Session in a sentence: Jesus calls us to stay connected with him. The fruit we bear is because of Jesus. In that is divine joy.

Main Passage: John 15:1-11

The command:

What are some words or phrases that speak to you? How would you explain “Abide in Me” to a counselor? A construction worker? A nurse? A truckdriver? A police officer? A farmer?

Few people use the word “abide” in everyday language. In all of the works of Shakespeare, the word “abide” is used 47 times. The King James Version of the Bible uses it 103 times, 45 of those times in the New Testament. If it is true that words are ways to help the human mind visualize concepts, how did those early Christians understand what Jesus was saying?

In the original language of the text, the word translated as “abide” simply means “to stay, remain.” The Contemporary English Version translates the word, “joined.” That helps, especially given the metaphor Jesus gives us. Jesus calls himself the vine and his disciples the branches. The purpose of the branches is to “bear fruit.” It seems reasonable enough that branches that bear fruit are most commonly “joined” to the “vine.” This would be a pretty good way to explain to a rural culture the relationship Jesus wants with us, especially to those who tended vineyards.

What about people in other walks of life? Law enforcement and military say, “On me.” That means “stay close, your life may depend on it.” Tradesman and coaches say, “Stick with me, kid, and you’ll learn something.” That means, “Pay attention and you, too, can learn this skill.” A professional guide tells her hikers, “Don’t wander off, you might get lost.”

“Abide in me,” Jesus says. “On me,” “stick with me,” “don’t wander off,” our life, our eternal life, depends on it. Our faith, our hope, is in Jesus alone.
The question?

Don’t tell me

what to do!

I’ll think about it.

Yes Ma’am/Sir.

Where are you on the scale? Jesus doesn’t threaten us. He only speaks about the natural result of not heeding his words. Without fruit, the branch is useless to the purpose of the plant. If it doesn’t bear fruit, there’s something already wrong. The “withering” is not a threat but simply a statement of the natural result of separating ourselves from Jesus. “Abide in me,” Jesus says. “But, why?” Jesus’ answer is stark. If we don’t stay connected to him, we will wither and die.

Is my spiritual walk with Jesus withering? Is my community withering? The health of a branch is measured by the fruit it produces.

What a minute. What is “fruit?”

Fruit is a familiar metaphor both in Scripture and in our culture. For the Apostle Paul, the fruit of the Spirit is “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). There’s nothing wrong with that, but that doesn’t fit the context of Jesus’ teaching. This passage in John is a part of the Passion narrative that takes us through the crucifixion and ends with the post-resurrection experiences. In the context of John, what is fruit? John suggests at least two potential meanings of “fruit.” First, we are called to love others as we have been loved by Jesus (v. 9). When we “abide” in Christ, we are able to love. Conversely, the absence of love in our lives could be an indicator that we are already “withering.” If we love Jesus, we will love others. If we do not love others, we are withering. Second, we are called to make disciples. In John 4:36, we read, “The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.” Sounds like John 15:11, doesn’t it? If we are not making disciples, if we are not calling others into a relationship with Jesus Christ, we are withering.

Voices from the Past: “As genuine disciples of Jesus, therefore, let us also lift up our eyes and see the fields that have been sown by Moses and the prophets…how it is possible to reap their fruit to eternal life.” Origen (c.184-253), Commentary on the Gospel of John
**Practices:**

Jesus gives us clear ways to stay connected when he says, “...my words abide in you” (v. 7a). When Scripture is a regular and significant part of our daily life we are being fed. We will bear fruit. “Ask,” (v. 7b) pray expecting that God hears and answers. “Keep my commandments,” (v. 9) reminds us of John 13:34. And finally, “that my (Jesus’) joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (v. 11) is a testimony of a life centered in the sufficiency and supremacy of Jesus the Messiah.

For a sermon preached on the topic, go to Rev. Nicholson’s [blog](#).

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