



Week 7 ~ Jesus Is The Vine

What just happened? There is a subtle shift at the end of chapter 14 of John that is easy to miss. Jesus makes the statement, *“Come, let’s be going.”* Why? Was Jesus finished with His preparation of the disciples? Did they have everything they needed to be able to handle what was coming? Let’s take a quick look at what had transpired in the brief hours leading up to what we read in Chapter 15 of John...

- **Passover meal...** In an act of genuine love and affection, Jesus got His disciples together for a meal the night before Passover. (13:1-3)
- **Washing feet...** As they all settle in around the dinner table, Jesus does to most remarkable thing. In an act of incredible humility, He takes off His robe, wraps a towel around His waist and one-by-one, washes the feet of each disciple. (13:4-5)
- **Embarrassed disciples...** Peter watches Jesus wash and dry the feet of one disciple after the other. When he is next in line, Peter interrupts Jesus and won’t let Him wash his feet without a discussion. Peter ends up getting clean feet anyway, but not without deeply regretting it wasn’t his idea to wash feet. (13:6-10)
- **Walking in humility...** Jesus then turns the foot-washing into a object lesson for His students, explaining the blessing that would come to them if they would walk in this kind of humility with one another. In the midst of His lesson, Jesus eludes to the fact that one of them would betray Him soon with statements like, “Not all of you are clean,” and “I am not saying these things to all of you,” even quoting a Psalm 41:7 that says, “The one who eats my food has turned against me.” (13:11-20)
- **Betrayal revealed...** At this point, Jesus’ emotions become so intense that He says, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me!” What a shock. The disciples turn to one another, wondering who Jesus was talking about. The tension builds to a fever pitch and finally Peter motions to John to ask the Teacher, “Who’s he talking about?” John leans over to Jesus and asked, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus doesn’t call him out by name, but reveals, “It is the one to whom I give the bread I dip in the bowl.” And Jesus dips the bread and gives it to Judas.” (13:21-26)
- **Evil enters...** In recounting the events of the evening from memory, John adds an important detail to the story...“When Judas had eaten the bread, Satan entered into him.” Wow! Jesus encourages him to get on with it

and Judas leaves. Confusion ensues, the disciples wondering about the implications of all they are witnessing. (13:26-30)

- **A “New” Commandment...** The moment Judas leaves the room, Jesus launches into a detailed explanation of the spiritual implications of His being glorified. He then gives them what He calls a new commandment, “Love each other just as much as I have loved you.” Then Jesus tells them that this love they show to each other will have a profound effect upon the watching world. (13:31-35)
- **Not me, Lord...** Impetuous Peter, round two. He tries to convince Jesus that, not only will he follow Jesus to the end, but that he is even willing to die for Him! Peter has a reality check when Jesus tells him that he would deny Him three times before the morning sun rises. (13:36-38)
- **Trust brings comfort...** Jesus realizes that He has just blown away His students. All this talk about Him leaving without them was devastating their faith. He then comforts them with these profound words of encouragement, “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me.” (14:1-4)
- **A Door opens...** Now it’s Thomas’ turn to speak up, asking Jesus how it is they are supposed to know where He is going. Jesus doesn’t answer their question, but blows things up by informing them, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” [Note to self: What Jesus said will probably be very important in the days ahead!] (14:5-6)
- **Show me...** Phillip pipes up and asks Jesus, “Show us the Father and we’ll be satisfied.” Did you just say what I thought you said, Phillip? “We’ll be satisfied.” Look out! Jesus gently explains how He has been showing them the Father for some time and they should reconsider the importance of believing in what He had been showing them. (14:7-11)
- **Another Advocate...** Next, Jesus gives the disciples “the key to everything.” He tells them that, if they love Him and obey His commands, He would “ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you.” Here we go. We are getting some help! Who is it Jesus? Who is the Father sending to help us? What? You’re going to send a Ghost? Seriously? A Holy Ghost? Then Jesus goes on to describe who the Holy Spirit is and how important He will be to them in the days ahead. (14:12-21)
- **Don’t worry...** At this point it is clear to Judas (the other Judas) that these things that Jesus is sharing with them will not be common knowledge and he asks Jesus why He doesn’t spread the word to a broader group than just the disciples. Jesus goes on to tell them that, basically, the whole thing will be on their shoulders. One more thing. Jesus tells them that He and the Father “will come and make our home with each of them.” Additionally, they don’t need to worry about all the things Jesus had taught them because the Holy Spirit would live in them and help them remember everything Jesus said. (14:22-31)
- Again, Jesus wraps this dinner/teaching/encouragement up with, **“Come, let’s be going.”** (14:31)

