

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Open up your bibles with me to John 15

We are continuing our verse by verse study through the Gospel of John

And we find ourselves in the middle of what is known as the Upper Room Discourse, this six hours period where Jesus pours into His disciples just hours before He was betrayed and nailed to the cross.

And we are in the portion of the Upper Room discourse where Jesus provides for His disciples and us, this beautiful illustration of the Vine, the Vinedresser and the branches

Jesus is the True Vine

God the Father is the Vinedresser

And we are the branches / we are the twigs

And one of the things we learned last week was that the purpose of the branches is to bear fruit – but the only way to bear true, genuine, God glorifying fruit is to abide in the Vine.

We have to be attached/we have to be connected to Jesus (that is what abide means) in order to be able to produce fruit for Him.

“for without Me you can do nothing”

Those were His exact words in verse 5.

In our text this morning – Jesus is going to continue in His illustration of the vine.

And the importance of abiding in the Vine

And what we are going to see in our text this morning is, Jesus showing us what abiding in Him practically looks like within the life of the believer.

And the dominating subject that Jesus is going to deal with – not only in our text this morning, but throughout the entire Upper Room discourse is agape love.

Let's pray...

[Jhn 15:9-15 NKJV] 9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 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. 11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and [that] your joy may be full. 12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 15 "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Now, before we get started – I feel that it is necessary to remind us that what Jesus is teaching His disciples here in Ch 15 (especially in vs 1-17),

Jesus is not providing us a how to manual in how to be saved

We have to understand this

What this is – the entire picture of abiding – is a description of the life of one who is saved.

So we must not read these verses and somehow think – I have to do all these things in order to earn God's favor, in order to be saved, in order to earn God's love

That is not what Jesus is saying here

Jesus is describing what the life of the believer looks like.

Remember what Jesus told His disciples in verse 3

[Jhn 15:3 NKJV] 3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

So, before Jesus even brought up the importance of abiding in Him, He made it clear that these 11 disciples were already clean.

So the disciples were not clean because of their ability to abide

The disciples' were not clean because of their good works

They were clean because of Jesus

In the same way, we as believers, we are cleansed, we are pure, we are pruned, we are unstained, we are unblemished, we are in a right standing with God because of our faith in Jesus.

Because of what Jesus has done, His life, His death, His resurrection

That is what cleanses us.

That is what puts us in a right standing with God

It doesn't rest on our shoulders; it rests on the shoulders of Jesus

And now that we are clean, we are called to abide.

So what does this abiding look like?

That is what Jesus is going to tell us.

[Jhn 15:9 NKJV] 9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.

It is very hard for us to grasp entirely what Jesus is saying here.

As the Father loved Me

Keep in mind who we are talking about here

This is Jesus, who has always existed together with the Father from before the very beginning:

[Jhn 1:1-2 NKJV] 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.

And from the very beginning, their relationship was one characterized by love:

[Jhn 17:24 NKJV] 24 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

We see that love manifested when Jesus was baptized –

Matthew tells us in his gospel - **And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."**

So the Father, at the start of Jesus' ministry declares His love and His satisfaction for Jesus

He used the word "Beloved" – the One who is worthy of being loved

Notice that the Father's love for Jesus didn't begin when Jesus started turning water into wine or when Jesus began feeding the multitudes or healing individuals or raise the dead or when He began to proclaim all these truths.

That is not when the Father's love was declared

His love was declared before Jesus did any of this

The Father's love for Jesus was perfect and complete before Jesus ever did a thing
Church, Jesus is talking about an incredible, eternal love that the Father has for the
Son.

This is a divine love

This is a love that existed before anything was created

There was never a time when God did not love and was not love.

And what Jesus is saying here is –

Hey guys, in the same love that God the Father has for Me, I also love you

Jesus loves His disciples as much as God loves Him.

And His love for His disciple is perfect, complete and unconditionally

So Jesus love for you and me doesn't hinge on our ability to do good things or produce
good fruit

God doesn't like us more or love us more when we are killing it and being fruitful and
He doesn't love us any less when we are not.

In the same way that the Father has loved Jesus – so does Jesus love you.

[Rom 5:8 NKJV] 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

This is foundational

This is good news

News that we should rest in

Cling to

Rejoice in

Although we were unworthy, the love that was and still is extended to us in Jesus Christ is still complete and unconditional.

