

The Gift Of Abiding

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[0 : 00] Well, church, if you would, please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to John chapter 15. John chapter 15. Our passage this morning is John 15, verses 1 through 16.

And when you've found that, I ask if you would, if you're able, physically able, would you stand for the reading of God's Word as I read John 15, verses 1 through 16 this morning? Jesus 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. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and 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.

[1 : 48] These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing.

But I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

This is God's holy, perfect, inspired word. Let's bow once more and take a seat as we pray. Lord, I pray that you would speak through the preaching of your word this morning.

God, give us ears to hear. And cause us to abide in you, we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

Well, I have had a stressful week this week, thanks to customer service.

[3 : 09] I'm sure that many of you have had the same experience with customer service that I have. It's always frustrating to me that when the internet goes out or the TV goes out, give it some time, the power might go out this morning, I don't know.

They always ask the same question. Now, of course, calling customer service is never your first result, right? You try everything you can in your own power to not call these people.

You try to solve the problem by yourself. Sometimes you have to put your pride on the side, pick up the phone, and ask for a little bit of help. But every time without fail, they always ask the same first question.

Do you know what it is? Is it plugged in? Is your device plugged in to a power source? And I don't know if they've ever had anybody say no yet, but every time they ask, and I get it, right?

Because if the device is not plugged in to the power source, it doesn't matter what they do. It doesn't matter all the troubleshooting that they can go through. It doesn't matter what you do to fix the problem.

[4 : 18] If there is no connection to the source of power, you're not going to get the device to work. No connection, no life. No connection, no power.

Well, in a similar way, I'm afraid, many of us, many Christians, go through their week, go through their life with very little spiritual power, very little spiritual life.

And oftentimes we wonder why. We've come to our gift number three this week. We've seen that we've been given good gifts of peace, given good gifts of joy.

We've been given gifts of comfort, gifts of assurance, given the good gift of the Spirit of God dwelling within us, His power at work in us. Every believer has been given these good gifts from

God Himself.

But let's be honest, how many of us actually feel at peace this morning? How many of us struggle to actually experience the good gifts that we have been given?

[5 : 26] Well, this morning, as we look at John chapter 15, I want us to see the secret to a faithful, fruitful, peaceful, joyful, genuine Christian life.

And the secret, Jesus tells us, is abide in Christ. Abide in Christ. As we walk through this chapter this morning, John 15, we're going to see the picture, the point, and the produce of abiding in Christ this morning.

The picture, the point, and the produce. First, we see the picture of abiding in Christ. Jesus, He speaks in a metaphor here in verses 1 through 3.

And I want us to get the picture of what Jesus is describing to His disciples first. We have to understand the picture that He's giving them before we can apply it to our lives.

We're going to get to that application. But first, I want us to see the picture here. Jesus gives us a metaphor. And He's prone to speaking this way. We've seen all throughout the Gospel of John.

[6 : 35] He's given several I am statements. You remember these? He said, I am the bread of life. I am the shepherd of the sheep. I am the light of the world.

I am the resurrection and the life. Each one of these I am statements is declaring to us that He is the I am. That He is the Lord, God Himself in the flesh.

And each one of these I am statements, it gives us a metaphor, a picture, to help us understand Him better. Well, here in John 15, this is the final I am statement in the Gospel of John.

And it's the only one, the only one, that has an additional qualification with it. Look there at verse 1. He says, I am the true vine and my Father is the vine dresser.

I am the true vine and my Father is the vine dresser. What does this mean? When we hear this, our minds instantly go outside to a garden or to a farm.

[7 : 45] It goes to agriculture, to planting. And that's good. We'll get there. But the disciples, when they hear this language, I am the true vine, their minds instantly go to the Old Testament.

And all of the wealth of references all throughout the Old Testament where Israel is represented as a vine. And a vineyard is used as a metaphor to describe Israel, the people of God.

And guess what? It is never good. It is never pretty. When the Old Testament describes Israel as a vine, it produces wild, rebellious fruit.

I'll give you one example. I want you to keep your finger here in John 15, but flip back to Psalm chapter 80. The passage that we read this morning. If you have your Bible open, flip back to Psalm chapter 80.

Because I want you to see this. This pieces together all the pieces that we need to see to understand what Jesus is saying in John chapter 15. First, we see clearly that Israel is the vine.

[8 : 49] Look there if you have your Bibles open to Psalm 80 at verse 8. It says, You, God, brought a vine out of Egypt. You drove out the nations and planted it.