Today’s Text: John 15:1-17 *The Passion Translation*

- ¹ **“I am like a sprouting Vine, and the farmer who tends the Vine is My Father. ² He cares for the branches connected to Me by lifting and propping up the branches that are fruitless, and pruning every fruitful branch to yield a greater harvest. ³ The words I have spoken over you have already cleansed you. ⁴ So step into life-union with Me, for I have stepped into life-union with you. For as**

a branch severed from the vine will not bear fruit, so your life will be fruitless unless you live your life intimately joined to Mine.

- **I am the true Vine...** This is the last of the seven “I am” statements in John (6:35; *Bread of Life*; 8:12, *Light of the World*; 10:7, *Gate for the Sheep*; 11, *Good Shepherd*; 11:25, *Resurrection and the Life*; 14:6, *Way, Truth, and the Life*; 15:1, 5). All these figures paint a beautiful picture of Jesus’ relationship to his people and the world. The Vine reveals the most intimate relationship of the seven, eg. the Shepherd cares for the sheep, but the Vine imparts its life to the branches. Israel was God’s choice vine on which he lavished care and attention. He longed for fruit, but the vine (Israel) became weak and produced rotten fruit. Therefore Jesus, as “the true Vine,” fulfills what God had intended for Israel.
- **I am like a sprouting Vine, and the farmer who tends the Vine is My Father...** A Vine must have a husbandman, or vinedresser, to plant and *watch* over it, to *receive* and *rejoice* in its fruit. The Father is after fruit. When He planted the Vine, He had fruit in mind. The focus here is the Vine, the branches that come off of it, and the fruit that comes from the branches as a result of they healthy connection to the Vine.
- In the Old Testament the Vine is often used as the type of Israel, planted and tended by the Almighty as the husbandman. Israel, however, had proved a wild and fruitless Vine. Christ has now been planted by the Father as the True Vine.
 - ⁸⁻⁹ Remember how You transplanted us here Like a tender vine from Egypt. You cleared the land for Your vineyard, Evicting the nations from off Your land and planted us here! The roots of Your vineyard went deep into the soil And filled the land with fruit. ¹⁰⁻¹¹ Because of Your favor on Your vineyard, blessing extended To every mountain of influence. (Ps 80:8-11:21 PASSION)
 - I was the one who planted you, choosing a vine of the purest stock—the very best. How did you grow into this corrupt wild vine? (Jer 2:21 NLT-SE)
- **Pruning every fruitful branch to yield a greater harvest...** Every one of us who bears fruit gets pruned. The Father *prunes* and *dresses* the branches in order that they may be more healthy and fruitful. He does this, not merely for their own sake, but that they may be fruitful branches. In some cases it is best to cut it off to keep it from injuring the other branches.
- ⁵ **“I am the sprouting Vine and you’re My branches. As you live in union with Me as your source, fruitfulness will stream from within you, but when you live separated from Me you are powerless. ⁶ If you live separated from Me, you will be discarded like shriveled up branches that are gathered up and thrown into the fire to be burned. ⁷ But if you step into My life in union with Me and if My words live powerfully within you— then you can ask whatever you desire and it will be done. ⁸ When your lives bear abundant fruit, you demonstrate that you are My mature disciples who glorify My Father!**
- **As you live in union with Me...** The idea is, “Stay connected to Me, so that My life can flow *in* and *through* you.” We stay connected (abide, remain) by having the highest value for His will

expressed through His Word. Every Christian is a branch of the Vine. Our life is drawn directly from the Vine. If we cling to the Vine, keep Christ's words, so that Christ abides in us, we will have the life of the Vine, and produce significant fruit. But the branch that is separated from the Vine not only doesn't produce fruit, it eventually dies! The bottom line: We can do nothing without Him.

