

If we want to be a Christian today. You cannot do it by yourself. Apart from him you can do nothing. But he says abide in me.

Abide in me. So that is so important for us. Because if we don't what happens? We wither.

We fade. We had flowers in a vase in our house a wee while ago. And one of the flowers after a few days was starting to wilt.

[38 : 03] A lot quicker than the other ones. Wondering well why is that? What's happened to that flower? And look more closely. And what we had noticed was that the stem of that one flower was outside the vase.

And not with the rest in the water. And so because it wasn't immersed in the water. Because it wasn't getting that feeding. It was wilting. And wilting so much quicker than the others.

And that's just the way it is for us. When we're outside of Christ. When we're away from Christ.

When we're not nourished by him. When we're not abiding in him.

We wilt. That's been the lesson to the church in the Old Testament that Jesus is highlighting here.

The vineyard was not fruitful because we're not abiding in him.

So are we abiding in him? Are you abiding in him? We ask that individually. We ask it collectively.

[39 : 03] Because apart from him we can do nothing. We must abide in him. The second thing we see here then is to be tended by him.

We abide in him. And that's the start. But we have to be tended by him as we go on. The gardener is always looking after the garden.

And that is true for the vineyard. For the church of God as well. Where the Lord is building his church. And he's doing it in ways that he's tending his church. Pruning his church in all kinds of different ways.

And the purpose of tending and pruning is that the garden, the plant might thrive. That it might thrive. Because if it's not thriving, what happens?

It's thrown away. It's no use. And that's exactly what we see here. As Jesus is saying, I am the vine and you are the branches.

[40 : 10] We also see how the Father is the vine dresser, as it says in verse 1. So there is this work of the gardener ongoing all the time as well.

And there's three different ways that we see here that the garden is tended. And the way we are tended by God as well. And three of them are there for us to understand the work of God in our midst.

And the first way of caring for the vine here is shown in verse 2. Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit, he takes away.

Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit, he takes away. And this is showing the care of the gardener, the vine dresser.

Because immediately we think here, the branch is removed and thrown away. But it's not actually the case. And what you see here is this branch is the branch of mine.

[41 : 18] It's not bearing fruit, but it's still mine. It's not dead. It's still connected. But the problem is that this branch is on the ground.

And you can see this happen in your gardens. I'm sure that there is a plant, maybe even from last year, that's become covered in last year's overgrown grass or leaves that are fallen.

And it's covered its way down. It's on the ground. And it's not bearing fruit. It's unable to bear fruit because of this. And this is the picture here that the Lord is giving to us.

Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit, he takes away. But take away there actually could mean, as another translation is, to lift up and support.

And that's a much better picture. It's like what you have in verse 7 of Psalm 80, where it speaks there about, Look on us, O God Almighty, let us see your glory bright.

[42 : 29] Turn us once again towards you. Come and save us, give us light. It's the psalm saying, lift us up, O Lord. Give us light.

The vine that he brought from Egypt, the psalm is saying, will you not lift us up again towards you? Give us light. And that's what the gardener is doing here.

He's lifting up the branch that it might have the light to flourish again. And that is what the Lord does for his church and for his people.

You see, there are times in our experience when we feel weary. We feel cast down. We feel burdened. We feel we're not bearing fruit. But the Lord, the vine dresser, he is able to lift us up. That we might bear fruit once again. A good gardener is able to revive plants, to bring life, to bring fruit from plants once again.

[43 : 31] And so is the Lord. And so that when the church or the people of God seem so downcast, so dismayed by so many things, we pray, Lord, give us your light.

Lift us up to your light once again. And that is the care of God for his people. And Isaiah 42, verse 3, there's those wonderful words.

He says, It's bruised. It's maybe not bearing fruit, but he will not break it.

And there is the gardener just looking after what is his. Lifting it up, tending it, that it might bear fruit again. So individually we can feel that sense of overwhelmed by life's experience.

But by abiding in Christ, we are able to know that care of the gardener that lifts us up. The second thing that we see here that he tends the garden is that he prunes.

[44 : 36] He prunes the garden as well. So there's the lifting up of those that are downcast. But he also says in verse 2, Every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

So what is Jesus saying here? Well, it's a reminder that there are times of pruning in our experience as well. A good gardener knows exactly when to cut.

And where and how to cut. In order that the plant will bear more fruit. Healthier fruit. Richer fruit.

If you don't know what you're doing, you'll just hack away and you may destroy. But the gardener, the vine dresser here, he knows what he's doing and so he prunes.

