

# The True Vine

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 23 October 2011

Preacher: Mr Ian Murdo Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] I turn back with me now then to that portion of scripture we read in the New Testament, John's Gospel, chapter 15. I'd like us to consider this part where Jesus tells us, I am the true vine.

It tells us in verse 1, I am the true vine, and my father is a 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. Verse 5, he says, 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. So on. We have yet another truly remarkable statement from the Lord Jesus here that gives us a very clear insight into the relationship that there ought to be between Jesus and between the believer.

[ 1 : 23 ] Now, John's Gospel is characterized with these I am statements of Jesus. There are seven I am statements in John's Gospel. Such as Jesus says at different points, I am the bread of life, I am the resurrection and the life, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

He says here, I am the true vine. And so on. There are seven particular I am statements. And this is very significant. And if you recall, in Exodus and in chapter 3, when the Lord calls Moses, the Lord has an encounter with Moses there at the Barneen Bush.

And God identified himself to Moses. And he said to Moses, I am whom I am. And he told Moses, as he called him to go to Egypt and to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, he called them to tell the people of Israel and to tell Pharaoh, I am has sent me to you.

So, in other words, we understand that I am is God. And these I am metaphors that we have here and that Jesus uses and John identifies for us in his Gospel, well, they identify Jesus as God.

And by doing so, Jesus takes to himself that great name of Jehovah. And this is in keeping with the opening statement of John's Gospel, where we have these marvelous words, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[ 3 : 18 ] So, I'd like to just consider this passage, just to give a little bit of background information, first of all, about the situation that Jesus and the disciples are in here and what has led him to make this statement.

Secondly, just to consider some characteristics of the vine. And then thirdly, and briefly, to consider how do we abide in the vine.

So, first of all, and just a little bit of background here of the situation. We're told at the end of chapter 14, Jesus says to his disciples there that I love the Father.

He says, rise, let us go from here. So, he and the disciples are at that point, they are leaving the upper room where they have shared the Passover, where they have shared fellowship, and particularly leading to institute the Lord's Supper, as we understand it.

And he is walking at this point towards Gethsemane. And Gethsemane, of course, is found around the place called the Mount of Olives.

[ 4 : 36 ] So, he's on the way to Gethsemane, and so on the way towards Calvary, to Golgotha, and to give his life for his own people. And as they are walking towards Gethsemane, then it's quite likely that there were many vineyards round about them at that particular point.

And as they were walking around and past these vineyards, this is when Jesus says to his disciples, I am the true vine. I am the true vine.

So, he's not just looking here at the physical elements of the vines round about, but there is a very clear spiritual implication in all of this as well.

We've sung there in Psalm 80, and that gives us quite an insight into the vine. There we see a blending of Old and New Testament, where the psalmist, he talks about Israel, God's chosen people Israel of the Old Testament, the Old Covenant.

He talks about Israel being the vine that is taken out of Egypt. And in verse 6, and also then in verse 17 as well, we read the words of the psalmist there, that the son of man whom you have raised up for yourself.

[ 6 : 01 ] So, it's a contrast in the psalm of Israel of the Old Testament that's been taken out of the bondage and slavery of Egypt and blended in there, we see the Lord Jesus himself, the son of man whom you have raised up for yourself.

And the people Israel whom God called and chose for himself, he took them out of that bondage from Egypt. He liberated them, he brought them or transplanted them into his own chosen land, the land of Canaan.

And his people Israel, they took deep root in that land, and they spread out like many branches right throughout the whole of that land.

This was God's vineyard of the Old Testament. And what we have in Psalm 80 there is quite significant, because the psalmist there, he is praying that God would visit his own vine, his people Israel, in that land of Canaan.

Israel, the people Israel, they were originally called to fulfill a long-term role, to be a light for the Gentiles and a light to all of the nations round about them, that these nations would be drawn to this people Israel and that they would come to know the Lord, to bring God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

[ 7 : 30 ] But, of course, they failed. And they failed in quite a significant way. The vine itself was really the symbol that was used to identify the people Israel and it was used often in the Old Testament as well.

And when Jesus here, when he identifies himself as a true vine, well, by implication, then that tells us and Jesus tells us that there was a false vine.

And we're told that there was a false vine. And we're told that especially in the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel and also Hosea.

