



8/20/26

We're focusing on storming the throne for our church, and reason #11 in A Gospel Primer, to rehearse the gospel to ourselves daily is this: The gospel helps us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ with a deep nurturing bond. The gospel both displays God's love, and it teaches us to love as Jesus loved. The author said, "By preaching the gospel to myself each day, I nurture the bond that unites me with my brothers and sisters for whom Christ died, and I also keep myself well-versed in the raw materials with which I may actively love them in Christ." I pray that you and I will rehearse the gospel to ourselves and grow in our love for each other.

*Blessings,
Jonna*

John 15:1-11 ~

It was the last night of Jesus' life before He went to the cross. My daughter spent a semester in Israel, and she told me that Jesus and the disciples would have been walking through the Kidron Valley on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. She said there are vineyards all around and the valley is where they burn the dead branches. The disciples would have seen the vineyards and smelled the burning wood as Jesus spoke. I love how Jesus used visuals to make His point. I'm a visual learner, so it really helps me.

As I've been seeing this week, our relationship with the Lord is both a collective relationship as the body of Christ AND an individual relationship with Him. The tree is a great example. It is one tree, God's tree, with many branches. We're all individual branches, and part of the same tree. What does God want to teach us from John 15:1-11?

Vs. 1-2 ~ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

So... I more easily think of a tree, but they had grapevines everywhere. Jesus spoke to what they understood and saw. He is the TRUE vine. There are a lot of fake vines out there that fight for us to connect to, but they don't have what we need.

The Father is the Vinedresser, the Gardener. He cultivates and fertilizes the vine so that the branches can thrive.

It is assumed and understood that everyone else is a branch. Jesus spoke about unfruitful branches IN HIM being taken away. He was not speaking about Christians losing their salvation. He was speaking about the Jewish people, the chosen people, who were basing their salvation on their bloodline rather than on Jesus. The Father takes those branches away because they refuse to acknowledge His Son. 1 John 2:23 says, "No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also."

The branches IN HIM that bear fruit, He prunes. First, branches BEAR fruit. They don't MAKE fruit. This is a big deal. My job as a believer in Christ, as I'll see, is to abide in Him so that HE can grow the fruit in me. I also see here that He will prune me. Pruning hurts. It cuts away what needs to go so the branch can thrive. Sometimes the branch being pruned can feel like a branch that's being cut away. But the result is way different. O Lord, please help us to welcome Your pruning, because I know as I look ahead in the rest of the passage that the result of this pruning will be more fruit, a deeper understanding of Your love, and fullness of joy. I want joy. And joy doesn't come without pruning. Perspective is everything.

Vs. 3 ~ "Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you."

How much does Jesus love us? The cleansing we need to abide in the Lord is not something we have to do. He cleans us with His word! Ephesians 5:26 says that Jesus makes us clean "by the washing of water with the word." This is hard for me to comprehend!!! I feel so dirty with sin when I'm selfish or wanting comfort more than I want my King, or when my thoughts are arrogant or filled with shame that He already paid for. It isn't until I go to His word and speak the truth to my heart, asking the Holy Spirit to help me choose the facts over my feelings, that I'm able to once again reset my mind on what's true. It's then that I can celebrate that He's washed me clean! ALREADY I am clean. Praise His name!

Vs. 4-5 ~ "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. 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."

Take a branch off a vine or a tree and expect it to grow fruit... How long do I have to wait before I see it sprout? FOREVER! It never will! It's a dead branch. When God's people don't ABIDE in Him, dwell with Him, meditate on Him, talk to Him, listen to Him, let the Holy Spirit lead and transform us... like that dead branch, we will never grow fruit. What happens to our hearts when we're cutting ourselves off from the source of our nutrients? Our hearts harden. We miss out on the joy God wants to fill us with.

Apart from Him, we can do nothing! We can't make our own fruit, so we won't bear fruit

without Him. How much do we miss out on because we won't dwell with the Lord? Whether it's because of fear or shame or anger or desire for pleasure over pruning? O Lord, we need to be reminded that You WANT to be with us!!!

Vs. 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 verse can be confusing. Is it saying a believer can lose salvation? No. Anyone who does not abide in the Lord at all doesn't know the Lord at all. They can show up at church on Sundays. They can say a lot of the right things. But if they aren't in a personal relationship with the Lord, they will be a thrown away branch. Sadly, there are some branches in the church that aren't actually part of the tree. There are also a lot of branches that aren't thriving because they're barely abiding. They look like what my plants would look like if I still had any... little green shoots that have a lot of wilted leaves stemming from them because of lack of nutrients or water.

I always have to remember that Jesus was directing this to Jewish people BEFORE He went to the cross. He was speaking about people who claimed to be His people by blood, but didn't have a real relationship with Him... like the Pharisees and Judas. Jesus said of the Pharisees, "They honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." The Lord knows those who are truly His. Also, I want to be careful to pay close attention to what God DOES want me to do and not be looking at how far away from Him I can go and still be okay. That's not really about a thriving, fruitful relationship.

