

## Rest, Work and Fruitfulness

John 15:1-8

Sunday April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Shabbat is Hebrew for Sabbath.

Sabbath = Rest

Rest = Abiding with Jesus

When we are rested we can work.

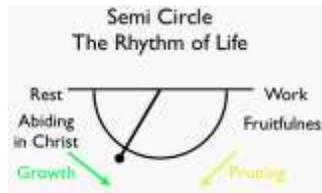
When we work according to the will of God we bear fruit.

Rest, Work, Fruitfulness this is the rhythm of life and the source of our fruitfulness. It begins and ends in relationship. Verse 7, **“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you ask for whatever you wish and it will be done for you.”**

In verse 1 where Jesus said, **“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower.”** Jesus is saying that he is the connection between us and God, and us with each other.

The metaphor of Jesus as the “true vine” speaks of connection and relationship, so it is a bit surprising when we go immediately from the image in verse 1 of connection to separation/pruning in verse 2, **“He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.”**

But it is this process of abiding with Jesus, and then working or bearing fruit that leads to pruning. Pruning is part of the process of becoming more connected with God through Christ, and more connected with each other. Without pruning and abiding with Jesus we can not bear fruit. It is the circle of life as a Christian; or as I have taught before it is the rhythm of life as a Christian.



It is the half circle, the pendulum of which swings from “rest” to “work”, or “abiding” to “fruitfulness”; then being “pruned” and back to “abiding”; so that we can grow and be even more fruitful.

Now the Greek word that here is translated as “prune” in verse 2 also has the connotations of “cleansing and healing”, which sounds more positive than “prune.”

In fact in verse 3 which reads, **“You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.”** The word “cleansed” is the same Greek word as “pruned.”

All of this passage speaks of relationship. Jesus is the “true vine” The “Father” is the vinegrower and you and I are the branches.

As one pastor wrote, “The vine needs the branches; the branches need the vine (fruit doesn’t grow on the vine); and the vinegrower needs both. There is in the community of faith a built in interdependence of relationship between God, Christ (who is the Church), and believers as disciples.” Desperate Preachers Site



What is fascinating about this image of Christ as the vine and we as the branches is that when you look at a grape vine, the vine and the branches merge seamlessly with each other. It is hard to distinguish where one ends and the other begins. When we abide with Jesus it becomes so with our lives.

As we mature as Christians when people see us they see God. As they are in relationship with us they are in relationship with God and as we are in relationship with God we are brought into relationship with

others. God brings People of Peace into our lives. Then God prunes out things that block our relationships of love. God cleanses us and heals us from those things that block relationships of love.

As 1 John 4:7 says, **“Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”**

As we are pruned and cleansed we become more capable of abiding with Jesus and each other. It is from those relationships that we gather the strength to produce fruit, which is **works of love**. The best work of love is introducing a person to Jesus Christ for if they believe, nothing can take their eternal salvation away.

The point is that as we grow as Christians, we are pruned again and again, just like grape vines; so that we can bear sweeter, better fruit, **works of love**. God takes things out of our lives that stand in the way of loving others. God does this to help us grow. It happens in relationship with Jesus as we abide with him. The closer we grow to the True Vine the sweeter our fruit.



Now our scripture lifts up **4 ways to abide in Jesus**.

**First, know Jesus' words!** Know the Bible to the best of your ability. Verse 7 makes this very clear, **“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you,...”**

We need to know the teachings of Jesus. We need to know his words in the Bible.

The question we need to ask ourselves is the Bible a part of our everyday life? Does it guide us in what we say, and think, and do every day? If not, we are missing part of what it means to abide with Jesus.

In response to this Vista Church has started an Education Committee to provide more avenues for Bible Study.

**Second, pray!** Pray daily, pray continually. Pray not only in heavy traffic, ill health, and before tests and finals, pray! **Abide in Jesus.** Meditate with him over family matters, daily duties and even things you think God doesn't care about. If you can worry you can pray. In prayer turn those things over to God. If you've with joy listened to the chattering of a small child, or the cooing of a baby, you know what God is feeling when we talk to him about things that we think don't matter.



And we pray together as a Church. Here is our Prayer Puzzle that reminds us to pray and bring our wishes for our New Vistas Building campaign before God. It is filled in, but will be completed only through the power of God's Spirit. Remember, "Ask for whatever you wish."

**Third** and this may seem strange, but to abide in Jesus means to **continually make a recommitment to Him** as Savior and Lord!

If you have made a commit to Jesus once then do it again and again and again. Commit all your ways to God in Christ and you will abide in him. This we can see in verse 8, which upon first read seems out of place. Especially when you think these words were first spoken to his closest disciples and now to us as His Church.