You cleared the ground for it. It took deep root and it filled the land. You brought a vine out of Egypt. Who's the vine? Who's the vine? It's Israel.

You brought a vine out of Egypt. The Lord took Israel out of slavery in Egypt, planted them like a vine in the new vineyard in the land of Canaan, and they lived happily ever after, right?

That's what happened? Wrong! They rebelled. They failed. They disobeyed. They were idolatrous over and over and over and over again and again and again and again.

This vine produced wild fruit. So, Psalm 80 verses 12 and 13, we see this brought the judgment of God. It says, You've broken down its walls so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit.

[9 : 53] And the boar from the forest ravages it, and all that move in the field feed on it. This is a picture of the judgment of God against His people, Israel, because they bore wild, idolatrous fruit.

This is a problem. This is the problem that faced the people of God. God had made promises to Israel. God promised Israel that they would be His chosen people.

He promised Israel that He would bless them. He promised Israel He would protect them. He promised that He would put them in their own land. He promised them that He would be their God and that they would be His people.

But this big problem called sin keeps getting in the way. So, look at where the psalm ends. Psalm 80 verse 14.

It ends with a prayer. It says, Turn again, O God of hosts. Look down from heaven and see. Have regard for this vine, the stock that your right hand planted.

[10:54] And for the Son whom you made strong for yourself. They have burned it with fire. They have cut it down. May they perish at the rebuke of your face. But, listen to this. But let your hand be on the man of your right hand.

The Son of Man whom you have made strong for yourself. Then, we shall not turn back from you. Give us life and we will call upon your name.

Are you piecing it together here? This is a prayer for restoration. We see here that the ultimate hope of Israel is for one individual shoot off of the vine of Israel.

One individual Son of Man to come and restore true worship for the people of God. That's the hope. And here, as we get back to John chapter 15.

Here, Jesus says, I am that one. I am the vine. Israel was the vine, but it was a rebellious vine.

[12:04] I am, Jesus says, I am the true vine. I am the true Israel. I am the one who will obey where Israel has rebelled.

I'm the one who will restore true worship for the people of God. All of the promises made to Israel are fulfilled in and through me. I am the fulfillment of everything that Israel was supposed to be.

Church, this is good news for us. I hope you understand. Because what this means is that anyone who is in the vine can be connected, can be a part of the people of God.

Anyone who is connected to this true vine can receive, be the beneficiaries of all of the promises of God in Christ Jesus.

Because Jesus is the true Israel, all of God's promises come to His people through Him. So you want to go to the promised land? Jesus says, Come to me in my Father's house.

[13:13] There are many rooms. You want the presence of God to dwell with you? Jesus says, Come to me. I will ask the Father. He'll send the Spirit to dwell within you. You want the protection?

You want the peace of God? The true shalom of God? Jesus says, My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. You come to me. Come to me.

Come to me. I am the true vine. The true Israel. The only way to be included in the people of God is to be connected to the true vine.

Jesus Christ. He says, I am the vine. The true vine. And you, believer, are the branches. Isn't this what John has been telling us all along? If we've been paying attention, isn't this what he's been saying all along?

That no one belongs to the people of God by virtue of their physical birth alone, but only by spiritual rebirth through faith in Jesus Christ.

[14:18] He told us this all the way back in John chapter 1. It says, He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Church, we should rejoice in this. And we should praise God for this. This means that you, Gentile, you, anyone in the entire world, anyone who comes to Christ is now included to belong to the true vine.

And all of the nourishment, all of the power, all of the benefits, all of the blessing, all of the promises of God come to you through Him.

That's the picture. Now, second, what's the point? What's the point? The point is, make absolutely certain that you are connected to that vine.

That's the point. It's very simple. Jesus says, I am the vine. Make it absolutely certain in your heart that you are connected to that vine.

[15:40] Make it the aim of your life to connect yourself deeply to Jesus Christ. If all of the gifts of God, all of the promises of God, all of the life-giving power of God comes by virtue of being connected to the vine, we had better make certain that we are actually connected.

And not just once, not just once at the beginning of your relationship with the Lord, but every moment of every day. Are you connected with Christ?

Jesus has a word for that connection. What is it? It's abide. Abide. Abide in me and I in you.

Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 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.

[16:49] See, church, there are only two options here for everyone in the world. You either belong to the vine, abide in him, bear fruit in him, and so prove to be his disciples.

