



Growth Group Questions
October 6, 2024
“Grief and Gratitude”

Context:

In the gospel of John Jesus makes seven “I AM” statements. These all harken back to Exodus 3 when Moses asks God for His name so that he can tell the people of Israel. God responds “I AM Who I AM. Jesus picks up on this and we hear him say, “I Am” the bread of life (6:35), the light of the world (8:12), the door (10:7), the good shepherd (10:11, 14), the resurrection and the life (11:25), the way the truth and the life (14:6) and the true vine (15:1). Jesus does this to make it very clear that he is God.

In our text for today when Jesus says he is the true vine, he is declaring himself the new Israel. He would be the one who would show the world what God was all about. He would tabernacle in the world and display God’s goodness and glory. Israel had not done that well, but Jesus would accomplish what God had intended Israel to do.

We again hear the theme of bearing fruit, but we also hear about the theme of pruning. As our lives bear fruit, God prunes us or cuts us back. The image of pruning reminds us of the trials and difficulties that come our way, and yet in spite of those troubles, God is using them to help us in our witness to His love and grace.

It is important to note that the word for “prune” in verse 2 is also used in other texts in the New Testament and is translated “cleansing” or “purifying.” In the pruning, God is cleansing us and making us more like Jesus.

There is a clear call to remain or abide in Jesus. The word “remain” is used eight times in verses 4-7. The importance of maintaining a vital relationship and staying connected to Jesus is key. Just as the branches depend on the vine for sustenance, followers of Jesus must depend on him for their spiritual life and growth.

Scripture

John 15:1-8

15 “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^[a] 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, as I also 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 you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are 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 done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Psalms 80:8-9

⁸ You transplanted a vine from Egypt;
you drove out the nations and planted it.
⁹ You cleared the ground for it,
and it took root and filled the land.

Psalms 80:14-15

¹⁴ Return to us, God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see! Watch over this vine,
¹⁵ the root your right hand has planted, the son^[a] you have raised up for yourself.

Galatians 5:22-23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Psalms 34:18

¹⁸ The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Isaiah 43:1-2

⁴³ But now, this is what the Lord says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Revelation 21:3-4

³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’^[a] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”



Questions:

1. In John 15:1, Jesus says, “I am the true vine.” What did He mean by that?
2. The word “remain” (or in some versions the words “abide” or “linger”) appears eight times in John 15:1-8. Why do you think Jesus made such a point of using this word? What do you think it means to “remain” or “abide” in Jesus?
3. How does “remaining” or “abiding” in Jesus change the way you live your life?
4. John 15:1-8 speaks of pruning. Why do farmers prune their plants? How do the reasons why farmers prune their plans help you to understand why God prunes us?
5. Pastor Paul said that when troubling times come our way, it matters what we are “grafted into.” What do you think he meant by that statement? How do you know what you are grafted into?
6. Pastor Paul also said that it is possible for a Christian to experience both gratitude and suffering at the same time. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
7. Review Psalm 34:18 and Isaiah 43:1-2. What do these two Scripture passages say to you? Can you restate them in your own words?
8. Pastor Paul said that throughout our suffering, we have “living hope.” What does that mean? What is our “living hope”?

Pastor Paul’s Sermon Reflection Questions:

1. How does the resurrection of Jesus impact your understanding of grief and sorrow?
2. What are you grateful for?

