

- We are spending August in John 15:1-10.
- They are verses very familiar to many Christ-followers, especially if you grew up in the church.
- As I read it this morning, don't listen like you are reading the bible, or something that someone wrote so that it would get in a book.
- Rather, as we read these words, think of them as reading a conversation that Jesus was having with those who were his friends, just before he was arrested and killed. Put yourself in the situation of walking and talking together as Jesus shares these words.

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. 9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now 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.

- If you were with us last week, you will remember that these were words Jesus said to encourage his disciples because he knew that within hours he was going to die. They were going to lose their stability, their belief, everything they thought.
- He wanted them to know that he was the only source of life that would not disappoint and they were to keep on seeking him to remain in him.
- His Father is totally committed to bringing us into that relationship with Jesus and everything he does, he does for my benefit.
- Because of that, we want to let the events of this life drives us towards Jesus and not away from him.
- It is remaining in Jesus that provides the strength and ability to live this life.
- The key word in this section is the Greek word meno (μένω). It is an action word, a verb, that means to continue, dwell, endure, be present, stand.
- He uses it repeatedly through this little talk with his disciples.
- We are supposed to remain in him. But what does this even mean? What does it look like?
- How do I know if that is what I am doing?
- I knew a couple once that had been married about ten years. Their story followed the path of so many other people I have met.
- They had fallen in love and enjoyed being together. But over the years, it seemed as though their interests were different. She did things differently than him. He was wrapped up in work. Slowly they began to drift apart. It wasn't any one thing, but rather a slow, steady move away from each other.
- He began spending more time at work as did she. He found fulfillment in extra curricular activities. She found it in the kids.
- After 10 years, they were still living in the same house, but they were not together the way they once had been.

- They were roommates but not close. They were around each other regularly but did not really know what was going on in each others minds and hearts. They were together but even when they were, they were no longer present.
- To the outsider they were still married and all was good, but to those who knew them, they were all but separated. To use the terminology of Jesus, they were no longer “abiding together.”
- The problem is that the idea of remaining in Jesus sounds good but I don’t “feel” like I am abiding in him or remaining in him.
- I am constantly making mistakes. I sin. It feels like there is little fruit in my life.
- Honestly, when I was growin up I read John 15 as a threat. If you don’t bear fruit, God is going to cut you off and throw you away, so work harder. Be productive.
- Sometimes I feel like I am doing all the right things but God seems far away.
- Last week we examined the answer the “why” question. Why should we care about remaining in Jesus? The entire reason we are to remain in the vine is because we need to be connected to that source of life because anything we find as our source of life, our reason to get up in the morning, apart from him, is doomed to failure and disappointment.
- Today I want to look at “how.”
- When Jesus told his disciples to remain in him, what was he talking about. Is it some type of mystical experience or do I have to “do” certain things?
- Unfortunately for those of us that like procedure, there is simply not a “three step process” for remaining in him. There is no list of things that if we do them guarantee that we will have what Jesus is describing.
- Jesus himself did not describe to his disciples a formula. When they asked him how to pray, he gave them an outline, a skeleton, on what this looks like but when it comes to remaining in him, he rather game them a word picture, a metaphor, that illustrated what it looks like when we do. What it comes down to is this:
- **Remaining in Jesus is remaining in relationship with Jesus.** But not the “married in close proximity but not really together” kind of relationship. When we are remaining in Jesus that relationship is characterized by three things, according to Jesus. It is a dependent relationship, a growing relationship and an infectious relationship.

I. It is a dependent relationship.

4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

- There is a reason Jesus used the metaphor of the vine and branches for his disciples.
- What happens when a branch is disconnected from the vine?
- The only reason a branch is green, lush and bears fruit is because it is getting sap, nutrition, moisture, from the main plant.
- By itself, it can do nothing. It withers.
- A branch cannot disconnect itself and go do something, then come back to get greened up again. Our life with Jesus is not like a car. Fill it up, go do what you’re going to do and then come back and get filled up again.
- Here’s the thing, a dependent relationship is a choice. One we find hard because we have been raised to be independent.