Or, he says, you do not belong to the vine, do not abide in him, do not bear fruit for him, and so prove to not be his disciples.

And what happens for these over here? He says, 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.

This is a heavy truth, church. Jesus says, this is the work of the vine dresser. Jesus says, this is exactly the type of work what the Father is doing right now.

The Father is the vine dresser. He says the Father is clearing, and he is pruning. It's his work. Why? Because he's the vine dresser.

[18:01] He's the only one who can see with 100% certainty and clarity those who are actually abiding in the vine and those who are not. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away.

Every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit. And Amanda and I went up to the mountains last year, and we went blueberry picking, something that we wanted to do while we were up there.

We were out there maybe for an hour before one of the workers came by, and he said, hey, let me show you something. And he took us, we followed him to this one bush that we had walked past probably 50 times that morning.

Now he took us to this one bush, and he said, look at this, this blueberry bush, it produces pink lemonade blueberries. Raise your hand if you've ever heard of pink lemonade blueberries.

I had never heard of pink lemonade blueberries. But once he showed them to me, once he pointed them out to me, I realized, okay, these are slightly different color. They got a little bit of yellow, maybe a little bit of purplish pink there.

[19:07] They're a little bit smaller. And he said, taste one. So it had a different taste to it. I had walked by that bush probably 100 times without knowing exactly what was going on in that bush, but he knew.

Why? Well, he was the one that planted the bush. He was the one that cared for the bush. He was the one that knew exactly what type of fruit he was looking for it to produce.

He knew what the good fruit was, what the bad fruit was, where to point us to go if he wanted this type of fruit, that type of fruit. Well, Jesus says, that's exactly what the Father is doing.

The Father is the vine dresser. He's caring for the vine. He's clearing out those that do not belong to the vine. And those that do bear fruit, He's pruning.

And it might bear more fruit for His glory. You know, this is the Christian experience. If you're hearing this, and you're like, this doesn't really sound like me.

[20:04] I want us to look here at this passage because it gives us a full picture of the entire Christian experience from beginning to end. See, the Christian life, it begins with God's choosing.

Verse 16. He says, You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit. God's choosing inevitably leads to cleansing.

Verse 3. It says, Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. That's hearing and believing. That's when, believer, when you heard the word of Christ and you believed it and you loved it and you repented of your sin and you trusted in Christ, that's the cleansing power of the word of God.

Faith comes through hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. And that initial cleansing with the word, it inevitably leads to ongoing abiding.

Those who are cleansed with the word abide in Christ. Verse 4. That ongoing abiding leads to fruit producing. Verse 5. That fruit producing leads to painful pruning.

[21:16] Verse 2. And all of it, from beginning to end, Jesus says, all of it is God glorifying. Verse 8. By this my Father is glorified, He says, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Ask yourself, as you read this passage, does that sound like me? Does that describe my experience? Where in this paradigm am I?

Am I abiding in Christ? Have I received the word of Christ by faith? Have I been cleansed by the word of Christ? Am I bearing fruit for the glory of God? Does this sound like me?

See, the point of this metaphor, the way that we know whether or not we belong to the vine is if we are abiding in the vine. And He says, one way, one sure way, we see if we're abiding in the vine is if we are bearing fruit.

So the million dollar question for us then has to be, what does it mean to abide? What does it mean to abide?

[22 : 26] If Treg was here, I wish he was here because I think this is his most quoted passage. This is one of his greatest hits. If he were here and he were explaining this passage, I know he would use the word yield.

He would say, this means that you are yielded to Christ. You are yielded to Him and to His desires for you. And I think that's a great answer, but I would ask him, well, how do you yield to Him, Treg? And He's not here to explain Himself. So we'll look at the passage. I wonder if you noticed what I noticed here as we read this passage. Jesus, He changes language around.

He flips the words around here. He tells His disciples to abide in Him in three different ways here. Did you notice that? Verses 4 and 5, He says, abide in me and I in you.

But then verse 7, He says, abide in me and my words in you. Verse 7. And then He says, abide in my love.

[23 : 30] Verse 9. So which is it? Which is it? Well, the answer is yes. And we shouldn't think of these as three separate things to put our roots down into or three separate categories to abide or to yield ourselves to.

To abide in Christ is to abide in His Word. It's His Word that makes us clean. It's His Word that teaches and corrects and reproves and rebukes and trains and encourages and instructs and assures us of God's love for us in Christ.

You cannot abide in Christ apart from abiding in His Word. One way to assess our abiding in Christ is by asking ourselves, are we abiding in His Word?

