

## GIVING GOD GLORY

John 15:1-8 Text vs. 8 *“This is to My Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples.”*

What does it mean to you to be a Christian? Does it mean, perhaps, the comfort of knowing that you’re on God’s side? Or does it mean being part of a community of people who depend on and support each other? Does it mean being part of a wider community sharing a love for God and worshipping the One True God? Does it mean having friends and connections you wouldn’t otherwise have?

Well, being a Christian might mean all those things to different people. But none of them is at the heart of what Jesus meant in our lesson today. Jesus was teaching His disciples what it means to be one of His followers. He was getting ready to leave them and go to Jerusalem to be crucified, so He used the comparison of a vine and its branches to teach them a profound spiritual truth. This passage reveals fundamentals necessary for your Christian walk and your relationship with God.

Jesus identified Himself as *the true vine*. The source of life. The nourishment and spiritual vitality for all believers. By calling Himself *the true vine*, Jesus meant just as a vine is the source of life and nourishment for its branches, Jesus is the source of spiritual life for His believers. He said the whole point of being one of His followers was to bear fruit to the Father’s glory. In fact, He said if you don’t bear fruit, something’s wrong! John 15:1 is where He began that He was the true vine and that His Father the vine grower. The image of a vine, or a vineyard was used for the nation of Israel in Isaiah 5. The *Song of the Vineyard* tells how God planted a vineyard, meaning the people of Israel, and looked for his vineyard to bear good grapes. But all He found was wild grapes which were of no use to Him. So, God said He’d tear down that vineyard because it didn’t bear the fruit, He required from it. Israel had failed to do what God required and would be left a desolate wasteland.

And now, Jesus had come to declare *He was the true vine*. He was the One who would obey and please God in all that He did. (v.10) Because Israel had failed to do it. Now, if Jesus is *the true vine*, those who become His followers will be grafted into Him and become branches of that same vine. That means we too, are expected to bear fruit. And if we don’t, the Father, the vine grower, will prune us away. He’ll take away those unfruitful bearing wild grapes. But those bearing good fruit, He will prune and make even more fruitful. Have you ever seen how grapes grow? First, the vine sends out shoots. Some have flowers which become grapes. But about the time the grapes are beginning to ripen, it suddenly has a spurt of growth. New branches spring out of the vine. To the casual observer it looks wonderful! Healthy and vigorous.

But the vine grower isn’t interested in lush growth. He’s interested in luscious grapes. So, one of the jobs of the vine grower is to go along and prune the branches that don’t have any fruit on them. In fact, some bunches of grapes are cut off making those that are left are even better. That’s the picture Jesus is giving. You are to be grafted into the vine, that is the life of Christ, in order to flourish and bear spiritual fruit. But notice, it doesn’t depend on the branch. It depends entirely on the vine grower. Your salvation doesn’t depend on *your* efforts. But on God who does it for you! However, some don’t feel they’re good enough to be grafted in. They fear they might not have reached the standards required. So, they doubt how they stand before God. But their standing before God is not dependent on them. God knows they’ll never be good enough by themselves.

So, His gift is to graft them in, if they ask Him, to take part in the life of the vine, the life of Christ. That’s when He expects them to bear the fruit that God desires drawing on the power of God and the life of Christ. Just as physical life begins when your *physical* heart starts beating in your mother’s womb, spiritual life begins when your *spiritual* heart starts beating after being “born again” and grafted through your faith into Jesus Christ. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus explained to Nicodemus that no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are “born again” (John 3:3). This spiritual rebirth occurs when you accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord. You begin a new life lived with God, receiving forgiveness and eternal life.

Spiritual life means having an intimate relationship with God. You communicate with Him through your prayers, your worship, and reading your Bible. Your heart and mind are renewed. You grow spiritually. You become more Christ-like. That’s when a spiritual life will produce a lot of spiritual fruit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). So, the first thing to learn is that Christ is the vine, and we are His branches. That’s the whole point of being a follower of Christ. It’s so we can continue His work and bear much fruit to the glory of God. But the question is, how are you going to bear fruit? Well, it’s obvious! The first thing you need if you’re going to bear fruit, is to be grafted into the vine.

Now this is important! No matter how good a branch may be, unless it’s grafted into a healthy vine, it’ll never bear any fruit. Again, follow the analogy of the vine grower. Most, if not all, commercial grapes are grown from grafted vines. What the grower does is select a variety of grape that appears to have the desired characteristics. Then he grafts that branch into a root stock that’s known to be healthy and vigorous and disease resistant. The result, hopefully, will be a vine that produces plenty of good fruit. But until that branch is successfully grafted into the root stock, it’s of no use. In fact, if it’s left alone too long, it’ll shrivel up and die. That’s the picture Jesus was giving of our situation. We need to be grafted into

the vine, the life of Christ, in order to flourish and bear fruit. But it doesn't depend on the branch. It depends entirely on the vine grower.

So, your salvation of being grafted into the vine doesn't depend on *your* efforts. But on God! He does it all for you. Now you may ask, "Why is a spiritual life important?" Well, spiritual life gives meaning, purpose, and hope beyond physical existence. Spiritual life is a journey of faith, growing and having a relationship with God. Spiritual life exceeds the physical and points you toward eternity. You remain connected to Jesus, drawing life from Him, just as branches rely on the vine for nourishment. You rely on Christ for your spiritual nourishment. And fellowship with other believers encourages and strengthens your spiritual life. But what happens if you don't do this? A branch separated from the vine withers and dies. Spiritual disconnectedness leads to spiritual dryness, fruitlessness, and ineffectiveness. God prunes to remove what's dead or unproductive. The pruning process doesn't just last for a day, or a week, or a year. It isn't something you can say, "Well, I've been through that! I'm glad it's over!"

No, this pruning process in your life doesn't happen all at once. Or once for all. It takes an entire lifetime. Your Heavenly Vinedresser prunes you constantly. He's removing what you don't need. He's removing what hurts your spiritual growth and your witness. It may be painful for a time but remember, those are things that may prevent you from enjoying a full life in Christ. Pruning may involve trials, challenges, or discipline. It may hurt. But it leads to greater fruitfulness. Pruning removes hindrances. Sin and interferences. Pruning redirects your focus. It promotes growth, health, and spiritual maturity. Abiding in Christ yields fruit. When you abide in Christ, you bear fruit, naturally. Your life influences others by drawing them to Jesus. Fruitfulness brings glory to God. Your transformed life reflects God's character and love. Remain connected through prayer, Scripture reading, and fellowship. Pruning, even when it's painful, will change your life and you will display the beauty of Christ by trusting God's method. As a friend of Christ, you will bear much fruit to the glory of God. And if you're going to do that, you'll need to be firmly grafted into the life of Christ, and into the life of His Church. You'll need to be committed to obeying Him in everything you do. You'll need to be drawing your strength and your energy from Him. Relying on Him to produce the increase.

Become *output* oriented. Being output-oriented for God involves bringing into line your actions and goals with spiritual principles and surrendering your plans to Him. Seeking His will. And faithfully pursuing the path He sets before you. Serve God in all you do. And remember, your strength and effectiveness come from being a branch growing in Christ *showing yourself to be His disciple* that bears abundant fruit for God's glory! AMEN