And these prophets and the Old Testament in general, it emphasizes Israel's disobedience towards the Lord so often. And that's a theme, a theme of unfaithfulness of his people Israel through the Old Testament, almost as if they were fit for nothing.

Israel, they failed God. They would follow for a while and then they would turn away from the Lord, apostatizing and turning to false idols before the Lord would draw them back.

[ 8 : 41 ] They would be faithful to him for a while but then turn away. And that is the history of the Old Testament. As the people Israel following the Lord for a while, turning away, unable to be perfectly obedient towards the Lord, towards his commandments and towards the sacrificial system.

And all that God required of them. They were apostatizing, turning away and fearing God. And something, of course, had to be done about this.

And here we see the contrast as well. The contrast we have of the nation of Israel, who was the vine of the Old Testament, destroying itself by disobedience.

And that is contrasted now with Jesus, who says, I am the true vine. I am the true vine. Because of Israel's failure and disobedience.

Well, God had to act decisively so that men and women and boys and girls could be saved. And that is why he sent his son, Jesus, into this world.

[ 9 : 52 ] Jesus, he is the obedient son. He was perfectly obedient, as the scriptures tell us. And it's through his sacrifice and his giving of himself and his obedience that God's plan of redemption, this plan of salvation, this new way of salvation in and through him.

It is all through Jesus and his finished work at Calvary that all the purposes of God, this mission of God, the rescue mission for humanity. It's through Jesus and his finished work that it finds its fulfillment.

Jesus, who is the true vine. And we know that the son, this son Jesus, he is the one who has come to give his life as a ransom for many.

He has come in our place where Israel failed. Jesus succeeded. And Jesus, his sacrifice satisfied the divine justice of God.

And it's all to the glory of the Father. And that is a real emphasis we have in this chapter itself as well. The last thing Jesus said before he left the upper room, he said to his disciples, let's move out of here.

[ 11 : 11 ] And let's move forward and move forward to the cross so that the world will know that I love the Father. And Jesus says, I did not come to do my own will, but I came to do the will of him who sent me.

All to the glory of the Father's name. That is why Jesus came into this world. That is why he suffered in so many ways in his ministry as we see it and endured so much.

That is why he set his face towards Gethsemane. That is why he went to Calvary. That is why he took your sins and my sins upon himself. That is why he endured the physical sufferings.

That is why he endured the spiritual sufferings on the cross. That is why he gave himself unto death. All to the glory of the Father. In full and perfect obedience to the Father's will.

And the Father, through all of these acts, is superintending or overseeing all that Jesus does and all that happens on the cross.

[ 12 : 26 ] Making sure that his plan follows through to the last minute detail. Jesus says, I am the true vine.

I want secondly to consider just some characteristics of this vine. Now we know that when anything is planted in any garden or in any place, that there must be someone to look after that planting.

And we have a vine, as it were, planted here. And Jesus makes it very clear that the Father, he is the vine dresser. He is the one who is looking after the vine.

God the Father here, he is portrayed for us as the gardener, as the vine dresser. That word he is before us, the superintendent who is overseeing all that is happening to do with the vine.

And he is protecting the vineyard. And he is tenderly and carefully watching over and keeping his vine and his vineyard. This is a well-kept garden.

[ 13 : 38 ] This is a garden that has been worked. And this is a garden that has been watered. And this vine is growing here. So what we have and what we understand from the passage here is that God the Father, he is portrayed as the vine dresser or the gardener.

And Jesus, the Son, he is portrayed as the vine. And in the passage we're told about the branches of the vine. And we understand that to be the Lord's people. So the Father is a gardener.

Jesus, the vine, the branches, his own people, his church. And this vine is essentially a fruit-bearing tree or a fruit-bearing plant.

And Jesus stresses the fruit-bearing aspects of the vine time and time again throughout this passage. We see it in verse 2 and verse 4 and 5 and 6 and 8 and 16.

The fruit-bearing process is the key aspect of the life of this vine. When it's planted, a vine is actually, the stem of it and the root of it is actually quite an ugly thing to look at.

[ 14 : 51 ] It's all twisted. It's ugly. And it reminds us, I think, perhaps of the cross and how we're told there that all that happened, and even with the Lord himself, he was without form or comeliness.

And Isaiah, I think, reminds us of that. But Isaiah tells us at the beginning of chapter 53. It says, And we esteemed him not.

