

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, October 12th, 2025
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Vines
Proper 23
John 15:1-11

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Our hearts are ready, O Lord,
our hearts are ready!
We will sing and make melody!
We will awaken the dawn!

We will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples,
we will sing praises to you among the nations.
For your steadfast love is great above the heavens,
and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

All Knowing Father,
you seek men and women, boys and girls,
who will worship you in spirit and in truth;
and so we ask you to inspire
and bless the worship each week in this church,
in our words and music,
our prayers and hymns,
and our psalms and lessons.
Open the hearts and lips of those
who worship you today all over the world,
that all of us may listen with an alert conscience
to the preaching of your Word
and come with true repentance and faith.
We ask this in the name of
our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Children's Video: "Thankful Heart"**Call to Confession**

Prepare the way of the Lord!
Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you
with our whole heart and mind and strength.
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
so that we may delight in your will
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name.
Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Through Jesus Christ forgiveness of sins
is proclaimed to you.
In Christ we have redemption through his blood,
the forgiveness of our trespasses,
according to the riches of his grace.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name
Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one
For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever, Amen.

Hymn #433: "All Creatures of Our God and King" (V 1,5,6)

All creatures of our God and King,
Lift up your voice and with us sing
sing praises, hallelujah!
O brother sun with golden beam,
O sister moon with softer gleam,
sing praises, sing praises,
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

Let everyone of tender heart,
forgiving others, take their part:
sing praises, hallelujah!
All who long pain and sorrow bear,
give God your burdens and your care:
sing praises, sing praises,
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

Let all things their Creator bless,
And worship God in humbleness,
sing praises, hallelujah!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit, Three in One:
sing praises, sing praises,
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

Responsive Reading

Psalm 106:1-6

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever!

**2 Who can utter the mighty deeds of the LORD,
or declare all his praise?**

3 Blessed are they who observe justice,
who do righteousness at all times!

**4 Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people;
help me when you save them,**

5 that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones,
that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation,
that I may glory with your inheritance.

**6 Both we and our fathers have sinned;
we have committed iniquity; we have done wickedness.**

Anthem (Music Ministry): “For Beauty of Meadows”

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

John 15:1-11

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every 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. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide 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. ⁵I 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. ⁶If 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. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Sermon

Today we will start into John chapter 15, and it may seem like we are starting into something new because it is a new chapter, but we need to remember the original text had no chapters. What we read as John chapter 15 was part of the text which starts around John chapter 13 and ends at John chapter 18. It is a single evening, a conversation between Jesus and the disciples which takes place over a meal and the few hours that followed, and for that reason we need to understand that it is all connected.

At this point the Last Supper has occurred, as has the washing of the feet and Jesus has begun to give his disciples the teachings that they will need to continue his work after he departs.

These final instructions to the disciples are important for us as well, and you can begin to understand their importance because you will see Jesus repeating key idea’s, especially about what it means to be a true follower of Jesus in this world.

Two weeks ago, we saw Jesus talk about being, ‘the way, the truth and the life’, last week we saw Jesus tell his disciples that if they really love him, they will keep his commandments, both which prepare us for what Jesus is about to say this week.

John 15:1-3

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² 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. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

Jesus is there telling his disciples as they stand around the dinner table in deep discussion, that he is the true vine.

Jesus was speaking about a grape vine.

Grape vines were commonplace in the region, not just for their beauty, but for the very practical use of them to grow grapes for food and to make wine.

However, perhaps more importantly, the vine was a frequent picture of Israel in the Old Testament.

If you were to visit the temple in Jerusalem at that time, there was a massive wall that had an ornate grapevine formed from gold and precious gems. The people of Israel knew that they were the vine of the Lord their God.

The vine was also a recognized symbol of the Messiah.

So, as Jesus is preparing to leave his disciples, he is preparing them for all that is to come by telling them that he is indeed the Messiah, the true vine of God come to his people. He is saying I may be leaving you, but I will stay connected to you like the vine and the cluster of grapes.

The imagery of the vine and the branch is a powerful description of the relationship between God and man, more so than the sheep and the shepherd. A sheep can wander off and eat on their own, its connection to the shepherd is not as vital as the connection between the vine and the branch.

This image of the vine and branch is one of absolute connection and dependence, and this is what Jesus is emphasizing, he has already spoken about showing our love for him in our obedience, he has already told us that he is, ‘the way, the truth and the life!’ and now he is saying you need to be connected to Him.

Jesus is not something we add to our lives; Jesus needs to be the source of our lives.

There are a lot of things we add to our lives to improve them, going to the gym, taking up a new hobby, eating better, sleeping more, a new supplement or drink. There are a million different things that people add onto their lives so that they can have a better life here on earth.

