

## Weekly Reflection – “The True Vine” - John 15:1-11

***“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.” John 15:1 ESV***

I want to show you the big picture of what it means for Jesus to say, I am the true vine. First, we need to see that by saying, I am the “True Vine,” Jesus is clearly implying there are other vines. In the Old Testament we see what this metaphor of a vine means, because in the Old Testament, the people of God, the people of Israel, were described as a vine. (Isaiah 5:1-7, Isaiah 27:1-6, Jeremiah 2:21, Ezekiel 19:10-14, Hosea 10:1-2, Psalm 80:8-19) Israel was a type or a shadow of something or someone to come. Israel as a vine was a shadow of Jesus as the True Vine.

God had chosen and designed His people (Israel) to be the channel through which the fruit of His life would flow. The channel through which His life, His love, goodness, justice, righteousness, and everything that emanates from God would flow to the nations. When Jesus says, “I am the True Vine,” He is saying, “I am what Israel was shadowing. I am the channel through which the life, the love, the power, the justice, the righteousness, the blessing, the goodness, and the glory of God will flow to the nations.”

In the words, “I am the True Vine,” Jesus is not saying that Israel was a false vine. What He means is that He is the true vine of which the nation was a symbol, a picture. Jesus is the only source of true life. This is who He is. He makes life possible that is impossible apart from Him. By taking the image of Israel and applying it to Himself, Jesus asks His disciples to no longer identify themselves by their nationality. His desire was that the identification of all people with the nation of Israel (or any other earthly nation) would be replaced by their identification with Him.

***“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5 ESV***

Jesus says to His disciples, I am the vine, and you are the branches. He’s using this imagery of a vine and a branch to say we can be united together in such a way that you remain in me and I remain in you. And when you do that, you will bear much fruit. You will experience My life flowing through you in a way that’s impossible apart from Me, because apart from Me, you can do nothing.

You can’t do anything that is truly good apart from the life of Jesus in you, and that is a shot to our pride, but it is such good news. You know why? Because if this is true, then this means you can do all things that are truly good with the life of Jesus in you. Another way to put that in a bit shorter form, independent of Jesus, you cannot truly live, but in dependence on Jesus, you can truly live. What this means is, as a branch, you can experience abundant, supernatural life in Jesus, every moment of every day. ***“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10 ESV)***

Are you feeling the wonder and the weight of this imagery Jesus is saying right now through His word to you and me as we’re listening, I am in You, you can have abundant life, bear much fruit. Assuming you’re a Christian, assuming you’ve repented of your sin and believed in Jesus as your Lord and Savior who died on the cross for your sin and the Lord who rose from the dead in victory over sin; Jesus is saying, right now, I live, dwell, reside in you. Jesus died for you, not just so that you could be forgiven of your sin, as if that was the end of the story. No, Jesus died for you so that you might be filled with His Spirit. Jesus died for you so that He might live in you. And this changes everything about you, about how you view yourself, when you look in the mirror every morning, do not look in the mirror and see all the spots and blemishes and imperfections and stains of past sin and shame; feeling like you’re never enough before God. Look in the mirror and see Galatians 2:20, ***“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son***

***of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” See Romans 8:1-2, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”*** This is who you are if you are abiding in Jesus and Jesus is abiding in you.

Choosing to abide in Jesus is choosing to live your life by faith in future grace.

The reason future grace is so important is that everything in the Christian life depends on it. You can't be a Christian without faith in future grace. When you get up out of the chair of grace you remove yourself from the source of grace and if you are not living by grace than you are living by your own strength and works. I believe the promises of future grace are the key to Christ-like Christian living.

**By future** I mean the grace that begins now, this very second, and the next second, and sustains your life, and the grace that we will live in moment by moment for all of eternity.

**By grace** I do not merely mean the pardon of God in passing over your sins, but also the power, beauty, and promises of God to keep you from sinning, to sustain you, to sanctify you. Not only were you saved by grace, justified, but you are being saved by grace, sanctification. Grace is divine power promised for our entire future and given in our present experience.

**By faith** I do not merely mean the confidence that Jesus died for your sins, but also the confidence that God will continue to save you, confidence in everything God has promised for the future.

So a life lived by faith in future grace is a life lived moment by moment with confidence that God will continue to do all He has said He would do and He will supply the power and the means to live each moment of our life, that in every second of our life going forward God will supply the grace we will need to live for Him.

Is future grace biblical?

- ***1 Corinthians 15:10 - But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.***
- ***2 Corinthians 9:8 - And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.***
- ***Hebrews 4:14-16 - Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. (15) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***
- ***Philippians 4:19-20 - And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (20) To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.***
- Think about the implications if we can continue to grow in our trust of future grace.
- How much less we could worry or fear because we know God has promised to supply all that we need.

How do we know there will be future grace?

- The redemptive work of past grace, the death and resurrection of Jesus, is the foundation for our faith in future grace.
- ***Romans 8:31-32 - What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (32) He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all (past grace), how will he not also with him graciously give us all things (future grace)?***

### How do we find this grace?

“Be present in the moment.” This seems obvious right? “How can I not be present in the moment? I’m here right now. How can I be present in another moment?” And yet this concept can feel elusive for many. Many spend more time living in the past or looking forward to the future.

Author Brennan Manning tells this story about presence in the moment: “A monk was being pursued by a ferocious tiger. He ran as fast as he could until he reached the edge of a cliff. He noticed a rope hanging over the side of the cliff, he grabbed it and shimmied down the side of the cliff...the monk glanced down and saw a big, jagged rock five hundred feet below. Then the monk glanced up and saw the tiger poised over the cliff. Just then, two mice began to chew on the rope. What to do? The monk looked down at the face of the cliff, saw a strawberry growing, reached out, plucked it, ate it and cried, “Yum-yum. That’s the best strawberry I’ve ever tasted.” The point: if the monk had been preoccupied with the rock below, his looming future, or with the tiger above, his ferocious past, he would have missed the strawberry God was offering him in the present moment. That is being present in the moment.

I believe this is central to the abiding life, living by faith in future grace. You cannot abide in the past, nor can you abide in the future, you only have the ability to abide in the present moment, here and now. What strawberry in your life may you be overlooking because your too focused on your past or your future? Don’t waste your present moment. Be intentional about not wasting it. Don’t just survive. Don’t just make it to the end of the day. Abide today. Abide in the Vine and be present in this moment; there are many strawberries waiting for you.

**What vine are you getting your life from?**