And that is the way that a vine looks just as it is planted in the stem, the bare stem. And the vine grows over a large, large area. And what you see initially is just bare wood.

And you would think nothing's going to come of this tree that's been planted. But through time, it becomes covered with luscious green leaves. But if it's left like that, then it won't bear any fruit.

These leaves, these branches, they have to be pruned, as we're told here. And pruned to exactly the right place. And when they are pruned and when the work is done properly, then these branches, they will bear fruit.

[ 16 : 20 ] They will bear fruit. And I went, I was told that there was a vine growing in Tung School in the village where I stay. So I went down to see Donald the janitor. And I went, I asked him, could I have a look at this?

And he took me into the polytunnel. And he showed me this vine that's growing there. And it was quite astonishing to see this growing in the Isle of Lewis. There in that well-kept garden, what I saw with that vine was, I saw the stem of the vine, the way it came out.

And I saw the way that it spread. And it wasn't really very nice to look at at all. That was very true. And, but the stem, it was powerful to look at.

And to look at the branches that were coming off that vine, that's what really struck me about the whole thing. Because the branches, they're flimsy. And they look so weak.

They look so insignificant. And so thin. That you would never believe that it would bear fruit and that grapes would grow off the end of it. But there, on the branches of that vine, in that school polytunnel, I was seeing branches there that you wouldn't think would hold one grape.

[ 17 : 29 ] And there was 12 grapes hanging from that branch. And it was astonishing, amazing to look at it. How insignificant and weak the branch looked. But it was throwing all of its strength from the stem, from the vine itself.

And that's how it was able to bear the load and to bear fruit to the glory of that tree. And we're told about this bearing fruit.

And there are two aspects to this. One is in the life of the believer. When a person comes to faith. We're told in Galatians chapter 5 that the fruits of the Spirit ought to be shown through in an individual's life.

And Paul tells us they are the fruits of the Spirit. They are love and joy and peace and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control and meekness.

And that are signs that God is at work in a person's life. And God is changing this life into quite an extraordinary life. And the fruits of his Spirit are shown through.

[ 18 : 34 ] But the second aspect of fruit bearing is about winning souls for Christ. And I think that's perhaps more associated with this passage and what's meant for the passage. But the whole point is you cannot have this second aspect of winning souls for Christ if you don't have the first one.

Which is bearing fruit in your own personal life as well. And what Jesus is primarily saying here, what the thrust of the passage is, is that this is the renewal of the mission of Israel through the Messiah.

And after Jesus had finished his work, he sent his disciples into the world. You know what we have in Matthew chapter 28? The Great Commission where Jesus says go out into all of the world and make disciples of all people and of all nations and of all tongues and so on.

And so the disciples were given the task of carrying on this evangelistic crusade. All to the glory of God. So that God the Father's name would be exalted.

And this is now carried through all of the centuries. Right up to this very point in time. Where all of the Lord's people now carry that responsibility. To evangelize. To reach out to people.

[ 19 : 51 ] To share the gospel. And to seek to bear fruit to the glory of the gardener. That is the responsibility of all Christians today and all Christians in here today.

To seek to bear fruit to the glory of the Lord. And so we see that there are three purposes for the vine.

First of all, there's a very distinct purpose. And that is that it is to bear fruit. The vine only exists for that purpose. To bear fruit to the glory of God.

And the vine, it is the vine itself that supplies life to the branches. So that the branches will indeed bear that fruit for the vine. So there's a distinct purpose for the vine.

There's also a very distinguished purpose, secondly. And that is that it is to give all of the glory to the gardener. All of the glory to the Lord. To God the Father. And that is what Jesus tells us.

[ 20 : 53 ] That it is not the soil that gets the glory. It is not the vine that gets the glory. It is not the fruit that gets the glory. But it is the gardener who has planted and who has looked after this vine and the branches of it.

It's all to the glory of the Father. And that is why we have the gospel. That is why the Lord Jesus has come. So that his name would be glorified.

In people being brought to faith. And his own people bearing fruit to his own glory. All the praise is given to the gardener. Everything Jesus did. Everything Jesus said in his life here on earth.

It is all to the glory of the Father. That is the aim and the purpose of everything in the gospel itself. And that really should be the burning desire of every single believer here and wherever the believers are found.

