



# Calvary of Albuquerque

Life Lessons from Grape-Growers (Part 1) - John 15:1-7

From the Series, Believe:879

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## MESSAGE SUMMARY

My parents grew grapes on their little plot of land in Southern California. There weren't many, but enough for me to know that getting fruit at harvest depended on three things: the solid connection of branch to vine, the vigilant care of the workers, and the consistency of those things over time. Jesus, walking with the disciples toward the Garden of Gethsemane, gives life lessons to His men using the familiar example of growing grapes. With that analogy in mind, let's consider the three ways our relationship to God is described by Jesus.

## OUTLINE

- I. Connected to Christ
- II. Cared for by the Father
  - A. By Tending
  - B. By Pruning
- III. Consistent Over Time



## Grape-Growing Evaluation:

1. As a plant on God's farm, how would you evaluate your own growth? What would help you grow more?
2. What is one thing that your parents had to prune back in you when you were a child? What do you see in your life now that needs pruning or trimming?
3. What does "abiding in Christ" mean to you personally?

## DETAILED NOTES

- I. Introduction
  - A. Life is like a bunch of grapes
    - 1. Jesus distinguishes between branches that bring forth fruit and those that do not
    - 2. Analogy common to the Mediterranean
    - 3. Farmer growing grapes and tending branches; Jesus teaches to have a real relationship with God
  - B. Metaphors for a relationship with God
    - 1. God is our Father: we are His sons and daughters
    - 2. God is King: we are His subjects
    - 3. Christ is the head of the church: we are the body of Christ
    - 4. Christ is the Good Shepherd: we are the sheep of His pasture
    - 5. He is the vine: we are the branches
  - C. Lessons from this passage
    - 1. Relationship: a vital, growing relationship with God
    - 2. Hardship: God uses pain and affliction to prune our lives
    - 3. Discipleship: telling the difference between a true disciple and a fake disciple
  - D. Underlying score
    - 1. True Father
    - 2. True vine
    - 3. Branches: some are true, some are not
  - E. Setting
    - 1. Jesus turned from speaking directly to this extended metaphor
    - 2. Supper is over
    - 3. Talk in the Upper Room is over
    - 4. Jesus and the eleven disciples leave the room and walk toward the Garden of Gethsemane
      - a. John 17 is a prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane

- b. John 18 is the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane
  - c. John 15-16 spoke en route from the upper city toward the Kidron Valley and the Garden of Gethsemane
- 5. May have passed a vineyard or a vine
- 6. Temple to the left with huge bronze gate embossed with golden vines and grapes
  - a. Vine a symbol of the nation of Israel
    - i. "Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard On a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; so He expected it to bring forth good grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard That I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned; And break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns. I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain on it." For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help" (Isaiah 5:1-7)
    - ii. See Psalm 80
    - iii. In context, Israel is God's degenerate, fruitless vine
    - iv. Jesus makes a distinction between the nation and Himself
- 7. Judas is not there; he is plotting the betrayal and crucifixion of Christ
- 8. 11 disciples are left with Christ

## II. Connected to Christ

- A. We are branches; twigs
  - 1. We love to enjoy a heightened sense of importance
  - 2. Dead grape branches are useless
    - a. They are used as kindling to kindle the real fire
    - b. Worthless in and of themselves
  - 3. The value of the branch comes from their connection with the vine
    - a. Sap flows through them
    - b. They are fruitful
- B. We enjoy real significance when we are connected to Christ
  - 1. Nothing significant, spiritual, lasting
  - 2. Twig can be powerful if it makes the right connection
- C. Personal connection ("you" used 11 times in this passage)
- D. Results in new life ("fruit" used 6 times in this passage)
- E. More than ritualistic connections
  - 1. Jews
    - a. Circumcision
    - b. Sabbaths
    - c. Festivals
  - 2. Others
    - a. Baptism
    - b. Christening
    - c. Confirmation
  - 3. John the Baptist: "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matthew 3:7)
- F. More than genetic connection
  - 1. Boasting in their genealogy, connection to Abraham
  - 2. "And do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Matthew 3:9).
- G. God wants total surrender
- H. "I would like to buy three dollars worth of God, please. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of him to make me love a black man or pick beets with a migrant. I want ecstasy, not transformation. I want the warmth of the womb not a new birth. I want about a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I'd like to buy three dollars worth of God, please." —Wilbur Reese

## III. Cared for by the Father

- A. By Tending
  - 1. Farmer, grape grower viticulturist tends and grows grapes
  - 2. Cuts away dead wood and prunes living tissue
  - 3. He delights over the care given to each plant
  - 4. Creator of the universe superintends your life with this kind of care
    - a. Millions of branches worldwide; God keeps track
    - b. Guillemot - each mother knows her own eggs
- B. By Pruning
  - 1. καθαίρω; kathairó - cleanse by purging, cutting away
    - a. Tipping - slows growth
    - b. Topping 1"-2" lopped off: (too much top kills growth)
    - c. Thinning - some taken off , remaining fruit is sweeter, bigger, longer lasting
  - 2. All pruning always hurts
  - 3. God doesn't enjoy pruning, but the end result is fruit
    - a. If you abide, you are fruitful
    - b. If you are fruitful you are pruned

- c. If you are pruned you are more fruitful
- d. If you are more fruitful you are pruned
- e. Fruit, more fruit, much fruit
- 4. Why do bad things happen to God's people?
  - a. Be careful not to call something good "bad"
  - b. "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive." (Genesis 50:20)
- 5. How God prunes us
  - a. Scripture
    - i. Some verses comfort, others confront
    - ii. "For the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our innermost thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are." (Hebrews 4:12 NLT)
    - iii. Do you let God's Word cut you?
  - b. Suffering
    - 1. Pain prunes away fleshly desires and sinful habits
    - 2. "[Pain] plants the *flag of truth* within the fortress of a rebel soul."—C. S. Lewis
    - 3. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word." (Psalm 119:67)
    - 4. "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:11)
  - c. Stupidity
    - i. Sometimes our pain is a result of our stupid choices
    - ii. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)
    - iii. "Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything. (James 1:2-4 NLT)

#### IV. Consistent Over Time

- A. Abide
  - 1. Μένω; menó - remain, stay put
  - 2. "abide" used 8 times in this passage
- B. Immediate context: Judas Iscariot professed to be a real follower
- C. True disciples stay disciples: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us." (1 John 2:19)

Greek Terms: καθαίρω; kathairó; cleanse by purging, cutting away; Μένω; menó - remain, stay put

Publications Referenced: *Forrest Gump*, by Winston Groom

Figures Referenced: Wilbur Reese; C. S. Lewis

Cross References: Genesis 50:20; Psalm 119:67; Isaiah 5:1-7; Matthew 3:7; Matthew 3:9; John 16; John 17; John 18; Romans 8:28; Hebrews 4:12; Hebrews 12:11; James 1:2-4; 1 John 2:19