**October 20th, 2019**

**Abide in Christ**

**John 15:6-11**

**Introduction: Last week we began a brand-new series entitled, “Traits of a Disciple.” We talked about the importance of staying connected to our source, who is Jesus. I mentioned multiple times that not a single one of us in this room has ownership over this church. I don’t own this church because I am the pastor, you don’t own it because you are a member. All of us are to submit to the leadership of Jesus as we move forward as a church. If we can’t get this submission part down, then we will have a hard time moving forward as a church. In John 15, Jesus is having a conversation with his disciples and this morning we will continue that conversation. We will be reading John 15:6-11 this morning. Jesus says this,**

**I. The Consequences of Abiding:** *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.*

 A. Unfortunately, the term “consequence” typically gets viewed in the negative. But actually, there are both positive consequences and negative consequences for our actions. A consequence is simply the result of an action or decision. For example, let’s say you desire to lose weight. You begin eating healthier and you begin exercising more. There are both positive consequences and negative consequences to losing weight. The positive ones are obvious. You begin to be able to fit into those clothes that have been in the back of your closet, you have more energy, and you generally feel better about yourself. But losing weight also has negative consequences. Losing weight requires you to change the way you eat which means no more Oreos or fast food. Also, choosing to begin a regular exercise routine takes discipline. Perhaps it requires you to wake up earlier than normal or head to the gym after work instead of going home. Those decisions are actually negative consequences of your desire to lose weight.

 B. Jesus gives both the positive and negative consequences of choosing or not choosing to abide in Christ. He begins with the negative consequences first. He says, those that do not abide in him are thrown away and wither and eventually burned in the fire. This is really strong language that Jesus us using with his disciples. Jesus is saying that failure to abide in Christ or failure to stay connected to the vine makes the branch worthless.

 C. Keep in mind that Jesus is talking to his disciples here. Jesus is not saying that life has no value or that God only loves those who are abiding in him. We know that God loves everything he created, and thus loves even those who are not abiding in Christ, but in terms of being a disciple of Jesus we ultimately have no spiritual value if we are not abiding in Christ. Let’s go back to the fruit tree illustration for a moment. If you have a branch that has lost its connection to the source, you can certainly keep that branch on the tree, but it won’t ever grow fruit. It’s completely neutral. There isn’t any harm in keeping that branch on the tree, but failure to remove that branch means that another branch is not able to grow and produce fruit.

 D. Verse 6 has been interpreted a number of different ways. Some think this is referring to…

 E. There are also positive consequences of abiding in Jesus. Abiding in Jesus and abiding in his words is a formula for spiritual growth in your life. Jesus is not saying that if we remain in him that we can ask for a new house or a million dollars and we’ll get it. Verse 7 is closely linked with prayer. He is saying if we remain in communication with him than the things that we will ask for in prayer will be things that Jesus himself is concerned with. We want to be so in tune with Jesus that when we go before him in prayer, we are asking for things that align with his purposes for the world rather than our purposes.

 F. I’m going to be honest with you this morning. I’m not at this point in my prayer life. I wish I was, but I have a lot of work to do in this area. So many of my own prayers are focused on my own selfish needs rather than on Jesus. I’m not belittling the importance of coming to Jesus with our own requests, but I aspire to get to the point where my prayers to Jesus are in align with what he is already thinking.

**II. Your Fruit Glorifies God:** *8 By this my father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

A. God is all about his glory. The best way for us to glorify our Father is to bear fruit. Let’s stop and think about that for a second. Sometimes in America I’m afraid we think that glorifying God means we achieve the American dream. The American Dream states that if you get an education, you get a job, a fancy house, and 2.5 kids then you have arrived and that is God’s will for your life.

 B. But that can’t be true. If that was God’s will and desire for all of humanity, then we would have no missionaries. We would have no people moving to remote parts of the world to take the Gospel to unreached people groups. Our brothers and sisters around the world in Southeast Asia and Africa are not living in fancy luxurious houses. They send their kids to schools where the education is not as good.

 C. I use missionaries as an example here to show us that bearing fruit as nothing to do with material possessions or earthly gain. Bearing fruit has to do with the spiritual impact you are making on those around you. We prove that we are a disciple of Christ based on the fruit we have in our life.

 D. What Jesus is saying here is very important, and James the brother of Jesus says something similar in his epistle as well. You prove that you are actually following Jesus based on the fruit that exists in your life. Or as James put it faith without works is dead. Neither Jesus nor James is saying works is what makes you right with God, but evidence of faith in God is the good works or the fruit that you bear.

 E. Being a member of a church doesn’t mean you are bearing fruit, even attending church every Sunday doesn’t mean you are bearing fruit if you simply show up because you know you are supposed to. Bearing fruit is not keeping a list of do’s and don’ts. It is proving that you are a disciple by the way you live your life. And that begins by trusting in the redemptive work of cross on the Christ for your sins.