To live your lives so that you will bring glory to the Father as well. As a branch out of this vine. So there is a distinguished purpose and there is the distinct purpose and that delegated purpose.

[ 22 : 06 ] That you would bear fruit to the glory of the Father. So these are just some of the characteristics of the vine. I just want to look finally and briefly at what Jesus is saying to us here about abiding in the vine.

He tells us in verse 2 that the branch must be attached to the vine. If you are not in the vine then there is no way that you are going to bear any fruit.

There is no way you will glorify the Father. And when we talk about this attachment of the branch to the vine. Then we speak about this special union. This bond that there is between the believer and Jesus Christ who is the true vine.

And if you think of it there has to be that connection there. You know you could somebody come into this building and the bulbs would be in place here.

They could switch on the switch down here to put the lights on. The cable could be there but if there is no power to give electricity then it is not going to work. It is just the same as anyone who has got a computer.

[ 23 : 15 ] They may have it sitting in front of them and the whole internet is out there. But if you do not have an internet provider then it is of no use to you. The same as with a car. And you have a car that has its wheels, its axle, its engine as well.

And the engine is switched on. But if you do not have that drive shaft where the power is going to come through to turn the wheels then it is a waste of time. And it is just the same really here with the gospel.

And what we have I think with this as well what we need to understand from this is that it is this union. This connection with the vine that is so critically important. So many people they try this, that and the other.

And they try to come into God's favour through their own good works. And they try to make themselves right before God. I think we could call it probably a do-it-yourself religion.

What Paul called when he looked back at his life before and he says that's just worthless done. I thought I was earning brownie points and coming into God's favour. But he says that was just worthless rubbish and done.

[ 24 : 22 ] Nothing of any use except to be in Christ. And attached through, as we have it here, the vine to the branch. Our own works do not work.

It has to be calling out to Jesus and acceptance of Jesus because only he is able to sort that situation. And it is the Holy Spirit that makes the connection between Jesus and the believer.

The Holy Spirit makes and maintains that connection. And it is through the Spirit that the power of God is unleashed in each and every individual who is a believer.

It is nothing of ourselves. It is all of Jesus and all through his finished work at Calvary. And as long as a person is connected to him, then the power of the Holy Spirit will flow into your life and will abide in you.

That is the lifeblood of the Christian. The Spirit of God dwelling within them. It can only come through faith and believing in Jesus.

[ 25 : 42 ] Your spiritual needs and your strength, they flow from the vine, from Jesus, through his Spirit, by his Spirit, and into working through your own life.

Continually vitalizing and revitalizing you as you need to. Effectively, as we understand from Scripture, drawing from that fountain of grace that is so freely available to all.

And each believer has a responsibility of maintaining that close fellowship with the Lord. If they are to live their life through the vine and produce fruit to the glory of the Father.

And we see here that Jesus, in the previous chapter, Jesus greatly encourages the disciples. He speaks of this wonderful new relationship.

He makes it clear in chapter 14, where he promises the Holy Spirit. If you look there in chapter 14, and at verse 15, Jesus says to his disciples, He says, If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

[ 26 : 47 ] And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper to be with you forever. Even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, but it neither sees him nor knows him.

You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. That is the connection. And that is that vital union between the Lord and the believer. It is through the Spirit of Jesus.

Through the Spirit of the Lord himself. And it is exactly the same as it was for the disciples there. It is the same for all believers today as well. That union through the Spirit of God.

And each and every one, every person here, you can have that great power unleashed in you as well. If you are not a Christian today, then seek the Lord.

Call out to the Lord. And you will have that connection if you put your faith in him, your trust in him, and truly believe in Jesus and his finished work at Calvary.

[ 27 : 43 ] These are the characteristics of a life that is lived in the Lord. But we are also told here, and I just want to touch on this, in verse 6.

It talks about branches that are taken away. And sometimes there is a bit of confusion about this and how we should understand these branches. They look as if they are in the vine, but they are cut off and they are cast into this fire.

Who is Jesus talking about here? Some people wonder, can you be saved one day and then lost the next day? Can you be justified at one point in your life and then unjustified at some other point further down in your life?

Well, that's not scriptural in any way, shape or form. It may look like that at a first glance, just a surface glance at the text here, but it goes right against what scripture tells us elsewhere.

