***“The God We Know:***

***Exploring the ‘I Am’ Sayings of Jesus”***

**Lenten Bible Study: Week 5**

**March 29, 2023**

***“I Am the True Vine: Knowing God’s Power”***

Let us know how you’re feeling today. *(No details needed)*

**For example:**

* I’m Feeling spiritually *Well, challenged, or drained today*
* I’m Feeling emotionally *Well, challenged, or drained today*
* I’m Feeling physically *Well, challenged, or drained today*
* I’m feeling *Disconnected from the Lord*

**Opening Prayer:**

**Loving God, you know that sometimes we feel disconnected from you. You know that we want your power but often find it hard to draw on it when life is tough.**

**We ask you to teach us what it means to abide in Christ and to help us learn how to overcome the challenging times of life.**

**We give thanks because you are the source of our power that is at work in us helping us to feel spiritually, physically, and emotionally well, even if we don’t see it.**

**By faith, help us to receive your spiritual power as we connect with you. We pray in your name Jesus, the true vine. Amen.**

**John 15:1-8 (NKJV)**

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

8 "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

Q = Upon reading this text, what images or associations come to your mind about being connected to Christ? Why do you think Jesus used the vine?

**Video:**

This video segment is filmed at a vineyard at the base of Mount Tabor, near a modern-day replica of ancient Jerusalem, and in the “upper room” where Jesus shared the Last Supper with his disciples.

Pastor Rob Fuquay interviews a vineyard owner who talks about the importance of pruning vines so healthier fruit can grow.

**The power to grow (2 Peter 3:18)**

Q = Is it possible to be surrounded by symbols and reminders of the Christian faith and still feel powerless and disconnected from God?

Q = What relationship does photosynthesis have with a grapevine?

**Commentary of John 15:1-5**

**1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.”**

Jesus often used agricultural imagery in his teaching because He lived in an agrarian society which was a community whose economy is based on producing and maintaining crops, livestock, and farmland.

His audiences would have included shepherds, grape growers, wheat farmers, and laborers in fruit orchards, just to name a few.

Being raised as the son of a carpenter in the Middle East 2,000 years ago, Jesus would have had exposure to the agrarian lifestyle even if he never worked on a farm himself.

His family might very well have raised chickens and tended a vegetable plot, which would have taught him about the manner of a hen mothering her flock.

**Matthew 23:37**

**"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”**

Or parables using images such as seeds falling to the earth while others never produce or produce poorly.

**Matthew 13:3-4**

**3 Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow.**

**4 "And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.**

Therefore, it was natural that Jesus would have used concrete examples from his daily life and the lives of those around him in his teaching parables.

In fact, if Jesus were teaching in America today, he might rather use parables invoking things from our world of technology, music, sports, politics, racism, fashion, materialism, and modern-day religion.

**1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.**

* When Jesus declared 1 **"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser”**
* He was repeating and confirming what the Prophet Isaiah had spoken about Israel, metaphorically, becoming the Lord God’s vineyard
* In fact, God expected Israel to bear fruit but the nation brought forth worthless grapes.

**Isaiah 5:1-2 (Contemporary English Version CEV)**

**1 I will sing a song about my friend's vineyard that was on the side of a fertile hill.  
 2 My friend dug the ground, removed the stones, and planted the best vines. He built a watchtower and dug a pit in the rocky ground for pressing the grapes. He hoped they would be sweet, but bitter grapes were all it produced.**

* Jesus came to declare that **He was the authentic vine.** Israel was given another chance to connect with God through Jesus Christ, the True Vine.

**John 1:11-12**

**11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.**

**12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:**

**2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”**

* "Every branch in Me”
* **The Branch** refers to Christians who accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior
* **The Vine** is Jesus Christ who provides [or supplies] spiritual nourishment and power to the Branch
* The Vinedresser is God the Father who attends [or cares for] the branch
* God’s intention for every Christian [every branch] is to produce fruit

**John 15:2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.**

* The spiritual production of every Christian is to grow from:
* **No fruit**—John 15:2 **“that does not bear fruit”**

to

* **Some fruit**—John 15:2 **“every branch that bears fruit”**

to

* **Much fruit**—John 15:2 **“He prunes, that it may bear more**

**Fruit**

to

* **Remaining fruit**—John 15:16

**John 15:16**

**"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”**

* The remaining Fruit is evidence of God’s Power in a believer’s life:
* Power for **True Discipleship**

**John 15:8**

**"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.**

* The power of **spiritual usefulness** in the Kingdom of God

**Isaiah 11:2 (English Standard Version)**

**And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,  
    the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
    the Spirit of counsel and might,  
    the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.**

* The power of **service towards others** in the Kingdom of God

**1 Peter 4:10-11 (English Standard Version)**

**10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:**

**11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

* The **power of demonstrating** the characteristics of the Holy Spirit

**Galatians 5:22-23**

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control…

* **"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away…”**
* **Part of this Scripture is Eschatology**—the study of end times or judgment
* These unfruitful branches were never believers. They never abided in Christ—they will be taken away in judgment

**John 15:6**

**"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.”**

* **“…and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”**
* **He prunes** Part of this Scripture shows the love of God for those who are in Christ Jesus
* The Father moves all things in the believer’s life that hinder fruitfulness—*He prunes* [kathairo, *kath-ah'-ee-ro*: to cleans
* **He cuts away** sin in and around our lives
* He disciplines us—corrects us **(Hebrews 12:3-11)**
* He provides the means (believers, medical professionals, etc.) to separate us from forces that drain our spiritual power

**3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.**

**4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.**

**5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**

* The disciples were cleansed by the Words of Christ

**Ephesians 5:26**

**“That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word”**

* **Abide in Me, and I in you**
* **Abide**: *[meno, men'-o]* to stay (in a given place, state, or relation) to continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, or tarry.
* Remaining is evidence that salvation has already taken place in one’s heart

**1 John 2:19**

**“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.”**

* Continuance in service and Word and the teaching of God’s Word is evidence of one abiding in Christ Jesus

**Colossians 1:23**

**“if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”**

**Closing Litany/Prayer**

**One:** When we feel isolated, we can remember that Jesus said,

**All:** “I am the True Vine; abide in me.”

**One:** When we feel powerless, we can find strength in remembering that

Jesus said,

**All:** “I am the True Vine; abide in me.”

**One:** When we are tempted to try to go it alone, we can reach out to other

believers, remembering that Jesus said,

**All:** “I am the True Vine; abide in me.”

**One:** When life becomes so busy that time with God seems impossible to

find, we can regain our focus by turning our hearts and minds to the

one who said,

**All:** “I am the True Vine; abide in me.”

**One:** When we stress about the quality of the fruit we are or are not

producing, we can relax and trust the source of our life and growth, the

One who said,

**All:** “I am the True Vine; abide in me.”

**Closing Prayer**

**Dear God, show us how to abide in you. Free us from trying to produce our own fruit, and help us to trust that you are at work in us through the power of the Holy Spirit and will continue to work through us according to Your will.**

**Prune from our lives the tasks and activities that diminish our power, steal our time, and keep us from growing as you want us to grow. We ask all this in the name of Jesus, the true vine. Amen.**