Vs. 7-8 ~ "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."

First, Jesus said we need to abide in Him. Now He says we need to let His word abide in us. A relationship with the Lord is all encompassing. It makes sense. If I were in a relationship with someone else and we never spoke, or I never listened to anything the other person had to say, what kind of relationship would we actually have? I've been married to my husband for over 32 years. I know him very well, and he knows me. We often know exactly what the other person is going to say before the words are spoken. That's what it is to be abide in the Lord and let His words abide in me... to know His word so well that when something comes up, I already know what He has to say about it... at least... most of the time. And He always knows what I'm going to say. "Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, You know it altogether" (Psalm 139:4).

So... when God's people let His word abide in us, He says we can ask whatever we wish and it will be done for us. So this is not just about knowing God's word, but letting it change the way we think. When it is impacting our minds and our motives, we can ask God to fulfill our desires and He will.

Before letting His word abide in us, we might ask for Him to fix the circumstances and make life easier. But that may not be what's best.

With His word abiding in us, we will probably ask the Lord to sustain us through the circumstances. One thing I know for sure that we'll ask for is found in vs. 8. We'll ask that the Father will be glorified and that we'll bear MUCH fruit, and that the fact that we are His disciples will be obvious.

When God's word is abiding in me, I WANT and pray for the Father to be glorified in me, my life to bear fruit, and my loyalty to Jesus to be obvious. When God's word is NOT abiding in me, if I pray at all, I will pray for ME to be glorified, my life to be easy, and for people to think highly of me and not disrespect me. My loyalty will be to my image and not to Jesus.

Vs. 9-10 ~ "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."

One more way to abide. Abide in Jesus. Let His word abide in me. And now... abide in His love.

Jesus said, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." How has the Father loved Jesus, and how does Jesus love me?

As the Father has loved Me...

- 1. He took pleasure in Him (baptism) ~ Matthew 3:17*
- 2. He openly spoke of His love for Him (baptism and transfiguration) ~ Matthew 3:17, 17:5*
- 3. He sent His Spirit to dwell with Him (baptism) ~ Matthew 3:16*
- 4. He was pleased to have the fullness of His deity dwell in Him ~ Colossians 1:19*
- 5. He ministered to Him in His suffering (after the temptation, in the Garden of Gethsemane) ... and grieved over His death (at the cross) ~ Matthew 4:11, 27:45-51, Luke 22:43*
- 6. He raised Him from the dead exactly when He said He would (on the third day) ~ Matthew 28:1-6*
- 7. He glorified Him (gave Him the name above all names) ~ Philippians 2:10-11*

So have I loved you...

- 1. He takes pleasure in us ~ Ephesians 1:7-8, Romans 3:23-24*
- 2. He openly speaks of His love for us ~ John 3:16, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:35-39*
- 3. He sent His Spirit to dwell in us and pour His love into us ~ Ephesians 1:13-14, Romans 5:5*
- 4. He is pleased to make us like Him ~ 2 Corinthians 3:18, Romans 8:29*

5. *He ministers to us in our suffering and grieves with us ~ Isaiah 63:9, 2 Corinthians 1:3-4*
6. *We have been crucified with Jesus AND raised to new life ~ 2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 6:4*
7. *He glorifies us ~ Romans 8:30*

He wants me to abide in that love... to let that love have full reign of my heart so that I trust His love even when my feelings don't align with the facts.

What's the evidence that I truly abide in His love? I obey Him just as Jesus obeyed the Father. In John 5:30, as in many other passages, Jesus said, "I can do nothing on My own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not My own will but the will of Him who sent Me." In the same way, Jesus said to everyone who was willing to come to Him, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23). That's obedience born from love.

Vs. 11 ~ "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

What does God want for His people? He wants us to have full, abundant joy. How do we as His people get that joy from Him? Joy is a fruit... one of the aspects of the fruit of the Spirit. Joy comes in abiding in Him, letting His word abide in us, and abiding in His love. I'm concerned that a lot of the branches of the vine, even the ones who are truly grafted in, would prefer to have the joy without abiding. What we miss when we don't abide is far more than the loss of joy. I pray that we will see that having Jesus IS the treasure we seek, not just the giver of the treasure.

O Lord, we are Your church, Your many branches. Please help us to abide in You so that our branches can thrive. Please help us to welcome the pruning even when it hurts. Pruning always hurts. A physical therapist I worked with a few months ago would ask me, "Does it hurt? Is it a good hurt?" Pruning is a good hurt. Please help us to believe that. Please change our hearts so much that our motivation is to glorify You and bear fruit for You. Please bring us to a place where Your love is the love we treasure most. This will be our joy. O Lord, please make it so!