

## ***Abiding in the Vine***

Trinity CRC, November 4, 2018 AM  
Essentials of Renewal #1

John 15:1-17  
Rev. Richard deLange

Dear Friends in Christ,

I don't know if you heard about a special apple in a BC orchard this summer. A farmer just outside of Salmon Arm is reported to have been in his orchard one day last spring when he overheard this little apple talking to itself. Now you can imagine that the farmer thought he was going crazy for a moment. But he shook his head, rubbed his ears and, sure enough, he heard the little apple screaming, "I have to try to be a better apple. I have to try to be a better apple. I've gotta get bigger and juicier. Bigger and juicier. Bigger and Juicier!" And the same thing happened to Dan Visser when he was walking through his field of wheat this summer. It was so quiet out there in the field that he overheard the stalks of wheat cheering each other on: "Grow, grow, grow!"

I know none of you believe that. You don't have to be very old to know that apples or any other fruits don't hang on the branches worrying about their growth. Neither does wheat in the field. Crops just don't do that. They depend on the roots to supply their nutrients and the plants normally do that, just like the ground gives nutrients to the wheat. In Jesus' illustration, the fruit depends on the vine. Between the good source of nutrients in the vine and the faithful hand of the gardener for care and pruning, the fruit just grows.

Today we want to consider the fruit of the Christian life since bearing fruit is essential to our life in Christ. Four essentials of renewal that our Renewal Team are exploring include that first one of abiding. In fact, fruit bearing is a mark of our connection to Christ, the true Vine. The first thing to consider, then, is the source of the fruit we bear.

### **The Source of Our Fruit**

In Psalm 1 we are reminded that those who walk with God are like fruitful trees. The righteous person, the psalmist says,

*Ps 1:3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season...*

In that particular psalm fruitfulness is associated with loving the Lord's commands. Desiring to do God's will. Similarly in the New Testament, doing the will of God characterizes a fruitful life. In Matthew 7, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus say the source of good fruit is a good tree.

*Mt. 7:17 Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.*

That's just the way it is. A good tree, properly cared for and supplied with all that is necessary by the gardener, produces good fruit. It doesn't have to try.

As Christians, good spiritual fruit in our life comes from being intimately connected to Christ, like branches to the true vine. As we drink our spiritual nourishment from Christ, or in the words of our text, as we remain or abide in

Christ we develop the character of Christ. He is the source. Taking in what Christ supplies makes us produce Christ-like fruit. Jesus said,

*Jn 15:5 If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.*

It can't be any other way. If a branch gets what it needs, the fruit will come. You won't be able to stop it.

That's the way it is with the Christian. If you're God's child, my dear friend, then you are a branch grafted into Christ the Vine. That's a wonderful comfort, for as a branch you are also tended, cared for, and pruned by the heavenly Father, in order to produce good fruit. Once you are connected to Christ the fruit will come. It will even increase year by year. So, remember, we can only bear fruit because of our connection to Christ. He is the source of our good fruit.

## The Fruit

Now let's think about the fruit itself. When the NT talks about fruit in the Christian's life, it does so on two levels. There is inner fruit and outer fruit. And it seems to me that Jesus gives examples of both here in John 15. He talks about an inward disposition or spiritual fruit like love and joy. And then also speaks about outward expressions of that inward reality when he talks about praying, laying down your life for your neighbour, and obeying God's commandments.

Probably the best-known passage in the NT that talks about spiritual fruit is Galatians 5 which mentions some of the same fruit as John 15. Many of you know it well. The Lord says,

*Gal 5:22 "the fruit of the Spirit is [what, girls and boys?] love, joy, peace, patience, <sup>23</sup> kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."*

Those who remain or abide in Christ are filled with the Spirit. And with the Spirit comes spiritual fruit both inside and outside.

Jesus teaches that too when he says in v.4

*Jn 15:4 Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

And in v.8 he tells us that our fruit must be for his *Father's glory*.

As a minister I have to constantly watch for false motives in my own heart. If I'm working hard and start to get grouchy, I have to ask myself, "Why are you doing what you do? For whom are you doing it?" We all need to answer those questions. You can give your all on the job or in the home or at school but then you get really ticked off because no one seems to care. And soon you are just putting in time and then maybe you even start to hate what you are doing. Nothing may have changed on the outside, but your attitude has because you don't think you are getting the thanks you deserve.

Any potential fruit in that situation has gone sour and rotten. Where's the joy, the peace, the patience? Where's the desire to serve your neighbour as yourself? When the fruit is missing, we need to go back to Christ. We need to check our connection to the Vine. Has our fruit bearing been compromised because we've tried to live our life in our own strength instead of remaining with Christ? Have we started living in our own power again instead of living out of our connection to

Christ? It happens so easily. It happens to all of us at times. And that's when we have to get back to Jesus so that the fruit of the Spirit is nurtured through Christ.

In Jesus' illustration the fruit doesn't worry about growing more fruitful. Apples don't shout to themselves, "I have to grow, I have to produce. I need to get bigger." They just remain on the branch. Likewise in our life, the focus can't be on the fruit. You can't say, "O, I'm so miserable. I have to get some joy or peace." You can't say, "O, I have to do something nice or say something kind". No, dear saint, don't look for the fruit. You just look to the Lord. Remain in Christ and the fruit will come. He told us plainly, "*Apart from me you can do nothing.*" So stay close to Christ. Get closer to Him. Let Him be your nourishment and the fruit will come. It will.