And pruning, it's for us, we go through pruning experience, it's not always pleasant. Where the Lord prunes things in our lives. He takes things away. There will be times of hurt and pain.

[45 : 39] But yet there's a purpose. That it may bear more fruit. And again, it's a reminder that the Father is committed to us.

That the Father is there to do us good. To help us through every experience. That we might have seasons when we're not doing well.

Seasons when we just need that sense of pruning things away. But it's so that we might come into a better season. A more fruitful season.

And so the vine dresser, he is pruning his people, pruning his church. And that's good news.

Because there's a purpose behind it to bear more fruit.

It's hard, but it'll be worth it. And that's when we have to put our trust in God. We have to put our faith in God.

[46 : 41] That he knows best. That he knows what he's doing. That he has our best interest in mind. So he prunes as well.

That we might bear more fruit. So he's caring for his garden. He's lifting up what's downcast. He's helping what's been strong to be pruned back.

That it might get stronger still. But there's a third way that he tends the garden. And it's more of a warning. And a strong warning as well.

In verse 6. If anyone does not abide in me. He is thrown away like a branch and withers. And the branches are gathered.

Thrown into the fire. And burned. Part of the gardening. Is to get rid of what is fruitless.

[47 : 44] And that's a serious warning. That we have here as well. Gathered and thrown into the fire. Whenever you read fire.

In the gospel. In the gospels or in the Old Testament. Whenever you see this word. There's a serious image behind it. Because it's that of judgment.

It's a fearful word. To be cast in. To the fire. And there's an example for us. On this very occasion. When Jesus is sitting with his disciples. Of one who was not abiding. In Christ. And that's Judas. Judas was with them.

He seemed that everything else was fine. But he wasn't abiding. And the warning is. That if you don't. You're thrown out. And that's the warning for us today as well.

[48 : 45] You say. You say. I like the idea of abiding in Jesus. I'll maybe come to that at some point. I'll look into that.

I'll maybe try it at some point along the way. But whenever there's good news. There's always warnings. And the gospel. The gospel always gives us warnings as well. Anyone who does not abide in me.

He is thrown away. And it's the same kind of language you see in Matthew's gospel. When Jesus is speaking about the judgment day.

When he says. Depart from me. I knew you not. Cast away. Abandoned. And none of us should ever want to get there.

Where we are left. Abandoned. By God. As Psalm 80 says. Turn us once again towards you. Come and save us.

[49 : 45] Give us light. That's the cry we need just now. Because a day will come. When that light is gone. We've remembered VE Day in this last week.

And although it was a time of joy. And celebration of peace coming. We always remember too. The cost. Of how many lives were lost.

To bring that peace. To bring that freedom. There was a story I heard. I read of. During the Second World War. When there were six Navy pilots.

Had taken off from an aircraft carrier. Six planes. Had taken off individual pilots. They knew there were submarines in the area. So the planes had gone up. To see if they could spot the submarines. And they'd been on this mission. Throughout the afternoon. And coming into the evening. They were making their way back. To the aircraft carrier. But the darkness was coming. But the problem was.

[50 : 45] The captain of the aircraft carrier. Knew that there was submarines nearby. And he had given the order. For complete darkness. On the ship. And so the lights.

That would light up. The landing area of the aircraft carrier. Were not switched on. And the planes came back. Looking for the ship to land on. They couldn't see it.

They knew it was there somewhere. And they were calling out on the radio. To put on the lights. Even just one light. That we might be able to land. The captain was adamant.

For the safety of the ship. No lights could go on. And the radio operator on the ship. Was having to answer these cries. For one light. And saying it we can't.

And in the end. He had to switch off the radio. So you wouldn't hear them pleading. Six aircraft. Because of no light. Ended up in the sea.

[51 : 45] But how much. About this do we see here as well. When there is no light of God. To guide us to him. That we might abide in him. When that light is gone.

We are cast. Away. And so there is this warning. Here. Come. And abide in him.

That you might be safe. That you might be secure. In him. He tends us then. He prunes us.

He lifts us up. But he also warns us. That there are those. Who will be cast away. If they do not come. And abide. So we are tended.

By him. The final thing. Just briefly. We see here. Is bearing fruit. Through him. When we plant. Whatever it is.

[52 : 42] Whether it is. Vegetables. Potatoes. Whatever we are looking for. What do we expect? We expect. A harvest. If you plant one potato. You don't expect.

Just one potato back. You want a crop of potatoes. A lot of potatoes. Back in return. You expect a good harvest. When conditions. Are right. Well.

