

9.7.25 Created for Connection: Make Yourself At Home

John 15:1-12 *The Message*

15 ¹⁻³ “I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn’t bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken.

⁴ “Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can’t bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can’t bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

⁵⁻⁸ “I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you’re joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can’t produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire.

But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.

⁹⁻¹⁰ “I’ve loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you’ll remain intimately at home in my love. That’s what I’ve done—kept my Father’s commands and made myself at home in his love.

¹¹⁻¹² “I’ve told you these things for a purpose: that my joy might be your joy, and your joy wholly mature. This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you.

*This is the Word of God for the people of God...thanks be to God.

Have you ever walked into someone’s house and heard them say,
“*Make yourself at home*”?

Now, sometimes we really mean it —

“Kick off your shoes, open the fridge, find the snacks.”

Other times it’s just polite — “Make yourself at home...

but don’t actually snoop through my cabinets and drawers!”

The truth is, being “at home” is about more than a place.

It’s about belonging. It’s about being at ease,

being known, & being connected.

It's about feeling the love and warmth of belonging...

not just a feeling of being welcome... but belonging.

*And today Jesus says to us: “Make yourself at home...in My love.”

Friends, we’re starting this new preaching series, Created for Connection because deep down, we all crave connection.

God wired us that way. From the very beginning —

Genesis tells us it’s not good for us to be alone.

We’re created for relationship: Relationship with God,

Relationship w/one another, & relationship w/the world God so loves.

Each week we’ll explore these relational connections.

And this morning Jesus reminds us that connection begins by making ourselves at home in him.

Abiding with Jesus...THAT’S where life flows.

That’s where love grows. That’s where joy becomes complete.

You may have noticed in this passage that Jesus gives us two different pictures:

~One is earthy and organic — the vine and the branches.

~The other is relational and personal —

“make yourselves at home in my love.”

At first they sound pretty different.

But put together, they tell a beautiful truth.

~The vine image reminds us that our very life depends on staying connected to Jesus.

A branch doesn't survive on its own — it belongs to the vine, draws strength from the vine, and bears fruit because of the vine.

~The home image reminds us what that connection feels like.

When someone says, “make yourself at home,” they’re saying:

You belong here. You’re not a stranger or a guest — you’re family.

Do you hear it? Both images are about deep belonging.

Both are about a connection that sustains life.

And when we bring them together, we see even more.

~A vine nurtures its branches so they grow and bear fruit.

~A home nurtures us with love, care, and relationship.

~Both are places where life flourishes.

And that’s the point: abiding in Jesus isn’t just staying put, it’s growing.

It’s letting his love become the lifeblood that flows through us,

so that our lives produce real fruit — love, joy, patience, kindness — for the sake of others.

Jesus doesn’t want us loosely connected like visitors dropping by, but deeply joined like family who share the same home, the same life, the same love.

“Make yourself at home in my love...

AND love one another as I have loved you.”

**So my beloved siblings in Christ, what does
“Making Yourself at Home” look like?**

First, it means belonging. You don’t have to prove yourself.

God’s love is not a hotel where you check in and out

depending on how well you’ve behaved this week. No! It’s home.

You are wanted here. You belong here—Jesus says over and over to us..

Second, it means staying connected.

Have you ever had your Wi-Fi drop in the middle of a Zoom call?

Pretty frustrating, right? When the connection goes, so does the flow.

Well the same is true with our lives —

When we disconnect from the Source of Life that is Christ,

When we disconnect from prayer, from Scripture, from worship,
from one another as a community of faith, we lose strength.

Staying connected keeps the life of Christ flowing through us.

And finally it means bearing fruit.

Home is where we are nourished, but it's not just for us.

A life rooted in God's love naturally overflows:

~When you pause and really listen to your teenager

instead of rushing past their words — that's fruit.

~When you choose patience instead of snapping at your spouse

or coworker — that's fruit.

~When you forgive the neighbor who irritated you or the family member
who disappointed you — that's fruit.

~When you drop off a meal, bring groceries each mos for the food pantry,
or simply check in on someone who's lonely — that's fruit.

Friends, those everyday acts of love and kindness are evidence
that we are staying connected to the Vine.

And you know...

I think we saw a glimpse of it at last year's Apple Festival.

Nearly a thousand people came—many of them young families—
gathering for fun, food, laughter, and connection.

And it wasn't just the crowd, it was also YOU—

so many FMC folks volunteering, welcoming, serving.

That day exemplified how we helped make so many “feel at home”
in God's love:

~People felt like they **belonged**. No one had to wonder if they fit in—there was a place for everyone, from toddlers to grandparents.
That's what God's love feels like.

~It meant staying **connected**. The festival only worked because **everyone** pitched in—just like branches only bear fruit when they stay connected to the vine.

~It meant **bearing fruit**. And the real fruit wasn't the pies or the apples—it was the smiles, the conversations, the sense of community & joy that blossomed and flowed.

Friends, that's what Jesus is inviting us into:
a life where we belong, where we stay connected,
and where our lives bear fruit that blesses others.

That's why we are having our 2nd annual Apple Festival in two weeks...
and need all of you... To connect, to abide in this life together...
a life that is created for connection and love and joy.

So friends, here's the invitation and challenge for this week:

~Don't treat God's love like a hotel you check into on Sundays.
Treat it like home. Stay connected. Abide.

~Let God's love flow through you in such a way...
that the fruit is unmistakable.

-Show grace to the person who cuts you off in traffic.

-Be generous when someone asks for help.

-Sign up to help at the Apple Festival

-Offer kindness at the grocery store, the office,
or on the phone with customer service.

-Speak words of encouragement instead of criticism.

Because friends, you and I were created for connection,
each and every one of us!

This is the promise of Jesus:

*When you make yourself at home in his love,
you find a belonging no one can take away,
a connection that never fails,
and a joy that makes you whole.

So don't just hear the invitation — live it.

Be the church where all belong.

Be the disciples who carry God's love into your homes,
your neighborhoods, your workplaces,
and yes —to the Apple Festival on Sept 19th.

For **YOU** were created for connection.

And in Christ, that connection becomes life,
becomes love,
becomes joy. Thanks be to God. Amen and amen.