Verse 8 states, **"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and BECOME my disciples."**

I hope you read and heard this close enough to ask why Jesus would say to his closest 12 disciples, **"and BECOME my disciples?"**

Well the Greek word and the connotation here is that **"they keep on becoming Jesus disciples."** This means you don't make a commitment to Jesus just once and then slack off. Being a disciple is a continual process of commitment.

To abide in Jesus we need to again and again and again make a commitment to Him that in some ways will be deeper and draws us closer to Jesus and each other. This is why when I bring in new members I ask all of us to join together with those taking their vows.

We need to time and time again recommit to Jesus in order to abide with him. Often we as Christians grow weak and weary in our walk and need to recommit to the one we follow.

**Fourth, we need to abide with one another in fellowship.** We need to gather together and be the Body of Christ, the Church which is Jesus' body in this world!

In verse 10, which we didn't read today, gives us great insight in how to abide in the Body of Christ, in the Church, in Jesus. It says, **"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.**

Yes, to obey Jesus is to abide in his love. To simply obey Jesus will keep us abiding in his love.

Now what are his commandments? You can search the scriptures and find many, but they are all summed up in 1 John 21, **"The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."**

And the depth and measure of that love is in dying for a friend.

But the death we die for one another need not be all at once, but a sacrificial death that goes on one day after another. Like a wife or husband taking care of a chronically ill spouse for month after month year after year.

We die for our friends, our fellow Christians when we serve them rather than being served, when we give up part of our lives to show up.

When we show up Sunday after Sunday: to teach, or go to Sunday School, worship, sing in the choir, simply show up to show whose side we are on.

We die then to so many recreational opportunities; to sleeping in and yet by doing this we find life. We find life by losing our lives bit by bit for our friends and those we serve.

Again I remind you that the words of Jesus that we hear today were spoken to Jesus' closest disciples and to the Church.

The call here to “**love one another**” was and is addressed specifically to the church and the members thereof. Jesus speaks elsewhere of how we are to love the world and those in the world, but here he speaks specifically to us; to Christians in the Church.

The command of Jesus is to “love one another” to be in a **covenantal, committed relationship** with one another “till death do us part.” It is only when we stay in relationship despite our irritations; despite the pain, and disagreements, and hurts we have with each other that we experience the promises of Jesus here in our scripture that come through loving one another. It is then we find the joy of abiding with Jesus.

When we take our commitment to love one another as members of one Church “**for better or worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health**” we will then experience Jesus' promise of Joy.

In Agua Prieta we live out our commitment to each other through our sister church in Mexico. We are fruitful there because we began with God. Faith took us there. Faith built the Fuente de Vida church. Love has held us there, and so we've seen great fruit!

Here are the 4 college graduates we went to celebrate their graduation last Saturday. They are holding watches that were given to them to emphasize the importance of this time and what they are going to do with their lives.



First, on the left is Raphael with a degree in Industrial Engineering.  
Second, is Manuel with a degree in Law.  
Third, is Deana with a degree in Industrial Psychology.  
Fourth, is Mary Lou with a Teaching degree.

Manuel, Deana, and Mary Lou are married and have 2 children each. They finished school while working, being parents and spouses. The average daily wage in Agua Prieta is \$4. They spoke of the great difficulties they had and how our support and the support of their church made their graduation possible. Raphael's mom never even attended an elementary school.



We have 11 more coming up and these are the degrees they seek: Law, Business Administration, Teaching, Accounting, Law Enforcement, Industrial Engineering, Interior Design, Psychology, Robotics, Criminal Justice and Mining Engineering.

Their lives and the community has been transformed by the works of our love that began with Faith in Jesus Christ. This is the level of the housing that still exists in spots there, but was the whole community when Vista began its works of love there. And yes there are people living in these shacks.



Here is Manuel's home now a few houses down from these shacks.



Love inspires love in return; so they gave us gifts and plaques to thank Vista Church for your support.



The 1<sup>st</sup> plaque came from Mary Lou



The 2<sup>nd</sup> plaque came from Raphael.



This is Mary Lou's father who gave thanks for all the families.



Mary Lou and her husband. I believe he is the little boy being held in the picture in our breezeway. His mother was murdered in the crossfire of a drug war shoot out in Cananea Mexico.

Friends, you have done great works of love with more to come that will bear eternal fruit. Our Satellite Fellowships are coming up at the end of this year. Our ability to engage in mission and ministry will be greatly enhanced by our new Ed and Admin building next year. We

through these and many more avenues will bear fruit for the Kingdom of God.

Remember it begins with abiding with Jesus. It ends in the Kingdom of God and in the meantime we are involved in the rhythm of life of rest, work and fruitfulness.

So remember these 4 ways to abide in Jesus, to be like Jesus, to be his disciple to connect with God and each other:

Pray.

Learn and know the words of Jesus.

Daily recommit your life to Jesus.

And love one another by serving one another.

For as Jesus said, “You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last,”

What is God saying to you and what are you going to do?

In Jesus' name amen!