 \*I love this quote from Dean Inserra who wrote an excellent book some months ago called The Unsaved Christian. He says, “While the number of those who check “No Religion” on a survey might be rising, politicians still invoke vague language about God in their speeches to appease the millions of Americans who get goose bumps singing “God Bless America” at baseball games. This god they are singing of, however, functions more like a national mascot than a God who demands our faith and repentance. The Church must awaken to the reality that this is a false gospel with eternal consequences. Culture Christianity is a mindset that places one’s security in heritage, values, rites of passage (such as a first communion or a baptism from childhood), and a generic deity, rather than the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.”

 F. So I caution all of us to remember that religious ritual is not fruit. You prove to be Jesus’ disciple when you desire the Word of God, when you boldly share your faith, and when you love the unlovable. What this verse ultimately shows us is that we don’t bear fruit to make ourselves feel good but we do it because it brings God glory. And our God is all about his glory.

**III. Love is All You Need:** *9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.*

A. One of my favorite Beatles songs is “All You Need is Love” off of their Magical Mystery Tour album. They weren’t talking about the same type of love that we are talking about in this passage though.

B. Jesus is talking about agape love. O.C. Quick says this about that type of love, “If we could imagine the love of one who loves men purely for their own sake, and not because of any need or desire of his own, purely desires their good, and yet loves them wholly, not for what at this moment they are, but for what he knows he can make of them because he made them, then we should have in our minds some true image of the love of the Father and Creator of mankind.” This is an excellent description of agape love.

C. This is the way Jesus loves you. He doesn’t see you as some failure who is never able to measure up. He sees you as a person created in the image of God and therefore you have worth and value in the eyes of God.

\*Just the other day a lady came by the church office seeking assistance on something that was going on in her life. I began to ask her some questions about Jesus, and I had the opportunity to share the Gospel with her. She was really hung up on a few beliefs that we have as Christians like our belief in the Trinity, and that Jesus can be the only way. I didn’t convince her to put her faith in Christ, but I said to her I want you to leave here today knowing that Jesus loves you. I might not be able to give you satisfactory answers to all of your questions but know today that Jesus loves you and that you can never earn a relationship with God. Jesus did what needed to be done so that you could have a relationship with Jesus. We simply place our faith in Jesus.

D. This lady and thousands like her live right around us. They are looking for peace and contentment in the world through their families, jobs, hobbies, money, and sports teams but those things can only satisfy temporarily. They will only find contentment and peace through the love that only Jesus can offer.

E. But this message of love is not just for the non-Christian. It’s for the Christians too. Maybe your life is spiraling out of control. Perhaps you are dealing with heartache, sickness in your family, the loss of a job, depression, or anxiety. Abide in the love of Christ today. Rest in his love. Sometimes though resting in the love of Jesus has to be a deliberate choice on our part. It’s not always going to be easy, and it’s not going to automatically mean that the pain is going to go away. But ultimately, it’s the best way for us to live. I don’t have to fight for God’s love. He doesn’t love me based on my ability to do things for him. He loves me simply because I have been created in his image, and he wants what is best for me. There is no ulterior motive to the love of God. It truly comes with no strings attached.

**IV. The Law Matters** *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.*

A. I know a lot of you are confused right now. We have been taught our whole lives that Jesus came to fulfill the law, and that the law is no longer necessary. Well, that’s only partly true. The law is not necessary in terms of our salvation. In other words, we don’t have to keep the law perfectly in order to be saved. Jesus kept the law perfectly for us so that if we place our faith in him we could have eternal life.

 B. But just because the law isn’t necessary for our salvation doesn’t mean it isn’t necessary for holiness and growth in Christ. Jesus says over and over again that keeping his commandments matter. So where do we get the idea that obedience to Christ doesn’t matter.

 C. We live in a world today where the most important aspect of a person’s life is their individual freedom. If you restrict a person’s ability to think or choose freely you have essentially stripped them of their ability to be a human being. But that is a modern idea. This is not how we were designed to live. For example, let’s say you have a pet fish. That fish is most free when it is restricted to the fish tank. If you were to take that fish out of its tank and give it the freedom to roam around the house it will die. Freedom is not the absence of restrictions, but rather it is finding the right restrictions. You are not free living your life however you want to live it. You are actually a slave to the things of this world when you do that. Instead, you are most free when you choose to live your life in the way that God created you to live, which is according to his commandments. Every human being has been created in the image of God, and therefore, the greatest way for them achieve the freedom that they are looking for is to place their faith in Christ.

 D. Jesus concludes this passage by saying that when we abide in his love and keep his commandments we receive joy. The joy of Jesus will be in us, and that joy will be full. We have got to stop thinking that following after Jesus is no fun. We have to stop thinking that it means we can’t do things that the rest of the world can do. Maybe we can’t do some of the things that the rest of the world is doing, but there is freedom in Christ friends. When we are walking with Jesus we can rest assured that we are living life the exact way God designed it to be done and there is not a better way to live.

**Conclusion:**