

Connected - The Branches

Have you ever watched a movie, and the entire movie you are trying to figure out what is going on? I'm talking about one of those confusing ones, with all the twists and turns...and by the time you get to the end, you're not even sure what really just happened...

Isn't life kind of like that sometimes? We spend so much time just trying to figure out what's going on, and before you know it, a bunch of time has passed and you're not sure what really just happened!

"The whole secret of a successful life is to find out what is one's destiny to do, and then do it."

~Henry Ford

That's what I want to discover this morning. What is your destiny and how do you do it?

John 15:1-8 (NKJV)

"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 bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

Last week we looked at the vine, Jesus, who cleanses us by His Word, sings over us, provides nutrients for life, health, and growth.

Today we look at the branches...you and me...

Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches." Say "He is the vine". Say "I am a branch."

You know it might not hurt to start every morning with that statement. That reminder of who He is and our position in Him. Because if we could keep that as a starting point in our lives, He is the vine, He is GOD...when you say those words it's like it echoes back that you are not!

Jesus is God, I am not. This helps us to recognize our proper place in this world!

Isaiah 45:18 (NKJV)

For thus says the Lord,
Who created the heavens,
Who is God,
Who formed the earth and made it,
Who has established it,
Who did not create it in vain,
Who formed it to be inhabited:
“I am the Lord, and there is no other.

Now that we have this mind blowing revelation out in the open...Jesus is God, you are not...

We can move on to what exactly are we? And what do we do now?

Jesus is the vine and you are the branches. So what exactly is a branch and what does it do? Remember Jesus is talking specifically about a grape vine.

Branch - klema (clay-mah) the shoot of a vine, a vine sprout

So you're a shoot! You ever heard the term "baby Christian"? Your spiritual life has an infancy state. It's like once you are born again...it's not as if Jesus takes you as an old, dead, fruitless branch and grafts you into the vine. He makes you into a new shoot or sprout of the vine. And you have to grow from there!

So if you are born again, no matter your earthly age, you start anew in Christ! All of your growth from this point on, comes from the nourishment that He provides!

Every branch **in Me** that does not bear fruit He takes away v2

Let's side step the "take away" part for today. Next week we'll look at the vinedresser or gardner...today is about the branches....Every branch **in Me**.

See everybody is a branch...but the question is are you a branch that is in Christ? There probably aren't many people listening today that would admit that they weren't, even if they knew it.

I've met "Christians" that were NOT in Christ...

John 6:66 (NKJV)

From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.

Say "from that time", From what time?

Jesus was speaking about how He was rejected by the Jews...His own people...and the disciples said “this teaching is hard, who can accept it?”

John 6:61-65 (NKJV)

When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you? 62 What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. 65 And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”

“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.”

Many disciples walked away...so much is made of Judas (rightfully so) but he wasn't the only one to betray Jesus...he's just the most famous one. He's just got the biggest story. But people have been turning their back on Jesus for thousands of years.

Why? How? They don't remain connected to the vine. They APPEAR to be connected.

But if you've ever seen a grape vine, the branches get all woven together and twisted up and you often can't really tell if some foreign branches are mixed in there. Sometimes the branch itself may not know...but the Vine knows...

Do you think if the others knew what was really in Judas' heart, that he would have made it to the point of turning in Jesus? I think Peter would have done him in! The branches may not know...but the Vine does...

Remember when Jesus said “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you”? Look at what else He said...

John 13:10-11 (NKJV)

Jesus said to him, “He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” 11 For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, “You are not all clean.”

Jesus knows who is IN Him.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. v4

Ahhh...see as we try to figure out who we are and what we should do in life...we find a lot of our endeavors to be fruitless. Right? Another dead end.

Because the only way to produce good fruit is to abide in the Vine. We are fruit bearing, not fruit making. In Christ we produce what we allow Him to do through us! If we remain in Him!

Colossians 1:22-23 (NKJV)

in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight— 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.

People get detached from the vine when they are moved away from the hope of the gospel! And if you are moved away from the hope of the gospel...you can't do anything!

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. v5

That's offensive! We can do nothing?

Oh you can do stuff....just nothing of eternal value. Apart from Jesus, you have an inability to produce spiritual fruit. I don't think we realize how temporary all this stuff around us actually is!

It serves a purpose but the purpose ought to be to help us live a life that produces spiritual fruit in Christ! You are a branch!

As a branch, are a shoot of the vine. The shoot has many different points of growth. It has primary growth, secondary growth, growth at different rates throughout the season.

You have different points of growth. I'm not knocking you if you aren't measuring up to what someone else is doing...but are you bearing fruit that the Vine is trying to produce through YOU?

The shoot forms a bud that turns into fruit. And the shoot is the support for the fruit. This is what Jesus means when He speaks of "bearing fruit" to bear is to support...hold up.

See the spiritual fruit in your life should be elevated above everything else in your life. It pleases Jesus.

Colossians 1:10 (NKJV)

that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

We are to bear fruit (hold up, exalt fruit) in every good work.

What's the fruit?

Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

In every good work, we should hold up, exalt love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

This is the fruit that is produced through you and me when we remain connected to Jesus! The fruit of the Spirit!

Guys this is it...

- What is your destiny? To be a branch, a shoot of the vine!
- How do you do it? Surrender! Allow Christ to produce the fruit of the Spirit THROUGH you

I don't just have love...I surrender to Jesus and let His love work through me.

I don't just have joy...I surrender to Jesus and let His joy work through me.

I don't just have peace...I surrender to Jesus and let His peace work through me.

You must allow the Spirit of God to produce the fruit, and then you bear it...hold it up...exalt it!

Fruit is produced in clusters. And the number of clusters depends on the vine! Exalt it! If you're going to boast, boast in the Lord...right? Tell of what He has done!

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. v7-8

God is not only glorified in our praise and worship...He is also glorified when we hold up that fruit!

"True happiness... is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose."

~Helen Keller

Be a branch...a happy little branch. A branch with purpose...to hold up that fruit that the Spirit produces in your life!