Do we hunger for His Word? Do we love His Word? I'm not saying just have a copy on your shelf. Not even just know it intellectually, but do we possess His Word in our heart? Are we feeding on it daily? Do you love the Word of God?

[24 : 51] I know there's nothing special about a calendar year. I realize that, but this year's coming to a close. 2024 is upon us. It's a wonderful time right now to begin making a plan.

What is your plan for abiding in the Word of Christ this year? Do you have a plan? What's your plan for abiding in the Word of Christ?

To abide in Christ is to abide in His Word. And, he says, is to abide in His love. Abide in His love. Friend, how often do you meditate on this one glorious, simple, beautiful truth that God loves you? that God loves you?

How much anxiety and stress and turmoil and anger would melt away in our hearts if we simply meditated more deeply on the fact that God loves you?

[25 : 55] God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life. the eternal assurance of the love of God is seen in the cross of Christ where He showed His love for us by laying His life down for His friends.

Are you preaching the gospel to yourself, church? Not just hearing it here when you come. I love that you come and hear the gospel here. We need this every day.

We need to assure ourselves of the love of God for us every day. Tim Keller, the famous pastor, when he was still living with us, he would say, the gospel is not just the ABCs of Christianity.

It's the A to Z. It's the whole thing. We never move past the glorious news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Church, isn't this what we celebrate at Christmas time?

That the love of God is made manifest to us in the person of Jesus Christ who came to live and to die and to rise in the place of sinners.

[27 : 03] For you, those who deserve it the least, He showered His love on you the most. Abide in His love for you in the gospel.

You know, there may be some here this morning, I don't presume to know the spiritual state of everybody in the room. There may be some in the room this morning that do not truly know the love of God in the gospel.

And if that's you, friend, what keeps you from turning to Him now? What keeps you from trusting in Christ right now, from receiving His promise that any who come to Him will have everlasting life? Abide in Christ. That's the point of this lesson. Now, last question. For those who know the Lord, I want to get very practical here in our last point.

Very practical. When you abide, third, what is the produce? Not what does it produce? We're talking about fruit this morning. Okay? What is the produce? I'm not a gardener.

[28 : 09] Y'all probably have realized that by now. So I'm confident that this illustration will make no sense whatsoever in a real life scenario. But just humor me for a moment, okay? When you become a Christian, when you trust in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, when you receive the Word, the promise of Christ, when you are now connected truly to the vine, what happens is you become an entirely new thing.

You are now a new creation. It's as if you have been plucked up out of the ground and now you've been transplanted into something new.

You've been plucked out of the soil where you've had your roots sunk down deep into sin and into darkness and to disbelief and rebellion to God and now you are connected to a vine that is completely rooted in the will of God.

And in your new life, now, as you're connected to the vine, you may see some fruit that does not belong. You may see some fruit that looks a lot like your old self, fruit of anger, fruit of jealousy, fruit of pride, fruit of lust, fruit of greed.

You may see that fruit produced, but if you are actually connected to Him, guess what? That is old fruit. That is not truly who you are. That is old fruit that's coming from those roots that have been sunk down deep for so long and you'll begin to see and to realize and to understand the difference between the fruit that comes from Christ and the fruit that belongs to your old nature.

[29 : 52] And you'll begin to join the Lord in that pruning work of cutting off the old fruit and producing the new fruit. It's a lifelong journey of abiding in Christ and seeing fruit born as you're connected to the vine.

So the question I want to ask is, what might that fruit look like? What might that fruit look like? And we could spend all day discussing the many, many, many results, glorious fruits of being connected to Christ, but I see six in this passage.

We're going to work through them quickly. Six fruits of abiding in Christ. And would you just, as we walk through this, would you consider how you might ask the Lord to produce this in you this year? Number one, the one who abides in Christ is marked by a new aim in life. The one who abides in Christ is marked by a new aim in life.

What is the point of your life? What is the overarching goal, the overarching banner that hangs across and over every other decision you make, every other thing that you do?

[31 : 08] What is the point of your life? life, before you were in Christ, it was entirely driven by self. Me. Bring me glory.

Satisfy my desires. Meet my needs. If you are in Christ, you have a new desire, a new aim, a new purpose. What is it? It's the glory of God. To magnify the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He says, by this my Father is glorified that you may bear much fruit. Second, the one who abides in Christ is marked by a new dependence on God's strength.