However, Jesus is not something that you add to your life to get a better life, you do not sprinkle in a little Jesus here and there and improve your life. Jesus is not a supplement to life.

Jesus is a source of life, like the cluster of grapes and the vine, there is an absolute dependence, the grape cannot survive without the vine. Christians are called to live their lives with an absolute dependence on Jesus Christ.

Knowing that we need to live a life dependent on God and that we struggle so hard to do so, the verse that says, **'Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away'** tends to cause fear in us.

However, this is one of those verses in which you need to go back to the original language to fully understand. Takes away would be better translated as lifts up. Every branch that does not produce fruit he lifts up.

Anyone who has been to a vineyard or seen one in a movie knows this, grapes do not grow on vines that travel along the ground, they grow on the vines that have been lifted up from the ground and hand upon some sort of structure designed in such a way that they are supported and encouraged to grow their fruit.

That did not happen naturally, someone had to go and do that, the vinedresser had to build the structures and then go out and lift the vines which were growing along the ground so that they could begin to produce their fruit.

Jesus lifts up the branches that are not producing fruit, he encourages them, and helps them begin to produce fruit, as long as they are connected to him. That lifting up is probably uncomfortable for those vines, it is a change in where they are and what they are doing, but God does it because he wants them to stay connected and to produce fruit. That is the nature of God.

Even the branches that do produce fruit are not left alone, **and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.**' The dead wood, the excess growth, the unnecessary things are pruned away.

Anyone who has walked with God for more than a few years can probably look back in their life and find points where they were being unfruitful and Jesus had to lift them up in their lives, to

change something in their lives so that they would once again produce fruit. They have probably experienced the discomfort and pain of being lifted up and pruned by the Lord in their lives.

Jesus wants us to produce fruit and that means that he will be active in our lives lifting us up and pruning, changing the way we live, so that our walk with him becomes stronger and the fruit we produce continues to grow.

Notice in verse three that Jesus tells the disciples, '**you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.**' It is the Word of God that does the lifting, that does the pruning. Remember that Jesus shared this right after telling the disciples that if they love Him, they will obey His Word. If you are living a life in disobedience of God's Word, you might not be as connected to the vine as you believe.

John 15:4-5

⁴ 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. ⁵ 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.

Jesus is emphasizing the mutual relationship that exists between Jesus and his people, they are connected.

The eleven disciples that were there in the upper room knew what it was to be connected to God. They were physically connected to God, they ate with him, slept with him, talked with him, traveled with him. They had a relationship with God that was tangible and very real, and now that Jesus has said he is leaving they cannot understand how they will still be connected to Him.

Jesus is telling them that that connection will continue though the Holy Spirit. That connection is real, and it will be like that of a vine and branches.

He then tells them that if they keep that connection, if they abide in Him, that they will produce fruit, because it is only through the branch's connection to the vine that fruit may be produced. A branch on its own cannot produce fruit, but a branch that is closely connected to the vine will produce much fruit.

People of God, if you are connected to God, there will be the spiritual fruit of God in your life. And the closer that connection is the more fruit there will be. If you are abiding in Jesus, if you love him and obey his commands then you will have, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in your life.

These are the blessings that God gives us, the spiritual fruit, if you want to see someone who lives in Jesus, who abides in God, look for the Fruit of the Spirit in their lives. So, if you want to know if a branch is healthy or unhealthy, you just need to look at the Fruit of the Spirit.

You would not look at a grape branch that is heavy laden with plump large juicy grapes and wonder if that branch is healthy or not, you know that branch is connected to the vine and healthy because it has produced good fruit.

If there was a branch that was only producing a few withered grapes, you would not think that it was healthy and well-connected to the vine. You would know that there is something wrong, something that is causing life giving nutrients of the vine to not reach the grapes.

The same is true for Christians. The measurement of our connection to Jesus in our life can be seen in the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives. So be honest with yourself and examine your life, if the fruit hanging from your branches is healthy or withered up and in need, and then do something about it.

Jesus is emphasizing this when he says, **'for apart from me you can do nothing'**

The truth is that there are a lot of good things that we can do in this world, there are a lot of good deeds and kind acts that we can take part in, but without Jesus they mean nothing.

This is a real danger for Christians in the world today, we can get so caught up in doing good, in helping people, in serving others, that we forget that Jesus is supposed to be the basis for that work.

