

Horton & LS Easter 5 John 15:1-8, 1Jn 4:7-21, Acts 8:26-46 The true vine

How fruitful are you?

How vines grow

“I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener”. Do any of you have a vine(s) growing in your garden? Often they are grown over an arbour or pergola in order to allow a space for the vines to spread and the grapes to hang free from the “roof”. When they start off they need very great care to encourage abundant fruit. Grape vines should not be allowed to produce fruit in the first year and the next year strictly restricted to one bunch. Thereafter they are free to reach their full fruitfulness. So pruning back a vine for fruitfulness is absolutely essential. A wild vine is often an aggressive and unruly growth. The variety of a vine is the defining characteristic of the sort of grapes we get – each different type of vine for eating or for the different wines.

Stock and branches

In this passage Jesus tells us that He is the true vine. **We are the branches** growing from that vine grafted into Jesus. All the characteristics of Jesus therefore are invested in the branches that grow from it. Jesus as the stock is the foundational essence of the fruit, but each type of graft produces our own unique flavour– Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Cabernet sauvignon, Merlot, Muscat etc. As branches of the vine we take on the essence of the vine and its characteristics as we produce fruit.

Separated from the vine without Jesus and the root system of the vine we are spiritually dead and useless. **Joined** and grafted to the vine we have the potential of producing fruit, but in order to produce it we need to be nurtured and pruned by the Father.

This is a lovely picture of how as faithful Christians we are not only under Christ, but we become part of his body and work here on earth. Jesus gives of His own life that we might have spiritual life and through the Holy Spirit continue to do so. The **Trinity** Father, Son and Holy Spirit is at work in us!.

What is the fruit?

Many people have preached on this passage and have only counted fruit as “winning souls”. There is no reason why this might not be a result of our fruitfulness – the church (the body of Christ) would die out if people did not come to know Christ – but it is not the essence of the fruit. Spiritual fruit is defined as **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**. The fruits are attractive characteristics **in us** that point to the character of Jesus. It is our behaviour and attitudes as Christians that glorifies God and draws other people to the love of Jesus for them.

How do we produce fruit?

It is good to examine ourselves regularly to nurture those little buds of fruit which come naturally – It comes when **we allow ourselves to be pruned and allow God to change our lives for the better**. Fruit comes from **our obedience to God to love others** around us

unconditionally. If we fail to produce fruit we will be given a chance to repent, but with no change eventually we will be cut off. There is no fear here because Jesus loves us and always works with us gently. Examples of 2 fruits.

The fruit of Love

In John's letter we read that love is a key ingredient of being a Christian. He says perfect love casts out fear. Our love emerges from realising how much God loves us. He cares deeply for all of us and does everything possible to help us grow. We love God because He loves us (4v19) and that means as we become aware of that love so our love will grow for Him and for others who are His creation around us, no exceptions. If we don't love our neighbour, John says, that is a big obstacle to us being able to love GOD. Perfect love casts out fear.

The fruit of faithfulness – prayer

The fruit of faithfulness is prayer. Jesus tells us **“Whatever you will ask in my name, it will be given you”**. The key thing here is that it is not just anything like “Lord help Arsenal to win the cup” because God is a supporter of both teams, or “Lord bring fire down on my enemies”, because Jesus has asked us to love our enemies. A prayer for our enemies is in accordance with being **“in the name of Jesus”**. Faithfulness is expressed in the name of the Lord, because He wants us to love each other even if....

Sometimes we seem to be praying for the right things **but nothing happens**. Faithfully we pray for those who are ill. It doesn't follow though that we can pray “please don't let them die, because dying is a gateway to ongoing life. Only Jesus knows the time He will take each one of us and Jesus continues to abide in us. Often Jesus heals, but faithfulness in prayer, is praying for God to come alongside us and He will always bring us comfort and He will change the pray-er and the prayed for. Jesus abiding in us means that we begin to get to know what God wants and ask things **“in His Name”**. A pretty good test to faithfulness is whether we are loving or not, whether we are prepared to have patience for the answer and whether we can find joy in Christ even in the sad times.

Conclusion

Jesus is calling us to **abide in Him for a more abundant life**. He doesn't want us to struggle along with things on our own, but He wants us to enter into the life of the vine and bear the fruit of the Spirit so that other people will see in us a bit of Him. As we let the sap of the Holy Spirit rise within us so we will be the people He made us to be and rise above those things that threaten to snare us. He loves us and wants us to be filled with His love. Let's take up His invitation to be fruitful. I pray that all of us will let Jesus abide in us so we can be.

I am the vine you are the branches
Live in me and you will never die
I am the vine and my Father is the Keeper
Come to me, Let the Spirit bring you life
Come to me , let the Sprit bring you life

Like a tree planted by the living waters
To stretch its roots into the living stream
You will show no distress
In the heat of the drought
But still bear fruit and leaves

MP 792 Danny Daniels
You are the vine, We are the branches,
Keep us abiding in you,
You are the vine, We are the branches,
Keep us abiding in You.

And we'll go, *(and we'll go)*
In Your love, *(in Your love)*
And we'll go, *(and we'll go)*
In Your Name, *(in Your Name)*
That the world, *(that the world)*
Will surely know, *(will surely know)*
That You have power to heal
And to save.