One day your teenager will come home and say, "Dad, I smashed up the car." And without even thinking, you'll say, "Are you alright?" Later you'll think to yourself, "Wow, I can't believe I didn't get mad at him."

That's self-control and love. That's fruit from abiding in Christ.

Another time you might be going for a major surgery. Someone recently told me that his friends at work asked him why he wasn't nervous about having to go through major surgery. He replied he knows he's in God's hands.

That's peace. And that's fruit from abiding in Christ.

The kind of thing the Good Samaritan did is also fruit. In that story, he didn't decide to make a name for himself. He didn't count the cost of taking care of an injured man. He just did it without thinking too much about it. He saw a need and sought to fill it as best he could.

That's loving your neighbour. And that's fruit from abiding in Christ.

Nine times between vv.4 and 11 we are told to abide or remain in Christ. Abiding in Christ is the secret of fruitbearing. When our focus is Jesus, then more and more we bring glory to the Father in heaven. More and more, people will see that you are a disciple of Jesus. There's no other explanation.

You and I can do a lot of things in this world, even some pretty nice things. You can be nice because you think people should be nice. And you can do all in your power to be nice, but it will often result in frustration and irritation because the source of your kindness is yourself. Or you can remain in Christ, you can cling to him and keep drinking in his nutrients. Then quietly and sometimes to your great surprise you will do things you didn't plan to do. You will have peace or patience or love or joy that you didn't know existed. The fruit will come because the branch is attached to the Vine.

Guess what? The Christian life isn't about trying to be good or trying to be better. That's a dead end street filled with frustration, disappointment and misery. The Christian life is about grace. It's about knowing that you can't save yourself, so you trust in Jesus to save you. All you can do is remain in him and live for the

glory of God. So, don't put the cart ahead of the horse. Focus on the Lord, abide in Christ and the fruit will come. People will see that you are a disciple of Jesus.

As a church going through a renewal process, we are asking ourselves—individually and corporately—am I deeply connected to Christ? Am I drinking from his Vine? Am I reading his word and praying? Am I eager to come to worship and getting closer to Jesus? Can people see that I'm living out of my connection to Jesus? Is there fruit growing out of me? Can I tell that I'm a little more fruitful this year than I was last? Maybe I'm more patient. Gentler. Loving more deeply.

Sometimes we can do things to take in more of Jesus. Read the Bible, pray and worship. Spend time in silence. Take long walks in the woods and meditate on God. We can get involved in ministry—investing in and loving others. Those are good and important.

Other times, the Lord puts us in situations where we have no other desire than to draw nearer to him. And even in these hard times and places, his fruit—the fruit of the Vine—shows up.

Watching Rachel fight for her life and standing with her in those first weeks and months, we knew we were helpless. All we could do was cry out to God, draw near to Jesus. The broken condition of our human bodies showed itself in Rachel's brain bleed. We were helpless. But because we were connected to Jesus, he was with us in that trial and he was nurturing our spirits. People said all kinds of things about us—like you are such a loving family. But it was only because of Jesus that we bore this fruit. Only Jesus. His grace flowing into us and his love flowing out of us. It was the fruit of the Vine. I know too that Jesus gave us peace in the storm like we never could have mustered in our own strength. It was all his grace flowing into us, like nutrients from the Vine into the branch and producing good fruit.

You've been through hard stuff. The death of loved ones. And his grace flows through you. Others see your pain but also how deeply you love. How you never take another life for granted but cherish each day with your friends and family. You show the fruit of the Vine. You've gone through a divorce and it could have made you bitter and cynical about marriage or people in general. But Christ-in-you helped you seek greater patience and understanding with others. You don't judge people like others might do when they make a big (or even a small) mistake in their life. You show kindness to them. You show the fruit of the Vine. You've had to deal with abuse or bullying in your life. It could have destroyed you and almost did. But one day, you realized that Christ was with you, healing your pain and joy started flowing in you and out of you. You began to laugh again and see the world through hopeful eyes. You show the fruit of the Vine.

This is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He united himself to us when he became a man. He knows our struggles in this world. He is one with us. He came to abide with us so that we can now abide in him. And we shouldn't be surprised when his fruit appears in or through us. We can expect it.

## Morning Worship

November 4, 2018 10:00 AM

Notes: \* indicates please stand if you are able

LUYH = red hymnals on back table

### THE LORD CALLS US TO WORSHIP

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

\* We Greet One Another

\* Gathering Song: *Jesus, Firm Foundation*

CCLI 6472799

\* Opening Prayer

Pastor Rich

\* Call to Worship

\* God's Greeting

\* Songs: *Your Love, Oh Lord*

CCLI 1894255

*Hosanna*

CCLI 4785835

### THE LORD RENEWS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM

Prayer of Confession

Words of Assurance

God's Will for His People

\* Song: *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*

LUYH 772

### RECEIVING THE WORD OF GOD

Children's Message

Pastor Hilary

*Children age 3 to grade 4 dismiss to Wee Worship*

Prayer for the Word

Scripture Reading: John 15

Sermon: ***Abiding in the Vine***

\* Song: *Nearer, Still Nearer*

LUYH 659

### WE OFFER OUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS TO GOD

Congregational Prayer

Tithes and Offerings:

1. Budget: God's Work through Trinity and the CRC

2. World Renew

Offertory: *Build My Life*

CCLI #7070345.

### DEPARTING WITH GOD'S SPIRIT

\* God's Parting Blessing

\* Closing Song: *Mighty to Save*

LUYH 661