

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Sermon Road Map
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John 15:1-8
May 2, 2021

The Vine is vital for a vibrant and fruitful life.

- A year ago, under pandemic precautions, many discovered *what was vital* to them.
 - ♦ Things we thought we *couldn't live without*, we found we could.
 - ♦ Jobs that seemed mundane and drudgery, realized their vital purposes
 - ♦ Food and supplies we took for granted - in scarcity we appreciated
- Change, challenges, and crises invite reevaluation of what is truly vital.
 - ♦ *Vital*: 1. Absolutely necessary; essential, 2. Full of energy, lively
 - ♦ Vital for a vibrant and fruitful life - now, but especially looking back
- The 11 faced change, challenges, and crises the next 3 days in Jesus' Passion
 - ♦ In his final hours of teaching Jesus equips them and us with this vibrant image

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- ❖ The Father's goal is clear: to cultivate vibrant fruitful branches/offspring
 - ***² Every branch in [Jesus] that does not bear fruit, [the Father] is going to cut off. And he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it will bear more fruit.***
 - Like a Vinedresser, the Father's goal is healthy, vibrant, fruitful branches
 - Branches draw their nature and vitality from the Vine.
 - Those who are in Christ have New Life, not life like fallen humans. Life like God.
 - The Father's **goal** is to mature his children to have a vibrant and fruitful New Life.
 - ♦ He will settle for nothing less. His children shouldn't settle either.
- ❖ The Vine - Jesus - is vital for such New Life
 - The Vine is the exclusive essential Source of New life. Easter shows us why.
 - Jesus died under the burden of all our sins. Forgiveness is found in no one else.
 - Jesus' resurrection reveals he alone offers New Life that never dies.
 - The news that God reconciled us to himself changes our inner being, planting New Life in us that trusts in Jesus. It attaches us to the Vine, the Vital source of New Life
 - ***You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.***
 - ♦ Only in Jesus are we cleansed of our sins and robed in righteousness
 - ♦ Baptism does this: initially and daily, because it's God's Covenant promise
 - ♦ Jesus' resurrection power cleanses us in God's sight, raising up New Life in us.
- ❖ The total absence of the Vine's fruit reveals the total absence of New Life.
 - What makes a person a Christian - a disciple of Jesus - a child of God?
 - ♦ God's gift of living trust/faith connection to Jesus - New Life - eternal life
 - ♦ Not merely *knowing about Jesus* or *the personal opinion that God exists!* Satan and all the evil angels have that too and tremble in hell.
 - Since **New Life** lives, it produces **new** priorities - fruit as **new** as its **New Life**.
 - ♦ How do we tell a person is alive? Heartbeat, breath, movement, brain waves.
 - ♦ Likewise New Life in Jesus has its telltale signs. Unique fruit - vibrant branches
 - Key: not loosely attached! Deeply rooted in Jesus' word, remaining in his word
 - ♦ Those who don't remain in his word are merely *cultural Christians*, not attached
 - ♦ Formerly, when surveyed many identify as Christians - heritage, not vibrant, dry
 - Growing number today identify as *nones*. That's honest. Fruit of a life without...

- ❖ The Vine produces vibrant and fruitful lives that glorify God and enrich us and our lives.
 - *Prune* is literally *clean* - the next verse follows: *You are already clean...*
 - Ask most people, they'll say a tomato is a vegetable. It's a fruit. It grows on a vine.
 - ♦ Do you know the gardener's *trick* to help the tomato plant produce more fruit?
 - ♦ You pinch off (prune) the sucker shoots at the base of the branch.
 - They don't produce fruit. They draw vital resources away from fruit production.
 - God prunes/cleanses us of what? Whatever short-circuits our fruit production.
 - ♦ Cleanse of sin's priorities, values, mindsets, choices, desires. Produce inferior fruit
 - ♦ While God declares us clean in Christ, our sinful nature remains to sabotage us.
 - ♦ The Father uses his word and life challenges to expose and remove interference
 - Consider every *loss, challenge, or frustration* as God's pruning to liberate you.
 - ♦ He acts purely out of love to rescue his own from sin's interference & cultivate life.
 - ♦ Paul teaches us to thank God for our suffering by showing us what is produced.
 - *...we also rejoice confidently in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces patient endurance, and patient endurance produces tested character, and tested character produces hope. And hope will not put us to shame* Rm 5:3-5
 - The lives of vibrant and vital Christians glorify God and point to Jesus their Lord.
 - ♦ A chief fruit of New Life: humility that knows I need God to have life and live.
 - ♦ Jesus sets us free from self-serving, self-glorifying with a Christ-like servant heart
 - ♦ An hour or so before our text Jesus said: *Love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you are to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.* John 13:34-35
 - It's natural for all people to love themselves, their own family, people of their culture or community - people like them.
 - The love of New Life devotes time, thought, care to diverse followers of Jesus.
 - Like Jesus, Christians care for all people, but sacrificially support each other.
 - ♦ The Holy Spirit, who gave us New Life when he attached us to the Vine, continues to fuel our New Life to produce the fruit of the Spirit: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*
 - If you struggle with any of those, ask the Father to prune away the sin that interferes.
 - You can't produce these with guilt. Only with learning the heart of Jesus.
 - ♦ Let's be honest: there are kind, gentle, generous people of other religions & *nones*
 - Envy these qualities, by wisdom and practice they have cultivated human fruit.
 - Needing to live with themselves and wanting this to be their legacy afterwards
 - Such a legacy is their version of *eternal life*. *We'll never forget you*. Really?
 - Go to a neglected cemetery and read the names. Who knows them? Often not even family. We all fade like the flowers of the field and our legacy with us.
 - Worse yet, not connected to Jesus, they face permanent separation from God forever.
 - What vital components are missing - what aspect of the vital fruit the Vine produces?
 - They are doing it out of an *enlightened self-interest*, not to glorify their Creator.
 - The fear of death, guilt for the past, search for purpose - lack of sure hope
 - Insist on the life flowing from the Vine. Your New Life will produce fruit that lasts.
 - ♦ Liberated by Jesus' full and free forgiveness and cleansing - rejoicing abounds
 - ♦ This prunes guilt and fear away, God's peace and love settle in and transform us.
 - ♦ Remain in the Vine - remain in his word. Seek the Father's pruning and fruit.
 - Seek help from fellow believers and your Pastor. We're here to encourage one another.
 - ♦ Others will see our Risen Lord has an impact giving us lives that are full and fulfilled.

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