- There is an initial choice – to accept Jesus as Savior. If you have not done this, you are not connected to the vine. It is the most important choice you will ever make.
- But there is also a daily choosing. A perseverance in remaining in him.
- This means to remain in Jesus is to depend on him.
- It is trusting Jesus because he died to forgive your sins. But it goes so much deeper than that. To trust him with your relationships. Your money. Your time. It means that as you listen and God
- Let me address one thing in this passage. Jesus says that those who do not bear fruit are thrown away and burned. This has been looked at least three ways.
- 1) The first view says if you stop remaining in him, you are out. Jesus kicks you out of the family and you are destined for hell. This is unlikely as it is at odds with so many other things that Jesus said about being adopted into his family.
- 2) The second view is that the cast out branches are ones who only appeared to be disciples, and who never really abided in Jesus, and therefore go to hell (like Judas). They did all the right stuff but were never really “in.”
- 3) The third view sees the cast out branches as those who accepted Jesus but did nothing with their lives and so in effect, they get into heaven but the fruit of their lives is nothing.
- But Jesus point was never to “do something or else.” His emphasis seems plain. True followers of Jesus remain in him. There is no such thing as a true follower of Jesus who does not remain in him. The branch must remain connected to the vine or it has no life and is of no lasting good.
- Notice that there is a “mutualness” to this whole idea of remaining in Jesus. Jesus says if they remain in him as he remains in them.
- It is a mutual dynamic that expects our life to be spiritually and practically in vital connection with Jesus, and that expects Him to indwell us in an active, real way.
- God never fails in his side of the abiding equation.
- **Remaining in Jesus is remaining in relationship with Jesus.** This is a dependent relationship. But it is also:

II. It is a growing relationship.

7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

- Jesus says his words must remain in us.
- To most Christ-followers, this is evidence that we remain in Jesus by studying the bible.
- We remain in Jesus by studying our bibles and reading them everyday. While that is certainly included in this statement, remember the context of when Jesus says this.
- He is talking to his disciples who have spent the last three years of their lives living with him, watching him act and interact with people, listening to his teaching.
- In the process they saw that Jesus always connected what he said with what he did.
- In other words, the one who is remaining in Jesus is taking the words and life of Jesus and living increasingly that way. Our vital connection with Jesus is what empowers us.
- It is hearing him more. Listening to what he says and then living that way.
- Jesus connects his words remaining in them, and them remaining in him, with asking God for things.
- This is not simply a request for stuff that we want.
- This is all based on the idea that as the words of Jesus and the example of how he lived his life take root in us, we do this as we are constantly in communion with Jesus.

- The more this happens, the more we know him, the more his words remain in us, and the more what we desire reflects what he himself is thinking and doing.
- **Remaining in Jesus is remaining in relationship with Jesus.** A relationship that is characterized by our dependence on him. A growing relationship. It is also:

III. It is an infectious relationship.

- Here's what I mean by that. A person who is remaining in Jesus is a person who is bringing this into all his other relationships.

9 *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now 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.*

- We are to remain in his love. It's an odd turn of phrase that doesn't mean a whole lot to us often. Once again we are helped if we remember the context.
 - He washed their feet. Jesus just told them to love each other the way that he had loved them. He was about to show them in the next 24 hours the extent of his love for them.
 - It's like he told them, "Pay attention to how much I love you. I love you so much I am going to die in your place to take your punishment for your sins. I want you to be so absorbed and intoxicated with that love that it infects everything you do in relationship to others, just as my love for you dictated everything I have done and am about to do for you."
 - It's the heart of the good news. He loved us so that we can love others.
 - You cannot remain in the love of Jesus and not have this spill out onto others.
 - This is grace. He lived the life we should have lived, died the death we should have died because we didn't, so that we are free to love others.
- **Remaining in Jesus is remaining in relationship with Jesus.**
 - This is the beauty of Jesus. He knows that when we are connected to him, we will not wither up. Our souls will not stay in those dark places where our own inner thoughts and actions lead us to frustration and hopelessness.
 - My friends, this is so intensely practical.
 - We remain in him as we depend on him.
 - Think of taking all those things we are so worried about. The things we try so hard to control.
 - What if we let that go. Took Jesus at his word that he would provide. Admit that his way is better than mine and simply follow his leading in everything.
 - We remain in him as we grow in him.
 - What if we listened to him more. Took more time to take a risk with him (which aren't actually risks if he is in the equation." Listened to the Spirit. Read the Scriptures and then actually did what they tell us to. I wonder if you would find ourselves more at peace and more fruitful.
 - We let his love for us infect our souls as we remain in him.
 - I wonder if we would increasingly see others as he does. Not as the enemy but as someone whom God loves. I wonder if it would lead us to tailor our actions to their needs. To respond to them in gentleness and not bitterness or anger. Maybe even forgive them and in doing so, experience the love of Jesus and his power in us more deeply.
 - What to you need to depend on Jesus for? What are you trying to control or what are you afraid of giving up or taking on?
 - Are there areas of life that you are withholding from Jesus?
 - Are their relationships that you need to extend the love of Jesus in?