

Stay connected to Jesus – John 15

March 22, 2020 - Langford Community Church – Graham Gladstone

Hello! So glad that you could be here today. The world continues to change and God remains the same. 😊

Since it's Sunday, we're going to look at the passage that was scheduled for today and that's John 15. John 15:1-8.

Now I've spent a bunch of time with this passage this week and I think that it boils down to a really simple message - stay close to Jesus and bear fruit like He did.

That's an important message generally, and even more important right now. With the changes that have come with COVID-19, everybody's routine is up in the air and it's really easy to just skip over our devotional time with Jesus. But it's now more important than ever to stay vitally connected to Him.

Because listen to what Jesus says in John 15:

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. (John 15:5 NIV).

Jesus says that we relate to him like a branches to a vine. Think about that. A branch needs the vine. It can't grow on its own, can it? But when it draws life and energy and nutrition from the vine, it will prosper.

Same with us - apart from Jesus, our spiritual life withers, but in relationship with Him, drawing strength and vitality and life from Him, we prosper!

And not only do WE prosper, but we prosper for the benefit of others. We bear fruit that is helpful to them.

Now many people have guessed at what the fruit is here – some say it's good deeds, some say it's evangelistic, some say it's acts of obedience and others say it's character based – love, joy, peace, patience – the fruit of the spirit.

To be honest, I don't think it's any one of those things; more than likely, it's ALL of those things, and so I like to think in terms of 'bearing fruit like Jesus did.' Doing things and acting in ways that Jesus Himself would have.

That works with our metaphor, doesn't it? If you see a grapevine in season, you expect to see grapes. If you see an apple tree, you expect to see apples. If you see a follower of Jesus, you expect to see them acting like Jesus would.

If there is no fruit or rotten fruit, then you gotta ask, is that branch really connected to Jesus? Because a Branch connected to the Vine will bear fruit that's consistent with the Vine.

And according to verse 8, this brings glory of God and confirms that we are indeed Jesus' disciples.

8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (Joh 15:8 NIV).

So that's the big idea today – Stay connected to Jesus and bear fruit like He did.

Now how do we do that?

First – staying connected – find time, even in the midst of all this upheaval, to spend time with God. Prayer, Bible reading, these videos, reflective walks with God; anything that will help you to nurture your relationship with Him. Find ways to draw life from Him, the way branches draw strength from the vine.

And two – bearing fruit – let that life energize your own life and then spill over to others as Christ-like fruit. I mean, Jesus goes so far as to say - 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, (which means that your desires will be shaped by the will of God) ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you (John 15:7 NIV).

Can you imagine what would happen if we all started praying “Lord, let me be your hands and feet to people who are in real need right now?” Apart from Him, Jesus says, we can do nothing. But in relationship with Him, we are capable of more than we can possibly imagine. Because not only are we in HIM but HE is in us.

So stay close to Jesus and bear fruit like He did.

Now one more thought that I want to consider. Right off the bat in verse 2, Jesus says that 1. the Father cuts OFF the branches that bear no fruit and 2. Cuts BACK the branches that do bear fruit, so they'll bear even more.

2 He 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 (John 15:2 NIV).

I wonder if we're in that time right now. If God is cutting back the excess baggage on our lives so that we will be able to really focus on what matters. I wonder if we'll look back at this time

and say – “wow, God knew what He was doing. He trimmed off the deadwood in our lives and we are even more fruitful because of it.” We can certainly pray to that end.

With all of the social distancing going on right now, there’s another concept that’s getting a lot of air time, and that’s staying connected. Do a quick Google search and you’ll find hundreds of ways to stay connected to family and friends, and you really should. Once we’re done here, why not go pick up the phone and call somebody from church and check in and make sure they’re ok.

And while you’re at it, there’s one more connection I’d encourage you to make – and that’s to Jesus. Stay close to Him and bear fruit like He did.