This is why so many of the social justice movements that exist in the world today are dangerous to Christians, they jump on board thinking that they are loving their neighbor as themselves, but as they jump aboard the social justice movement, they are leaving Jesus at the door forgetting that he is the basis of all that we are called to do, that sharing his name and his word to people is the core of our Faith, and if we need to abandon Jesus to take part in social justice we are not doing Gods work, we are doing it for ourselves and our worldly ambitions.

Jesus is very clear here in the upper room, you need to be connected to him, rooted in him, to have your good works have any bearing on your eternity.

Then Jesus goes even further.

John 15:6-8

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. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my

words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples

Jesus says abide in me, if you are connected to me, I will be at work in you. If you are producing a little fruit, I will lift you up, if you have excess growth, I will prune away until you produce more fruit. Jesus is focused on the grape vine producing fruit.

However, if you do not abide in him, if you are not connected, if you produce no fruit, you are of no use. There is no such thing as a Christian who is not living a life that is obedient to Christ.

Again, notice that Jesus does not say if anyone does not bear fruit he is cast out, he says if anyone is not abiding in the vine they are cast out. If you are abiding in the vine, but struggling to produce fruit, Jesus is there to work with you and help you produce fruit.

However, if you are not abiding in the vine, if you are not connected to Christ, you are cast out.

The focus of a Christian should not be in producing fruit, but in abiding in Christ.

Jesus knows who abides in him and who does not, and those who do not are cast out and burned.

Those people who think that they are living a spiritual life, or a good life, those people who call Jesus a good moral teacher, and those people who call themselves Christians and go to church, and sing and pray, but do not abide in Christ, do not love him and live by his commands, those who pick and choose their way through the Bible, they are at serious risk of being one of the branches that is thrown into the fire.

Jesus gave these words to the men who had walked with him for three years, Jesus is being very plain and very clear. You need to be connected to Jesus, rooted in Jesus, obedient to his commands and his words. Judas was not and Judas would be cast into the fire.

And after this dire warning Jesus once again tells the disciples that, **'If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.'**

Abiding in Jesus is obeying his Word, and when you do that when you abide in him, he will answer your prayers.

This means when God does not answer our prayers either we are not praying correctly, in God's nature and according to God's will, or we are not abiding in Him.

When we do so, when we abide in God and pray according to his nature and his will, we will see him at work in our lives, producing much fruit and that brings Glory to God.

John 15:9-11

⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Once again Jesus comes back to 'as the Father loves me, I love you'.

The love that existed between God the Father and God the Son, that unbelievable love is the same love that Jesus has for his people. Jesus chose to use the example of the greatest love that exists to explain his love for his people.

He wanted us to understand that his love for us outshines the love that a mother has for her child, or a husband has for his wife. He wants us to understand that it is an unmeasurable, unending, unchanging love, one that is eternal and filled with his grace and mercy. The magnitude of God's love for us is beyond our understanding, because we are not capable of that kind of love.

How could we ever doubt God's love for us, how could we ever question God's love for us?

Yet we live in a world where God's great love for us has become trivial, everyone says God loves them, but so many do not love him back.

God's great love for mankind is treated like such a little thing, we do not appreciate his love, this is why Jesus tells us to abide in his love.

Christians are called to abide in his eternal, unchanging, immeasurable love.

Jesus was all powerful, and he did not say abide in his power.

Jesus was filled with wisdom, and he did not say, abide in my wisdom.

Jesus was filled with mercy and forgiveness, but he did not say abide in my mercy and forgiveness.

He told us to abide in His love. To know the depths of his love for us and to love him back by living our lives according to his commands and his word.

And it is a choice. Jesus told us to abide in His love because for us it is a choice. The love of Jesus for people is a constant, however our love of him is constantly shifting.

We get to choose how we respond to God's love, we can accept it and live our lives according to his Word, or we can reject his love and live our lives the way we want.

People ask why evil exists in the world, why bad people do bad things, why doesn't God just end evil.

Well, this is part of the answer, if God forced us to love and obey him, it is not really love at all.

God showed us his love for us in the life and death of Jesus. He made a plea to all of mankind to understand his love and his grace and mercy and then left them the choice of loving him back, of living lives that abide in him, of living lives that are obedient to his Word or of living lives loving themselves.

The issue is that many people in this world choose to love themselves. They choose to live their lives according to their own desires, their own pursuit of sin, pleasure and power and wealth, and in doing so they disregard God's love for them. They choose to live lives that go against his commands and go against his Word because they value their own desires more than the love of God and that means as long as people are self-centered and self-focused evil will always exist in this world. Think about that the next time you are tempted to tell someone to follow their heart or listen to their desires.

