

I Am...
The True Vine
John 15:1-11

April 14, 2013

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Text Introduction: We are in the Gospel of John again today. We began this year considering the 7 miracles of Jesus as told by John. Now, we are considering the 7 “I Am” statements of John. In fact, today we have come to the last of these. Seven times, John records Jesus proclaiming Himself with the introductory formula “I am.” “I am the bread of life.” We said that just as bread sustains our lives physically, Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the One who sustains us spiritually and eternally. “I am the light of the world.” This statement gives us a radical claim (I am the light of the world) which calls us to a radical discipleship (anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness) which guarantees for us a radical promise (but will have the light of life). Then, there were the statements, “I am the door” and “I am the Good Shepherd” that point to Jesus being the only way to salvation. “I am the resurrection and the life.” This statement points to the promise of eternal life. “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Again, Jesus is the one and only way to eternal life. The last is recorded here in John 15.

Text: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper. ² Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me.

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me. ⁶ If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples.

⁹ “As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. Remain in My love. ¹⁰ If you keep My commands you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commands and remain in His love.

¹¹ “I have spoken these things to you so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.

Introduction: Each of these “I am” statements are especially selected by Jesus because in the first century Jewish dominated world into which Jesus came, each of these points of reference were decidedly important. You will remember that the bread of life statement was spoken immediately following the feeding of the multitudes. The light of world was spoken at a special worship time called the “Festival of Lights.” The door of the sheep and good shepherd was spoken because of the understanding of shepherding in that world. The resurrection and life statement was spoken at the raising of Lazarus.

What is true of each of these previous statements is true of this statement. That is, the statement has considerable value in light of the context of its saying. The land of Israel was well known for its vines filled with grapes, for example. Generations earlier when the people first were given this land by God,

spies went out to scout this new land. The Bible records in the book of Numbers that these scouts cut a single vine to bring back the grapes from this one vine, and the single cluster of grapes had to be brought back on a pole carried by two men. (See Numbers 13:23)

Not only that, but this example of a vineyard was also used of the whole nation (not the land, but the people) of Israel. (See Isaiah 5)

Into this kind of land that produces these kinds of vines and into this kind of history of Israel being referred to as a vine or a vineyard, Jesus then speaks: "I am the true vine." And, as with all of the rest of the "I am statements," it carries then great meaning.

When we understand that Jesus is the True Vine, then we are able to understand . . .

The Key to our Relationship with God.

The analogy is communicated with the word "abide" or "remain."

Here is what Jesus is getting at. The key to relationship is a close intimacy. It is not some far away relationship, it is close. God is not the "Big Man" or the "Man upstairs," He is right here with us. Think back to the shepherd imagery. In addition to that, Paul used the analogy of the head and the body to refer to Jesus and the church. Elsewhere, Paul would use the imagery of the bridegroom and the bride. All of these point to a close relationship with God.

So, what does it mean to abide?

Here is the Pattern.

1. We remain in His Word. (v.7)
2. We remain in Prayer (v. 7)
3. We remain in His Love (v. 9)

But, here is the proof that we are remaining. We will keep His commandments. (v. 9) The proof is going to be in our obedience. There is no substitute for abiding in Him.

The Key to our Being able to bear fruit.

Don't miss the most important truth of this text. We are not commanded to bear fruit; we are commanded to abide in Jesus. If we fail to abide in Jesus, we will fail to bear fruit. If we succeed in abiding in Jesus, we will bear fruit.

That seems to be our trouble. We are forever trying to bear fruit. We focus on bearing fruit. We strive to bear fruit. Instead of the oftentimes "fruitless" effort, we should instead focus on abiding.

We must have a willingness to abide.

Where do you start? You start with His Word. I don't know any other way. Ravi Zacharias says if you fail here, you will fail everywhere. I agree. In addition to abiding with Him in His Word, we establish a

time with Him when we pray. What decision do you need to make today? What do you need to change in order to say that you are abiding in Jesus?

We must welcome pruning.

The word here sounds like our English word cauterize. It is surgery that God wants to do in us.

Most writers will tell you that the most difficult part of writing is the editing process. However, the editing process, like the pruning process, makes for a better finished product. Though painful, we can only bear fruit by letting Jesus prune areas of our life. The result will be glorious—we will bear more fruit.

So, all of us need to be willing to abide in Jesus and welcome pruning. For without these, we will not bear fruit.

The Key to Joy.

These things that we talk about today give us joy. Real joy. Abundant joy. The key to joy, Jesus says, is to accept who we are. We must accept that we are braches. We must be connected to Him if we are going to have joy. How different this is from what the world says. The world says be connected to the world—be connected to fun, be connected to entertainment, be connected to possessions, etc. But Jesus says “Be connected to Me.”

This text screams at us that we need God, and we can't live without God. We need God's favor and blessing on our lives if we are going to bear fruit. But, it also screams out at us that we need to accept God on His terms and not on our terms. We need to let him be the vine and we will be the branches. We will abide in Him and obey Him.

What is going to be your decision today?