

- The Bible says we bear fruit when:
 - ▶ We win others: *I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a **harvest** among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.* (Romans 1:13)
 - ▶ We grow in holiness and obedience: *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you **reap** leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.* (Romans 6:22)



- ▶ We give generously: *For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this **fruit**, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way.* (Romans 15:27-8)
- ▶ We abide in Christ: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.* (Galatians 5:22-23)
- ▶ We serve others and grow in knowledge of God: *'And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing **fruit** in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God'* (Colossians 1:10)
- ▶ We worship and praise God: *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the **fruit** of lips that confess his name.* (Hebrews 13:15)

- As individuals are we people who 'feed' others by our words and our works.
- How much of our personal giving be it time or money or our church giving is directed at serving others?

2.6 Conclusion

- Jesus knows he is on the way to the Cross. He reveals to His disciples and to us who He is - the true vine - God with human flesh on. He knows that if those 11 disciples are going to grow the Kingdom they will need to *abide* in him. He knows that His Father will care for them, pruning them to produce better fruit and as He does so the Kingdom will grow.

3. Questions to consider at home

- 3.1 How does John structure his gospel? Why does he structure it this way?
- 3.2 Why does Jesus reveal to His disciples that He is the true vine? How is He different to the two other types of vine mentioned in the Bible?
- 3.3 *'No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine'* How do we do that?
- 3.4 How and why are vines pruned? Why does God prune us?
- 3.5 How and why do we bear fruit?
- 3.6 A friend tells you that at her church they are taking on a youth worker to work with the disadvantaged young people in their town. Your friend thinks that they should start with the church family first and then move onto others. How would you respond?

Matthew Street 6th September 2020



The Parish of Wellow

John 15:1-8 - Bearing Fruit

Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Talk Passage – John 15:1-8

[15:1] *"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, and I will 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 a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. [6] If anyone does not remain in me, he is 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 given you. [8] This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

2. Talk Notes

2.1 Context and Background

- *"Come now, let us leave,"* (14:28) Jesus says to the eleven remaining disciples. They have concluded their last supper together and are now heading towards the Garden of Gethsemane. Did they pass a vineyard on their way with vines in it like the picture below, pruned back, waiting for this years growth? Was this the visual prompt for Jesus to share his last 'I am' YAHWEH saying.

- ▶ I am the bread of life (6:35)
- ▶ I am the light of the world (8:12)
- ▶ I am the gate for the sheep (10:7)
- ▶ I am the good shepherd (10:11)
- ▶ I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)
- ▶ I am the way, the truth and the life (14:6)
- ▶ I am the true vine (15:1)

- Jesus' cousin John, sometimes referred to as the 'beloved disciple' anchors his majestic Gospel around three 7's to prove that Jesus was none other than God with human flesh on:

- ▶ Seven witnesses: John the Baptist (1:34), Nathaniel (2:49), Peter (6:68), Martha (11:27), Thomas (20:28), John (21:24) and Jesus (8:58, 14:7) (In Jewish law two or three witnesses would be enough to establish truth, but here John includes the perfect number (seven) to testify that Jesus really is the Son of the living God)
- ▶ Seven miracles: Water into wine (2:1-11), Healing the nobleman's son while miles away from the sick person, without seeing or laying hands on him (4:46-54), Healing the man by the Pool of Bethesda who had been there 38 years, clearly suffering from a chronic condition (5:1-14), Feeding the 5,000 (6:1-14), Walking on water (6:16-21), giving sight to the man blind from birth (9:1-7) and Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:38-44)
- ▶ Seven 'I am' or YAHWEH sayings that reveal deeper truths about Jesus' identity.



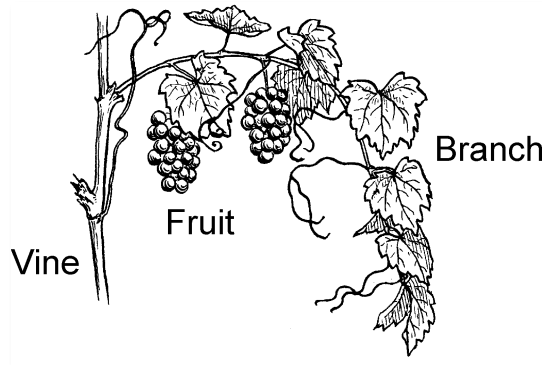
- In his final YAHWEH saying Jesus reveals:
 - ▶ who He is: **‘The true vine’**,
 - ▶ who we are, those who know and love Him and are in relationship with Him: **‘The Branches’**,
 - ▶ what the work of His Father is: **‘The Vinedresser’**
 - ▶ what our purpose is: **‘To bear fruit.’**