Stop and think about THAT for a while.

It's hard to grasp.

Turn with me to Ephesians –

[Eph 3:16-19 NKJV] 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what [is] the width and length and depth and height-- 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul is saying the same thing here –

“Guys, it is hard for us to grasp that Jesus loves us the same as God the Father loves Him”

And then notice the very end of verse 9 –

Jesus says,

Abide in my love

Remain in my love (NLT)

Stay connected – in my love

Rest in this love

Cling to this love

He is telling His disciples' and us -

Not to abide in our own ability to do good works or our own ability to try to produce fruit

But rather, we should abide in the unconditional love that was extended to us long before we ever did a thing.

Here in the next verse, Jesus points our response to His love

[Jhn 15:10 NKJV] 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.

There are many individuals who will say – “I love Jesus”

And that would be a great thing to say

But how is that love manifested or demonstrated in our lives?

How do we abide in His love?

Jesus says that we abide in His love as we keep His commandments

Our response to the unconditional love of Christ should always be obedience

So what Jesus is teaching us is that Love and obedience are connected

However, we have to be careful here –

Because if we take verse 10 out of context – we can say, “Well, it seems like God’s love has to be earned?”

No, Jesus is saying, as recipients of this unconditional love that has been extended to us, there should be a growing desire to walk in obedience.

We are to keep His commandments, just as Jesus has kept His Father’s commandments.

We do not obey in order to receive God’s love; we obey because we have received God’s love

[Jhn 15:11 NKJV] 11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and [that] your joy may be full.

Jesus is not telling us to abide in Him and to obey His commandments so that we can live a life of misery.

We abide in Him and obey His commandments so that we can abide in His joy.

I had you make a note of the word remain – because it is the same word that Jesus has used throughout this chapter. To abide

Keep in mind, that we are hours away from the cross

The worst days of the disciples lives are up ahead – they really don't understand everything but they kind of get a sense that something is about to happen.

That is why Jesus told them – “Let not your heart be troubled”

And from our previous studies, we know that Jesus didn't try to explain to His disciples about the pain they were about to suffer or the difficulties they were about to endure.

He didn't try to explain to them with reason

But rather, He speaks to their soul.

Guys, you don't need to be so troubled.

Believe in Me, Trust Me

Abide in Me

And out of this abiding relationship, Jesus promises joy

He didn't promise happiness – He promised joy

And there is a distinct difference between happiness and joy

I touched on this during our Midweek in Nehemiah 8

“The joy of the Lord is our strength”

Happiness is based on our circumstances

We go up and down – like a roller coaster

If things are going well, I'm happy.

Got money in the bank

Everything is going well at work

My kids are behaving this week

Happy, happy, happy until the bottom falls out

And what happens to your happiness – it follows our circumstances.

Joy isn't like that

Joy is given to us by God Himself

And joy is not defendant upon the circumstances of our lives

But rather, comes to us by faith, in Jesus Christ –

And this joy gives us a contentment and a steadfast satisfaction that God is in our lives

– And He will fulfill the promises of our lives –

so that even in bad times, we can have joy,

because He is who He said He is and He keeps His promises and He has given us this joy, only through an abiding relationship with Him

Now, going to back to His disciples,

Jesus already promised the peace – at the end of ch 14

And now, He is extending to them joy

So church, we have to dwell on this

If we are lacking joy as a believer, it may point to an area we are lacking in our relationship to the True Vine

We need to have personal time with the Lord

We need to read and meditate in His word

And when He speaks to us and whenever He begins to lead us – and He will, we need to walk in obedience

And when we do so, joy will abound in our hearts

Did you notice that at the end of the verse –

He promises that your joy will be full

When we get "His joy" in us, we find that "our joy" is full.

Jesus' joy is so much greater, so much larger, so much deeper, that when we get His joy in us, it always fills our little hearts right to the top.

He doesn't give us just a little joy

He fills our hearts to the top with joy!!!

[Jhn 15:12 NKJV] 12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. [Jhn 15:13 NKJV] 13 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

In ch. 13:34-35, Jesus had given His followers a new commandment –

[Jhn 13:34-35 NKJV] 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

He said this would be the distinctive badge of His disciple.