A new dependence on God's strength. If you abide in me and my word abides in you, ask whatever you wish. You hear that?

Ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. Ask. He says in verse 7, 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.

[32 : 18] I mean, that seems unthinkable that we should make requests of God and that we can ask God to act and to move and to respond to our little needs in our life.

But Jesus says this prayerful dependence ought to characterize the life of one who is abiding in me. Do you want power for the Christian life?

Do you feel like you don't have that in you? Ask. Do you want the peace of God to rule over your life? Just ask. Do you want to feel the joy of the Lord working in and through you?

He says, come, come just ask. Just ask me. Our dependence on Christ is never more clear than when we are on our knees in prayer.

It's so simple. Church, but how often is it neglected? You can bear more fruit in one hour of prayer than in a hundred hours of labor in your own strength.

[33 : 25] Do we actually believe that? What does our prayer life say about whether we believe that? God, make us like Martin Luther, the great reformer who famously said, I have so much to do today that I shall spend the first three hours of my day in prayer.

Make us abide in prayerful dependence. Number three, the one who abides is marked by a new desire to obey.

A new desire to obey. Before you were in Christ serving yourself, serving your own desires, you didn't desire to obey the Lord, but now in Christ you have this new desire to obey Him.

Where in the world did that come from? He says, verse 10, if you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love.

And what does that obedience look like? Well, he tells us it looks like love. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

[34 : 35] Church, that sounds simple. That is the highest calling in the world. How has Christ loved you? He gave everything for you.

He laid His life down for you. He suffered and died for you. And now He says, believer, you go and do likewise for one another.

Abide in Him and bear the fruit of love. And when we do, when our lives are marked by this kind of self-sacrificial, other-centered, God-glorifying love, we can have, number four, a new assurance.

A new assurance. The one who abides in Christ is marked by a deep-rooted assurance that they are truly disciples of Jesus Christ, that they truly belong to the vine.

Verse 8, He says, By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. What did He say in chapter 13, rather?

[35 : 41] What did He say? Do you remember? By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you what? If you have love for one another. Church, our faith is invisible.

We cannot see one another's faith. The roots of faith are invisible, but the fruits of faith are made manifest in love for one another.

And when we see an outflow of love for Christ and love for others, we should be assured that we are disciples of Christ. And when we look at one another and we see the ways that we are growing in love for Christ and serving and loving one another, we can encourage one another.

I see the grace of God at work in you, brother. I see the love of Christ coming through you, sister. Number five, the one who abides in Christ is marked by new joy.

New joy. These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. What could be more joyful than to know that your sins are forgiven?

[36 : 56] What could be more joyful than to know that Christ himself has come for you to reunite you with a God that you don't deserve the time of day with but he has loved you enough to send his son to reunite himself with you through his blood?

What could be more joyful than to know that you have eternal security? That you've been made children of God? We sing joy to the world, the Lord is come.

And the angels said, do not fear, I bring you good news of great joy for all the peoples. The one who abides in Christ ought to be marked by unshakable, supernatural, palpable joy.

Does this describe you? Does your heart rejoice in the Lord? If you want real, lasting joy, abide more deeply in Christ.

And lastly, number six, the one who abides is marked by new fellowship. new fellowship, friendship with God himself.

[38 : 10] Jesus assures his disciples here in verse 13. He laid his life down as an act of love for his friends. He says, 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.

Church, it is one thing to serve the Lord. It is another thing entirely to be called his friend. And Jesus says, I have come to befriend sinners.

To abide in Christ is to know the Lord Jesus not just as master but as friend. To abide in him is to speak to him, to listen to him, to follow him, to long for relationship with him as your deepest and truest friend who loves you and has given himself for you.

Church, if you feel yourself feeling spiritually dry this Christmas, if you are struggling to find peace, if you are strung out and too busy, if you are stressed, if you are not seeing the growth that you hope to see in the Lord, start right here.

[39 : 41] Make sure that you are connected to the vine. Jesus invites you to come to lay aside the burden of productivity, lay aside the stress of your busyness, lay aside the pressure of doing everything in your own strength to come to me and abide in me.

Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Let's pray. Lord, Jesus, what a promise.

Again, we confess how easy it is for us to wonder from the source of joy and source of power, source of strength, from your very presence, but Lord, we pray now, would you correct us in our hearts and draw us more deeply into communion with you.

we thank you, Father, that you sent Christ. The sinners like us might even know you, might even call you our friend. We thank you for your love for us in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.