

Text: John 15:1-8

Theme: Abiding Vines

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation this morning is the Holy Gospel according to St. John the fifteenth chapter, verses one through eight.

Good Morning Boys and Girls, how are you today? Good. In our text for today. Jesus says, “I am the vine. You are the branches.” What does a vine do? It grows and produces fruit. If a tree does not have any branches, it cannot bear any fruit. It’s very good news that Jesus is the vine and we’re branches, living branches. It means he takes care of us, like the trunk of an apple tree takes care of its branches, and then apples grow. Jesus takes care of you. How does He do that? Gives us clothing, parents, and the best way he takes care of us is that he died to pay for our sins, and then he rose from the dead, so that we can live with him forever. We live now, and we will live forever with Jesus because he loves us and takes care of us. He also helps us in producing fruit, how do we do that? Let’s listen to the rest of the sermon to find out. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

“I am the vine. You are the branches.” With this words, our Lord gives to us our very identity as Christians. In a vineyard, branches are defined by their connection to the vine. Jesus is the vine, and so your identity is defined by your connection to Christ. And it is in that relationship—but only in that relationship of branches connected to the vine—that you will bear fruit in your life. That is what naturally happens when branches abide in the vine. They bear fruit.

We are a part of Christ, grafted into what He has done for us upon the cross in order to bear fruit. In order to do this, we need to be a connected to Christ because if we are not, then we are no better than a branch away from it's vine. What good is a branch without a vine? It is good for nothing but to be thrown into the fire. It can produce no fruit, either good or bad. A branch can do nothing by itself unless it is connected to the vine.

In order to bear fruit, a vinedresser has to prune or cleanse the vine, the Greek word means either meaning. The vinedresser cuts away all of the dead, dying, and bad fruit, as well as extraneous vines in order that the good fruit that is there is able to grow and mature better and stronger. As branches connected to the vine, Christ, we undergo pruning and cleansing. This is a painful process, but one that is necessary to undergo. Unlike the vinedresser, the branches do not know the end result and outcome. They bear with the pain, until all is finally revealed at the very end. How often do we undergo pain and trials in this life? Very often! The pain of falling into sin time and time again even though we know it is wrong and that we should not do it. The pain of heartbreak and loss as we face death and destruction. The pain of living in a sinful and fallen world. The pain of a world that hates and despises us merely for claiming to be Christian. All of this pain, how can we bear it and endure?

We can bear it and endure because of our Source, because we are connected to Jesus Christ. His death and resurrection from the dead, gives to us the ultimate cleansing, the forgiveness of our sins, the salvation of our souls and life with Him forever and ever. We endure because we have been granted the strength by Christ. We know how everything will end. In this hope, in a way, we do nothing. We merely abide in Him. How do we do that? Jesus does it through the gospel, the good news of God's grace in Christ. The gospel is the "juice of life" for us, flowing from the vine into the branches. The gospel refreshes our

soul. It strengthens our faith. It enables our love and energizes our service. The gospel assures us of God's goodness toward us. It moves us into doing good works for others. This gospel comes to you in Word and Sacrament. It's the preaching you hear in church. It's the teaching you receive in Bible class. It's living in your baptism. It's receiving Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament. This is how the life of the vine gets into us branches. The life-giving gospel flows into us. So to abide in the vine, to draw our life from the vine, we need to be where the gospel is. That's why it is so vitally important to stay connected to Christ here in church. This is where Word and Sacrament take place. This is the power station that Christ himself has established, precisely in order for you to stay connected to him.

So abide in the vine. Stay connected to Christ. Your relationship to Jesus is your basic identity in life, like branches to the vine. He is the source of your life and the secret to your fruitfulness. Receive the juice of life as you continue steadfast in his word, live day by day in your baptism, and come again and again to his table. This is where and how you find what you need to be fruitful. So the message today is simple: Stay where you are—remain connected to Christ—and this will get you going and growing. Abide in the vine, and you will bear much fruit.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.