For those of us who love Jesus, truly love Jesus, the measurement of that love is how obedient we are to him, **'If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.'**

Ask yourselves, do you truly love Jesus, do you truly seek to obey all of his commandments, do you struggle to give up those things that you know go against God's will, or do you treat his love like something trivial, saying God loves me while you go about doing whatever makes you happy in this world?

Jesus says these things to his disciples for two main reasons. That his joy might remain in them and remain in them in full.

He has told them to serve one another, to love one another the way that he loves them, to obey his Word, to show their love for him in their obedience of his words, to abide in him, to bear fruit, to obey his commands.

Jesus has been pretty clear in his instruction, there is a difference between living a life that is abiding in him and one that is not, and for those who live obedient lives, there will still be trials, tribulations and temptations, but there will also be the joy of the Lord and his peace in their hearts.

Christianity is not about living a boring life, its not about living a dull life, it is about living a life of joy.

Look at the peace and joy you have in your life, this will give you a good idea of your faith.

If you are a vaguely committed Christian, you will not be filled with joy. This is because you are not committed and obedient enough to God to receive his joy, and at the same time you are too committed to God to enjoy the sins of the world. You're stuck in limbo, caught between two choices, and some day you will have to commit to one or the other.

That is where many Christians in the world today find themselves, living a vaguely committed Christian life, caught between the world and God. Commit yourself to God today, experience the fullness of his Love and live a life that is obedient to his Word so that you can find your place in his kingdom.

Live a live of joy, knowing you are one of his children, knowing that your salvation is assured, that God is with you in every moment of your life, that everything is going according to his plan, and even when we are surrounded by chaos, we can find peace because we know God is with us.

This is what God wants for his people.

This means if your Christianity is always making you miserable you are doing it wrong.

However, it also means that if your Christianity never makes you miserable you are doing it wrong.

Our connection with God should give us joy and make us miserable. There should be times when we find peace and times when living obedient to His Word challenges us, as he lifts us up and prunes away at our branch.

Our life should be filled by our need for God, both in times of happiness and in times of sadness. God wants us to be with him in all things, abiding in him in all things, obedient to him in all things, knowing His love for us, and living lives that show our love for him as we walk as the Salt and Light of his Word in this dark and broken world.

Let us pray,

We Thank You for All Your Benefits

Lord God, heavenly Father,
 we thank you for all your benefits.
 You have given us body and life
 and have graciously sustained us to this day.
 Do not take your blessing from us.
 Preserve us from greed,
 that we may serve you only,
 love you and abide in you
 and not defile ourselves by idolatrous love
 of wealth or goods,
 but hope and trust only in your grace;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one true God, now and forever.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Trinity 15

Hymn #434: "For the Beauty of the Earth" (V 1,2,5)

For the beauty of the earth,
 for the glory of the skies,
 for the love which from our birth
 over and around us lies.
 Lord of all, to thee we raise
 this our sacrifice of praise.

For the beauty of each hour
 of the day and of the night,
 hill and vale and tree and flower,
 sun and moon and stars of light,
 Lord of all, to thee we raise
 this our sacrifice of praise.

For each perfect gift of dine,
 to the earth so freely given,
 graces human and divine,
 flowers of earth and buds of heaven,
 Lord of all, to thee we raise
 this our sacrifice of praise.

Invitation to Offering**Offering Prayer****Closing Hymn #457: “Now Thank We All Our God”**

Now thank we all our God
 with heart and hands and voices,
 who wondrous things has done,
 in whom God’s world rejoices;
 who from our mothers' arms
 has blessed us on our way
 with countless gifts of love,
 and still is ours today.

Oh may this bounteous God
 through all our life be near us,
 with ever-joyful hearts
 and blessed peace to cheer us,
 to keep us in his grace,
 and guide us when perplexed,
 and free us from all ills
 of this world in the next.

All praise and thanks to God
 who reigns in highest heaven,
 the Father and the Son,
 and Spirit now be given,
 the one eternal God,
 whom heaven and earth adore,
 for thus it was, is now,
 and shall be evermore.

Pastoral Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are our living head.
 Teach us to be your body here on earth—
 your hands, your feet, your eyes, and your compassionate heart.
 Lord, send the impulses of your love into the sinews of this church.
 May your will and thoughts direct us.
 Let your hands, through our hands, supply food for our neighbors’ hunger.
 Let them hear your voice as we visit and talk with them.
 Let children come to us and sit to learn of your glory

Without you as our head, Lord, we are lifeless.
We wait for your power, your Word, your instruction.
Fill us with your life and love,
In the name of Jesus Christ,
Who lives and rules with you and the Holy Spirit as the one true God,
Now and forever, we pray. **Amen.**

Benediction

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with all of you. **Amen.**