

A Follow Up Bible Study

May 5, 2021

Building on the Messages of the Lessons from the Fifth Sunday of Easter

Warm Up

The *Thread* for Sunday's worship was: ***Jesus' stunning resurrection to life produces a new life of stunning fruit in his people.*** Clearly Jesus' resurrection is stunning. But what's so stunning about the fruit it produces in his resurrection people?

Every Sunday we publish a *Thread* (a thought that runs throughout the whole service: lessons, sermon, hymns) and *Blurbs* (a short overview of each Lesson that ties it to the Thread). Are you familiar with these resources? Do you read them? If so, are they helpful?

Sermon for May 2, 2021

Text: **John 15:1-8**

Theme: The Vine is vital for a vibrant and fruitful life.

Share your questions or comments regarding Sunday's sermon.

Share your questions or comments regarding Sunday's sermon **text**.

Gospel Lesson: John 15:1-8

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the [vinedresser].² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he is going to cut off. And he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it will bear more fruit.

3 "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I am going to remain in you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Likewise, you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 "I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him is the one who bears much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers. Such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this: that you continue to bear much fruit and prove to be my disciples.

1. This is the last of the *I AM* statements of Jesus, claiming to be the *I AM* who appeared to Moses at the burning bush. ***The true Vine*** - *the*: exclusive - one and only, and *true*: genuine or primary. This re-enforces his earlier *I AM* claim: ***I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.*** John 14:6

Both passages mention the Father, but in John 15 the Father has an active role that reveals his will and goal for having people *come to him* exclusively through Jesus. What is the Father's goal for his branches/children?

How do Jesus' disciples *remain in the Vine*?

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2. The world is offended by Jesus' claim to be the exclusive way to the Father, the only source of eternal life. They think of this as a rule or a narrow-minded notion. These words of Jesus reveal why it can't happen any other way. According to vs. 4-7a of this text, what alone does Jesus offer?
3. Jesus' words are pointed: ***without me you can do nothing***. Remember *can* refers to ability. Jesus tells us that anyone who is not one of his disciples is **incapable** of *producing fruit*. We can hear the world (and our sinful nature) saying, *What does he mean - do nothing? We do a lot of things - creative and brilliant things - charitable and kind things!*

What things can't others do that only Jesus' disciples can do?

What doctrine is Jesus teaching here?

4. When Jesus says, ***You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you***, what doctrine is he teaching and affirming?
5. Who is Jesus speaking about in these words? ***Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he is going to cut off. ...⁶ If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers. Such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.***
6. Who benefits when God's people produce stunning fruit - in quality and in abundance?

Explore the ways the believer's life is enriched by this fruit production.

7. Explain how the Father's pruning is pure love. When you are being hard pressed or suffering how would these words be helpful?

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8. “Prosperity gospel” teachers misuse these words of Jesus: ***7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*** Do you know what they claim? If not, what’s your guess? What key truth do they miss or ignore?
9. The Gospel for this coming Sunday picks up where we left off. Jesus circles back to what he stated in v. 7 and adds: ***16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will endure, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.***
- List the additional points Jesus makes in v. 16. Note the motivation and encouragement they offer.

First Lesson: Acts 8:26-40

²⁶ Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is an isolated area.) ²⁷ So he got up and went. And there was a man, an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship. ²⁸ He was on his way home, sitting in his chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah.

²⁹ The Spirit told Philip, “Go over there and stay close to that chariot.” ³⁰ Philip ran up to it and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet.

Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹ The man replied, “How can I unless someone explains it to me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

³² Now the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading was this:

*He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
so he does not open his mouth.*

*³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who will talk about his generation?
For his life is taken from the earth.*

³⁴ The eunuch said to Philip, “I ask you, who is the prophet talking about — himself or someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip began to speak. Starting with that very passage of Scripture, he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ As they were traveling along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What is there to prevent me from being baptized?”

³⁸ He ordered the chariot to stop. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they stepped up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away. The eunuch did not see him anymore, but went on his way rejoicing.

⁴⁰ Philip, however, found himself at Azotus. And as he went from place to place, he preached the gospel in all the towns until he came to Caesarea. Caesarea.

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10. Who is Philip? Acts 6

6 In those days, as the number of disciples was increasing, a complaint arose from the Greek-speaking Jews against the Hebrew-speaking Jews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

... ³ Brothers, carefully select from among you seven men with good reputations, who are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will put them in charge of this service. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word."

⁵ This proposal pleased the entire group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte from Antioch.

⁶ They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷ The word of God kept on spreading, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly. Also a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.

11. What did Philip do after Stephen was martyred?

³ But Saul was trying to destroy the church by going into one house after another, dragging off both men and women, and putting them in prison.

⁴ So those believers who were scattered went around proclaiming the gospel message. ⁵ Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began preaching the Christ to them. ⁶ With one mind, the crowds paid close attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the miraculous signs he was doing. ⁷ Unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed, and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. ⁸ So there was great joy in that city.

....when they believed Philip, as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

12. So if Philip was doing such great work in Samaria, why would Jesus pull him out and send him to an isolated area to serve 1 man?

13. The Thread of Acts is ***you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*** Acts 1:7 How does v. 27 open our eyes to God's former work and new work?

14. It might seem like this is merely an interesting piece of Bible History. After all no angel has ever come and sent me to such a ready made evangelism opportunity. Yes, but what can we learn here about sharing the gospel?

What kind of thing would Philip have said about this passage?

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15. Notice the numbering of the verses from 34-39. What's *missing*?
16. We don't know what Philip had taught this man or why he asked to be baptized. If you were going to think about it, what kind of things might have been said to have this man ask to be baptized?
17. The EHV is one of the few translations that says, *When they stepped up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away.*
Most, like the ESV, translate: *And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away,*
Discuss the distinction noting the context and which translation reflects the context.
18. The instant disappearance of Philip might have greatly disappointed this man. Why did he go on rejoicing?
19. ⁴⁰ *Philip, however, found himself at Azotus.* What does that mean?

Azotus - the Philistine city of Ashdod, 16 miles from Gaza, 60 miles from Caesarea.

Second Lesson: 1 John 3:18-24

¹⁸ *Dear children, let us love not only with word or with our tongue, but also in action and truth.*

¹⁹ *This is how we know that we are of the truth and how we will set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰ If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God. ²² We also receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commands and do what is pleasing in his sight. ²³ This then is his command: that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and that we love one another just as he commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps his commands remains in God and God in him. This is how we know that he remains in us: We know it from the Spirit, whom he has given to us. us.*