That people will be able to look our lives and see and tell that we are a disciple of Jesus Christ based on the way we love one another.

Since the goal of a disciple is to be just like the rabbi, & Jesus said others would be able to identify Christians by their love for one another, this means to be just like Jesus is to be filled with a practical, selfless love for one another.

This is the command that we are to obey

Jesus is making it very clear – that this isn't just any type of love that we are called to.

This is a specific type of love

He is speaking to the self-sacrificing love that He is going to display for His people on the cross.

It's important we understand that what Jesus is calling for here is action.

He's not saying – "Feel warm & fuzzy about others."

He's calling for deeds that communicate concern & care for one another.

This is a humble love

This is a selfless love – we put the needs of our brothers and sisters above our own.

This is a sacrificial love

This is a love that only comes from abiding in Him

How we interact with one another should reflect and picture the cross.

There should be a unique and special love for one another, found within the church

In other words, abiding in Jesus leads to loving the church

Turn to 1 John 3

Here in 1 John 3 – John actually expounds on what he wrote in John 15

[1Jo 3:16-19 NKJV] 16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. 19 And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.

Actually – you can read and meditate on most of chapter three for homework –

But what John points out in his epistle is that love is more than simple words – real love for one another speaks of action / it speaks of what we do for one another.

John gives us practical ways that we can show this love for one another

[Jhn 15:14-15 NKJV] 14 "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

15 "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his

master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Once again, we must read everything in context –

If we incorrectly take this verse out of context –

We can say that Jesus is saying -

"If you don't do what I tell you, then I'm not going to be your friend ..."

That's not the point at all.

This is not a conditional statement

Jesus is using the phrase "friends" as a synonym for genuine true believers.

Question – who is the only other person in the scriptures who was called the 'friend of God'

Abraham –

James 2:23 (NKJV)

23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.

Judas wasn't a friend – he was not a genuine believer

As believers, we are His friend

Before we were saved, we were not His friend, we were His enemies.

Now you might be thinking:

“Wait, I thought I was a child of God?”—You are.

“I thought I was a servant of God?”—You are.

And some might say - “I’m uncomfortable calling God my friend because it seems to put me on His level—like an ‘equal’.”

First of all, understand that when God calls us His friend

He isn't saying that we're His 'buddy'—like when one of your friends shows up at your door and you invite them in to have pizza and watch the game with you.

Jesus is not our buddy

Or homeboy

Or bro

The idea of being a friend of God doesn't negate our reverence for Him,

It doesn't negate our worship of Him, or our subservience to Him as our God!

It's just Jesus' way of saying that His disciples have entered into a brand-new relationship with Him under the New Covenant than Israel had with God under the Old (Mosaic) Covenant.

You see, we have to keep in mind that in that culture – no master would die for one of His slaves.

In that culture, no master would tell his slaves what he was doing or planning to do.

So, even though we are called Jesus' slaves (doulos) in the NT – our overall relationship with Jesus is much more intimate than that of a slave to His master.

There is a unity and oneness that we have with Him that transcends all other human relationships—something Jesus stressed with the concept of abiding in Him earlier in this Chapter and now stresses once again with the idea that we are His friends.

That's why Jesus told His disciples that their relationship with Him was much more intimate than that of a master to his slaves—

Yet, not only did Jesus die for us—He shared His heart, His will, and His mission with us— we call it the 'Great Commission':

Our relationship with Him is made possible through our faith – but our intimacy with Him (our daily fellowship) is predicated upon our ongoing obedience to all He has commanded us as His people.

Jesus gave everything to his friends—his knowledge of God and his own life.

Jesus is our model for friendship—because He loved without limits—
and He makes it possible for us to live a life of friendship—because we have
been transformed by everything He shared with us.

Through friendship we come to know God and through friendship we enact the love of
God.

We can risk being friends because Jesus has been a friend to us.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Although we are servants of Christ, Jesus has called you "friend".

We can trust Him as our Savior, serve Him as our King and depend on Him as our friend.

How awesome to have a friend in Jesus.

He knows you, He cares about you and He loves you more than you will ever know.

Jesus always has your best interest at heart and He'll never turn his back on you. He'll never leave you, He's always there for you and you can always count on Him.

There is no friend like Jesus, He's the best friend you'll ever have.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

