

Week Eight: 'I am the true vine.'

OPENING PRAYER

READ | *John 15:1-17*

¹"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He 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. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain 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. ⁶If 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. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.

DISCUSS

1. The intricate relationship Jesus describes with the vine and branches is allegory, but no detail is lost in reality. Apart from its life source nothing thrives and nothing survives. Jesus urges his followers to *remain in me*, that they would *bear fruit* (v. 4). What is *fruit* in the Christ follower's life? What might it mean to *remain in Jesus*?
2. *This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit* (v. 8). Is this perhaps a definition of 'fruit'? —that 'fruit' can be only that which brings glory to God the Father? An aspect of Jesus' being perfect was his disinterest in his own glory. He sought only the Father's glory. Why might the Father's glory be so central for Christ (and for Christians)? How does our 'remaining' in Jesus glorify the Father?

APPLY

1. In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis writes: "The Church exists for nothing else but to draw people into Christ, to make them little Christs... God became man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose." For those aspiring to Christlikeness, verses 12, 13 and 17 point to one of His most defining characteristics, as one who loved sacrificially. *Love each other as I have loved you*. In other words, devote yourselves to other-centeredness, because, when a response to all you've received in the gospel, it delights and glorifies your Father in heaven. Does a person remain in Jesus by loving others or love others by remaining in Jesus? True or false: only by truly embracing God's love for you and the grace He extends, will you be able to extend Christlike love to others? Explain.

CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer suggestions: > that by remaining in Jesus, 'the true vine', our lives would bear God-honoring fruit and his redemptive intentions in the world would be extended through us in the form of grace, mercy, humility and obedience... and love for one another; that the divine drama of the gospel of grace, rooted in the person and work of Jesus alone on our behalf, would astonish us, delight us, free us, change us, and give us hope