

Cell Notes: Fruit of the Vine

John 15:1-17

Setting the Scene

Jesus describes himself as the vine to show us what it means to belong to him. Of course, Jesus was not really a plant, but he used the metaphor to help people understand who he really was.

Does anyone know what a metaphor is? It is when you describe one thing as something else. If you had to describe yourself as a plant, what sort of plant would you be?

Show the plants. Smell some of the flowers; taste some of the fruit. Some plants produce fruit some nuts and some prickles

What do the seeds need to get from seed to full grown plant - water, light, air, food?

What do we need to grow to be complete adults? We need all of the above but also something more to make us complete adults - knowledge. And not just the things we learn at school about language, maths, science etc.

Show the pictures of the before and after gardens. It's easy for a team to come in and make-over a garden, but what happens when they leave? If the person who owns the garden doesn't know how to look after it, will it still look good? Jesus can be the person who tells us how to be complete people. In today's Bible reading, Jesus gives us some advice on how to grow into mature, flourishing Christians.

Refer to the ancient vine at Hampton Court Palace. The vine is about 240 yrs old possibly the oldest in the world.. Its base is about 4 meters around . Some of its branches are 35metres long Because it has been skilfully pruned and tended it produces several tons of grapes every year. Even though some of the smaller branches are 35 metres away from the main stem, they bear plenty of fruit because they are joined to the vine and the life of the vine flows through them. Branches cannot grow by themselves, but life begins with the vine.

Ask why the vine needs to produce fruit.

Show some of the things made from grapes.

Who was the vine in today's gospel reading. Jesus was describing himself as the vine with us as the branches.

And who was the gardener? God the Father was the gardener who did the necessary pruning. Jesus used the story of the vine and branches to explain that we are all part of him. It is through Jesus that we have life, and through the work of God, the gardener, that we flourish and grow strong.

What are the fruits that Jesus wants us to bear?

Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, self-control.

The Peace

Ask everyone to join hands, like a vine, forming a chain to a central point. When everyone is in place, say: 'Jesus said, "I am the true vine, my Father is the gardener. Apart from me you can do nothing."' Continue with the Peace.

Bearing Fruit

Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, self-control.

Those 'fruits' are fairly easy to say but how can we possibly come near to being sure that we are actually 'fruitful' in our lives?

4 *you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.*

10 *If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.*

Disobeying means that we are consciously deciding to walk outside God's love for us.

Not that God will stop loving us, or that receiving his love is gained by obeying, "remain " is the key word.

Obedying is not really so hard - we do so because we have experienced love and that is easy to respond to. Malcolm Cole, pointed out that the Old Testament concept of Law [Torah] had had a bad press. In the Hebrew it literally means "the pointing finger". The commands of God, whether in the 10 Commandments, the whole of the Old Testament Law or the New Testament commands of Jesus are there to point us to where we can remain within the love of God, not to prohibit certain actions.

11: I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Jesus takes delight and joy in our friendship and in us remaining in the Father's love - for we are exhibiting the family likeness. What an encouragement to enjoy the friendship of Jesus - that it brings joy to him. Our God is so generous though - it brings complete joy to us as well. It is about Augustine great saying 'Man does not find his peace until he finds his peace with God'. Complete joy is to be had dwelling in the love of God for us -enjoying his friendship.

Complete = Full = to fill to the top; so that nothing shall be wanting, to full measure; to the brim

Joy is not a matter of how you feel at this moment it - is about claiming and living in the love of God. It is an objective fact for you to claim and enjoy.

Love Shared

If Jesus' love and friendship for you is so important and it is part of his very nature and character no wonder he says to us.

12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you

Loving each other is not an optional extra for Christians - it is a command - and his commands keep us within the love of God. It is a conditional command also. You cannot love if you have not experienced the love and friendship for yourself – for it is 'as I have loved you' - in the same way, unconditionally, in a family relationship. It is not either mental assent to an idea - it is practical and to be seen in every contact with each other.

I thought that I might let you off the embarrassment of turning to the person next you and simply saying as earnestly as you can 'I love you'. By saying I love you in Christ; or In Jesus you are the most wonderful person I have met - and I love you. All are open to embarrassment - but the unconditional nature of 'I love you' is absolutely right.

SAY THAT NOW,

13:34 Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. 35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

Friendship is fruitful

It is possibly true to say that what Jesus expects from our friendship with him as that other come to know that loving friendship too. He could not conceive of a love that was not shared.

16: You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last.

You have been chosen - precious, valued - individually and intimately.

You have been appointed; 'ordained' KJV - set, fix, establish. Not a coming and going state as the Holy Spirit in Old Testament. Not to sit and enjoy fruit, but to go and bear fruit. A tree seed has a micro tree inside each seed - it is intended to produce another tree and more fruit.

That is how we are supposed to bear fruit for Jesus.

Conclusion

As you bear fruit you will be dwelling within the circle of God's love and his promise to you as the friend of Jesus is.

17 Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

It will not need be wringing things out of a reluctant God.

It will not be hesitant because we are not sure what God wants, or because we believe we are not good enough.

Luke 11:13 how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Questions

1. We often find obeying difficult. How can we help each other to find ways of find the right motive for obeying?
2. How difficult did you find it to say 'I love you' to the person next to you?
3. "You have been chosen - precious, valued - individually and intimately. You have been appointed; 'ordained'"
How does this help you in following Christ?