Because it's impossible to be saved today and to be lost tomorrow. That is an impossibility. And that's because your salvation doesn't depend on yourself.

[ 28 : 58 ] It's wholly based on Christ, on him. And when God unites Jesus, when Jesus is united with a believer, then it is all dependent on his grace and his blessing and his promises.

And each and every believer is bonded and sealed with a spirit of truth, that bond that can never be broken. Nothing in your life can ever separate you from him ever again, from the moment that connection is made.

I just want to quote, there are many scriptures, I'll just quote one scripture here, from Romans chapter 8. And it tells us here in Romans 8 and at verse 35, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written, For your sake we have been killed all the day long. We are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.

No, in all these things, Paul tells us, we are more than conquerors through whom you loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

[ 30 : 18 ] So who is Jesus talking about here? I just want to spend two minutes, I'm very conscious of the time. But I think we should understand this. It is perhaps at that point as Judas has gone out into the night, it is perhaps Judas Iscariot that is on his mind here as the branches that look as if they're in the vine, but yet they are cast off and cast into the fire.

To look at Judas Iscariot as we have it in the scriptures, most people, I think, would probably conclude that man's a believer. Look what that man is doing for the Lord.

Look at all the good works he's doing for the cause of the Lord. And he's always around Jesus, and he's always around his word, and he's doing this and doing that, and he just looks the part. But of course Judas didn't, he may have had that outward connection, but he didn't have the inward connection, that bond, that sealing of the Spirit, that faith and circumcision of the heart.

Judas Iscariot is a prime example and a great warning, I think, for everyone who thinks that they are in Christ and that they are safe in Christ, but if you're not bonded, and if you don't have this living, personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, and this union through his Spirit, then you don't have this life in you.

And the reference of the branches that are deadwood, as it were, and been picked up and cast into the fire, there is certainly an allusion towards a lost eternity, a lost eternity in hell for all people who do not have this vital union with the Lord.

[ 32 : 07 ] It has to be Christ working in you and through you. It's all of him. And Jesus says, just as I am in the Father, then I am also in you.

And he emphasizes that great, personal, close relationship between the Father himself and the believer. And he goes on to expand on that, in John chapter 17, in his great high priestly prayer as well.

So it is all of the Lord, and all of Christ, and that vital union with himself. It is all to the glory of God.

Let me just close with this. Jesus uses this phrase, in me, six times in this passage. That's how important it is, this link.

And he is emphasizing that it is absolutely necessary for life in him, and for the fruit-bearing process. And, you might ask, well, how do you get to be in Jesus?

[ 33 : 18 ] Well, the only way is by this new birth, what we're told in John chapter 3. You must be born again, into this new life, this union with him, into this new relationship, this living relationship, with a living Savior.

to call out to the Lord, and to cry out for mercy, and to seek that he would bless you, and bring you into this saving relationship with him.

He tells us in chapter 14, he says, Jesus says, I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life, and no one shall come to the Father, except through me, by believing in me, by trusting in me, and by having faith in me, and by having life in me.

It is all about being in Christ, in the true vine, being a branch of that vine. You know, there are many people who are, many people today who are in religion, many people who are in church, and many people trying to work out their own salvation, but Jesus makes it very clear, that we need to be in him.

And that is the vital union, that is necessary. And we all have to be connected, to this awesome source of power. And this life that he gives, is given to all who have that connection.

[ 34 : 39 ] And may it be today, that for any here today, who still don't have this relationship with the Lord, may it be, that you would seek, after the Lord, and call out to him, and just keep pleading with him, that he would come into your life, that you would confess your sins, repent of your sins, and call out to him, and go to him, and keep going to him, until he answers you.

Because he will answer the person, who faithfully, from their heart, cries out to him, for mercy. Jesus says, I am the true vine, you are the branches.



And the connection, is made, through the spirit of the Lord, where that, the branches are energized, and they are living branches, bearing fruit. All is done, to the glory, of God, the Father.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you for, all of your goodness to us, and, we bless you for your word, and we truly pray, that, that, you would bless your word, to each one of us, and we truly pray, Lord, that your name, would be glorified.

Keep us, throughout the remainder, of this day, and help us, Lord, to focus upon you, on this, your day, and may your name, be glorified, in all that's said and done. Forgive us our sins, in Christ. Amen.