- **Gathered up and thrown into the fire to be burned...** What did Jesus mean by saying that the disconnected branches are burned? There are three possibilities:
 - The "burned" branches are believers who have lost their salvation (But this contradicts many passages, e.g., 3:16, 36; 5:24; 10:28-29; Rom. 8:1).
 - These "burned" Christians will lose their eternal rewards, but not their salvation at the judgement seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:15).
 - The "burned" Christians are like Judas, not really Christians at all. Judas spent time with Jesus, seemed like a branch, but did not have the life of God flowing through him. His eternal destiny is ultimately that of a dead branch, the end result being eternal fire (Matt 25:46).
- **My words live powerfully within you...** "Words" is the Greek word *rhema* which means the power of the words of sayings of Jesus. The Aramaic translation here is literally, "my words take hold (are strong) within you. The point is this, "Have the words of Jesus gripped your heart? Have they changed the way you live your life? If the answer is yes, your heart is becoming aligned with His.
- ⁹ **"I love each of you with the same love that the Father loves Me. Let My love nourish your hearts.** ¹⁰ **If you keep My commands, you will live in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commands, for I am nourished and empowered by His love. ¹¹ My purpose for telling you these things is so that the joy that I experience will fill your hearts with overflowing gladness!**
 - **The same love that the Father loves Me...** What love is this? It is a wholehearted, mutual love. The love between the Father and the Son is complete, lacking nothing. Love is what opens our hearts to this kind of relationship. Obedience to the Father's commands is the same for a disciple as it was for the Son (cf. 14:15, 21, 23; 1 John 2:3; 3:22, 24; 5:3).
 - **The joy that I experience will fill your hearts...** Isn't it interesting that Jesus was about to be crucified and He is encouraging them with His joy? His joy wasn't an emotion, but the result of union with the presence of the Father. (Heb 12:2)
- ¹² **"So this is My command: Love each other deeply, as much as I have loved you. ¹³ For the greatest love of all is a love that sacrifices all. And when a person sacrifices his life for his friends, this great love is demonstrated.**
 - **Love each other deeply...** Again, the key is mutual love. They had seen Jesus demonstrate His love all evening. The kind of love Jesus was encouraging was a love that came from their hearts, not out of blind obedience.

- You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. ***Love each other deeply with all your heart.*** (1 Pet 1:22 NLT-SE)
- **The greatest love of all is a love that sacrifices all...** Jesus was about to demonstrate this highest human type of love by dying for his friends. Not only that, as Paul shows us in Romans 5:6; he died *for enemies*, something that man had never done. Jesus goes on to point his disciples to his love for them. They are his friends if they obey Him and He never backs down from this claim. The Aramaic word for “friends” is actually “family,” or “relatives.”
- ¹⁴ **“You show that you are My intimate friends when you obey all that I command you. ¹⁵ I have never called you servants, because a master doesn’t confide in his servants, and servants don’t always understand what the master is doing. But I call you My intimate friends, for I reveal to you everything that I’ve heard from My Father. ¹⁶ You didn’t choose Me, but I’ve chosen and commissioned you to go into the world to bear fruit. And your fruit will last, because whatever you ask of My Father, for My sake, He will give it to you! ¹⁷ So this is My parting command: Love one another deeply!”**
 - **When you obey all that I command you...** We serve Jesus, not out of bondage, but love. Jesus here, however, points his disciples to his love for them. They are his friends, if they obey him. That is the condition. One may “lay down his life for another” without dying. If he lives to consecrate his life to his welfare, he gives, if possible, a higher proof of love.
 - **I call you My intimate friends...** “Both the Aramaic and Greek word for “intimate friends” is actually “those cared for from the womb.” You are more than a friend to him, for you were born again from his wounded side. (Notes from The Passion Translation, by Brian Simmons.)
 - **You didn’t choose Me...** The Lord selected each one of the apostles, and called and released them to become his representatives in the church when he returned to Heaven. Peter, Andrew, James and John were taken from their boats and nets at the Sea of Galilee; Matthew from his tax collector’s seat, the rest of the eleven from their various callings, and, last of all, Saul of Tarsus was knocked off his horse on the way to Damascus given his unique assignment, he was to become “a minister and a witness” to the Gentiles.
 - **Whatever you ask of My Father...** Their assignment was to “go into the world and bear fruit.” While busy working to that end, they are promised the divine help from the Father. If at any time they feel threatened with defeat, they are encouraged to call for the help they need in Jesus’ name. The goal is that they bear fruit, or be efficient in the work of converting men. The principle that underlies the promise is of general application. Throughout the ages, men of prayer have been those that have born the greatest fruit.