2.2. The true vine - Jesus

- *“I am the true vine”* (15:1) Jesus declares.
- The Bible refers to three vines:
 - ▶ The *past vine* (known to the disciples) which was the nation of Israel (see Ps. 80:8-19, Isa 5:1-7, Jer 2:21, Ezek: 19:10-14). In an act of wonderful grace, God ‘transplanted’ Israel into Canaan and gave the nation every possible benefit: *‘What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it?’* (Isa 5:4) God asked. If ever a nation had everything it needed, it was Israel. But the vines and the vineyard only produced wild grapes! *‘When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad?’* (Isa 5:4). Instead of practising justice, the nation of Israel practiced oppression, instead of producing righteousness, it produced unrighteousness and cries of distress from the victims. God had to deal with the nation of Israel and chasten it, but even that did produce lasting results. When God’s own Son came to the vineyard, they cast Him out and killed Him (Matthew 21:33-46)
 - ▶ The *future vine*: the vine of the earth: *“Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe.”* The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath. (Revelation 14:14-15). This is our non believing world system ripening for God’s future judgement.
 - ▶ The *present or true vine* which is Jesus himself.

2.3. Branches - those of us who are in relationship with Jesus

- We, those who know and love Jesus and are in relationship with Him, like those 11 disciples walking with Him towards Gethsemane are encouraged no less than 8 times to *‘remain in’* or *‘abide with’*. Given that English does not have a ‘present continuous’ tense like Greek a more accurate translation would be: *‘to go on remaining in’* or *‘to go on abiding with.’*
- As a church and as individuals are we abiding in Christ through: worship, meditating on God’s word, prayer, sacrifice and service.
- *‘Remain in me, and I will 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’.* (15:4)
- A branch cannot produce life of its own: it must draw that life from the vine. It is our communion with Christ through the Spirit that makes the bearing of fruit possible.
- As believers we need to constantly remember from where our spiritual strength comes. It comes from the *vine*, from Jesus. It is in our weakness and vulnerability that God’s strength grows.

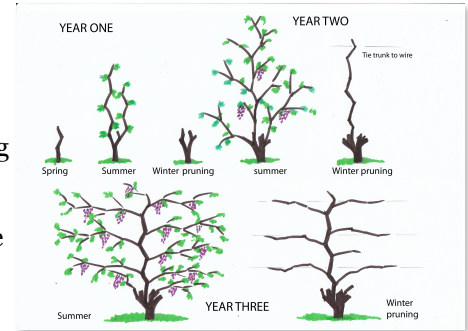


2.4 The Vinedresser - God

- Vines that produce the choicest grapes will have been nurtured, pruned and looked after with great care. - Vines left to their own devices run wild producing only small anaemic wild grapes.
- As Christians we should be extremely grateful that God draws close to us seeking to help us become more fruitful. Just imagine what our lives and churches would be like if He left us to our devices!



- Notice what the vinedresser (God) prunes:
 - ▶ Firstly - Dead wood - *‘such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned’* (15:6) - God will get rid of the dead wood in our churches and our lives that is no longer producing fruit. This can at times be painful as God prunes unhelpful traditions that are no longer bearing fruit or unhelpful habits that we have become accustomed to.
 - ▶ Secondly connected branches that are not producing fruit *‘every branch in me that bears no fruit’*(15:2) - We may well in all honesty be pursuing ideas and programmes that we think are producing fruit but are not. We need to ask ourselves personally and analyse all our church programmes and activities: Have they run their season? Is God’s favour still on this activity or programme?
 - ▶ Thirdly connected branches that are bearing fruit but could be more fruitful with further pruning: *every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful* (15:2) - God wants us to produce the best fruit - so he may well be encouraging us to *abide* more through: worship, meditating on God’s word, prayer, sacrifice or service. Our church programmes may well be producing fruit but are we listening carefully to God who may well wish to prune something in order that we might produce even more fruit of a better quality.
- Jesus wanted those 11 disciples and us to know that the more we abide in Him as churches and as individuals the more fruit we will bear; the more fruit we bear, the more God has to prune so that the quality keeps up with quantity. God is glorified by a bigger crop that is also a *better* crop.



2.5 Fruit - what we are meant to produce in order to attract others

- It is easy for both us and the disciples to forget that the branches do not eat the fruit they produce: others do! The disciples and us are not producing fruit to please ourselves but to *serve* others.
- As those 11 disciples told others about Jesus, who He was and what He had done they were of course extending the Kingdom and revealing to others the joys of *‘abiding’* in Jesus. Are we equally motivated today?