Jesus is telling us here. That the conditions. Are right. When we are abiding. In him. When we abide. In him. We bear.

Much. Fruit. He says. In verse five. There is a promise. In these words. Whoever abides. In me. And I. In him. He it is. That bears. Much fruit.

Fruit. So there is that hope. The promise. Of fruitfulness. And. If we are his.

[53 : 37] If we are abiding. In him. We bear fruit. But what does it mean? What does it mean? To bear fruit. What kind of fruit.

Are we looking for? We're not looking for vegetables. We're not looking for flowers. We're looking for the fruits. Of the spirit. We're looking for the fruitfulness. That comes.

Through abiding. In him. Paul says. To us. In Galatians five. He gives us a list. Of the fruits. Of the spirit. Love. Joy. Peace.

Patience. Kindness. Goodness. Gentleness. Faithfulness. Self-control. There's a list. Of fruits. Of the spirit. And if you abide.

In me. Jesus is saying. You will bear. Much fruit. And so much of it. Is to do with relationship. And you see that. As you read on.

[54 : 32] Through this. In verse 16. 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.

One another. So there is. Relationship here. There is relationship. Between. The people of God. And God. And the people of God.

And each other. And so abiding in him. Means both of these things. Loving the Lord. And loving. One another. As the begs.

Said recently. It is impossible. It is impossible. To be connected. To Christ. Without being connected. To those who love Christ. And there is the challenge.

[55 : 27] Isn't it? It's always there. You cannot be connected. To Christ. Without being connected. To those who love Christ. And that's. What he says here. In verse 17.

These things. I command you. So that you will love. One another. And so the fruits of the spirit. That we see. Love. Joy. Peace. Patience. Kindness. All of these things.

Do we have them? Do we pray for them? Do we guard them? If we do have them? When you go through that list. You think to yourself.

Failed. Failed. Failed. Failed. So it goes on. It's so challenging. To read. I know. I can be impatient. I know. I can be. Unkind. I know. I'm not the gentlest. At times. I know. All of these things. You can go through this list. I'm sure we all can.

[56 : 25] And say. But I fail. So often. I fail. So often. In so many. Of these things. And where do we go?

What do we do with that? Well we come back. To Jesus. I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me.

And I in him. He it is. That bears. Much fruit. We come back. To him. We abide. In him.

Because it's only. In our union with Christ. In our abiding in him. That we can bear. Any fruit. At all. And so the fruit.

That he desires. Is many and. Manifold different fruits. But they all come. From him. And abiding.

[57 : 26] In him. Are you. Connected. To Christ. Are you in. The vine. Are you joined.

To him. If you are. If you're abiding in him. There's life. Even when life seems to be. Flickering out. In many ways.

We go back to what he says. He will lift us up. He will tend us. He will draw us. To the light. That we might bear fruit. He will prune us.

He will warn us. He will help us. To bear fruit. But they all come back. To the first part. Abide.

In me. I am the vine. He says. Apart from me. You can do nothing. So let us abide. In him.

[58 : 24] That he might tend us. And keep us. And help us. To bear fruit. Let us pray. Our father in heaven.

We do thank you. For your word. That gives hope. And encouragement. And on the same hand. Gives warning to us. And we pray. Lord. That you will help us. To heed your word.

To abide in you. And you in us. Because apart from you. We can do nothing. And we pray. Lord. To know your light. Upon us. The light. That gives life. Lift us up.

Lord. To that light. That we might flourish. Through your grace. To us. So hear our prayers. And go before us. Pardoning our sin. In Jesus name. Amen.

We'll conclude. By singing. To God's praise. In Psalm 91. In the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 91.

[59 : 21] We'll sing from verse 1. To verse 4. Page 351. Again. This Psalm speaks about just finding that.

Shelter and refuge. In abiding with him. He that doth in the secret place. Of the most high reside.
Under the shade. Of him that is. The almighty. Shall abide.

We'll sing from verse 1 to 4. To God's praise. He that doth in the secret place.

Of the most high reside. Under the shade of him that is, almighty shall abide.

I hope the Lord my God will say, he is my refuge still, he is my fortress and my God, and in him trust
thy will.

[60 : 55] Assuredly he shall be saved, and give thee deliverance from subtle fowlers near, and
from the noise of blestelance.

His feather shall be high, I trust. Under his weight shall be.

His faithfulness shall be a shield, and buckler unto thee.

Amen. After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my left. We'll close with the benediction. Now may
grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all
now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen.