

THE VINE AND ITS BRANCHES

(Matt. 5:16; John 15:7, 8)

Introduction:

1. Our Lord was masterful in His ability to teach deep theological truths by means of simple, common, physical ones. While it is true we must be careful not to read into His illustrations more than is there, we must nonetheless feast upon His instruction all we can.
2. Let us this morning consider the illustration of the vine and its branches as detailed in John 15:1-11.

Discussion:

- I. The Context, Setting, and Characters.
 - A. The Context.
 1. Jesus has been ~3 years teaching, healing, preparing the world for His ultimate expression of God's love and God's will (John 13:1).
 2. He had just instituted the Lord's Supper and washed the disciples' feet (John 13:2-17), told them He would be betrayed and killed (John 13:18-38), and promised He would return someday to collect them to Himself (John 14:1-4).
 3. He had just promised them that if they kept His commandments that Father Son and Holy Spirit would be with them; and that the Holy Spirit would be given to them in a special way once He had ascended back to heaven (John 14:15-26).
 4. Finally He called for them to arise and leave the upper room (John 14:31) and walk toward the Mount of Olives (John 18:1), a place Jesus often went to pray/meditate.
 - B. The Setting.
 1. Jerusalem was built on the top of a range of mountains in the Judean highlands. As Jesus and His apostles left the city they would have descended down steep steps in order to cross over the Kidron Valley and then begin the ascent of the Mount of Olives.
 2. Gethsemane ("oil press") is believed to have been located on the lower western flank of the highest peak of the Mount of Olives.
 3. The Kidron Valley and sides of the Mount of Olives were historically fertile and more than likely peppered with not only Olive trees but vineyards as well.
 - C. The Characters.
 1. The Vinedresser = a person who prunes, trains, cultivates vines. A husbandman (Jer. 31:32; Matt. 9:15; Eph. 5:22ff; Rev. 21:2-9).
 2. The Vine = the main part of a vine that carries water/nutrients from soil to the branches (John 6:53, 54).
 3. The branches = the fruit bearing part of the vine (Matt. 7:17-20).
- II. The Instruction (John 15:1-11).
 - A. The Location = in Christ (vv 4-7); in Christ's love (vv 9, 10). Compare with Rom. 6:3, 23; 8:1; Gal. 3:27; 1 John 1:7.
 - B. The Seed = the word of God (vv 7, 10, 11). Compare with Luke 8:11; Matt. 13:24-30; and John 12:23, 24.
 - C. The Nurture = the provision and care of the Lord (vv 2, 3, 7, 9-11) = pruning (cp. Heb. 12:4-15), cleaning (Acts 22:16; Titus 2:11-14), answered prayers (Eph. 3:13-21), love and joy (cp. 1 Pet. 1:8; 1 John 1:4).
 - D. The Fruit = that which results in the glorification of God (v8; cp. Matt. 5:13-16; John 8:12; Rom. 8:29; John 17:4).

Conclusion:

1. That we might be able to glorify God in our lives is an honor too high to fully appreciate. That what we do here in the clay might shine light upon God and praise Him...
2. Let us all strive to glorify God in our lives. We know how to. We must be in and remain in Jesus, the Light. We must be born again from His word, and desire it as a newborn does its milk. We must strive confident that the Lord will provide for us all things unto life and godliness. If we do those things honestly with our whole being we will bear much fruit, and glorify our Lord and our God.
3. Invitation.

MORE ON “THE VINE AND ITS BRANCHES”

1. Other “connections” in the Bible.
 - A. The Message of God = Deut. 18:18, 19 ; John 12:48ff (John 5:18-47); John 14:15-26; John 16:12-15; John 17:20; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2; Eph. 3:1-7; 2 Pet. 1:12-21; 2 Tim. 2:2; 4:1-5).
 - B. The Image of God = Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:15; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; John 8:12; 1:4-9; Matt. 5:14-16; 1 John 1:5-7).

2. It’s all about sources and access.
 - A. The grace of God = Rom. 6:23; Titus 2:11-14; Acts 13:43.
 - B. Access = Rom. 5:1, 2 (faith is doorway to grace, not other way around!!); Jas. 2:14-26 (and faith entails obedience; cp. Heb. 3:18, 19).
 - C. Consider Job 9:33; 19:25; 1 Tim. 2:5-7; Heb. 10:19, 20ff.

3. Other “horticulture” illustrations.
 - A. The sower and the soils (Matt. 13; Mk. 4; Luke 8). The main message is that although the very same seed (the word of God) is sown the results will be very different depending upon the soil (the heart).
 - B. The tares among the wheat (Matt. 13). The main message is that the wheat (God’s people) must grow along side of tares (ungodly people), but at the harvest (judgment) they shall be separated.

4. One last thing to take note of: the pruning of God (John 15:1). This pruning can be compared to the chastening of God of Heb. 12 and the trying of our faith of 1 Pet. 1:3-9 and Jas. 1:1-3. You prune a plant to encourage it to grow more or to bear more fruit or flower more. This is a hard teaching we must understand or we will misunderstand the pruning for a “taking away” (cp. 2 Cor. 13:5).