

MESSAGE OUTLINE—WEEK OF MAY 2, 2021
THIS IS THE LIFE: REMAIN IN ME

John 15:1–8 (NIV)

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

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

⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, 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 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

The Life of Jesus is experienced by disciples who are...

1. Finite.

I am the true vine; you are the branches.

"I am the bread of life." John 6:35, 41, 48, 51; "I am the light of the world." John 8:12; "I am the door of the sheep." John 10:7, 9; "I am the resurrection and the life." John 11:25; "I am the good shepherd." John 10:11, 14; "I am the way, the truth, and the life." John 14:6; "I am the true vine." John 15:1, 5

God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'" Exodus 3:14 (NIV)

The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in. Isaiah 5:7

2. Remaining in Jesus.

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself.

"It has really become a habit; part of my daily routine. Two years ago it was something I rarely did; now it's something I rarely miss. And the daily consistency of that makes me more aware of God's daily work in my life."

"My time is precious, an appointment not to be missed, in the morning, as far as is possible. I have added a variety of devotional reflections, journaling (a new practice for me), and keeping better track of prayer requests in my journal. I try to better balance time in the Bible and prayer time."

3. Bearing much fruit.

To my Father's glory. You will bear much fruit. Showing yourselves to be my disciples.

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength... And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:12-13

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22–23 (NIV)

"I have spent more quality time with God, prioritizing first my love for Him. I now guard that time as the most important time slot in my day. That has helped me to remain more peaceful and centered during the past year."

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THIS IS THE LIFE: REMAIN IN ME

CONNECT

- Watch or listen to the song: *One Thing Remains*. How does this song encourage you? Find one version here: (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_KXsMCJgBQ).

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: Prayer of Recollection* (remembering who we are in Christ)

With all the noise and distractions in our world influencing how we see ourselves, the Prayer of Recollection helps us focus on what God says is true of us. When our primary identity is firmly grounded in Christ, we are free to live out our secondary roles and responsibilities from a place of security, courage, and trust. The goal is to come to a place of rest, where no pretending or achieving is needed, so we are free to be our true selves in Christ. Journal your responses.

Silence: Begin by sitting quietly. Relax in the presence of God. Let go of any distractions that come and simply focus on being with God.

1. Admit my limitations: I acknowledge I am not God, but a finite creation of God—"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." John 15:1-2

Reflect: For a moment, let go of your need to control whatever is distracting or troubling you. What does it feel like to loosen your grip on those things and admit your limitations?

2. Embrace my true identity: I belong to Christ alone—"Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." John 15:4

Reflect: For a moment, embrace the truth that you belong to Christ as totally forgiven, chosen, and loved by God. Do you believe what God says about you is true?

3. Rest in God's love: I believe God loves me and will never let me go—"I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

Practice: For a moment, imagine yourself resting with Jesus, safe, secure, and at peace. How does it feel to simply receive your true identity as God's beloved child?

4. Prayer: Write a short prayer, expressing your desire to grow in intimacy with Jesus as your primary identity. Identify the barriers to intimacy with Christ and ask God to remove them.

Group Debrief: What did you find helpful in this practice? Do you find focusing on Christ as your primary identity appealing or challenging for you?

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

- Read John 15:1-8 aloud. What did you hear in a fresh, new way?
- How is Jesus defining who he is and who the disciples are through this metaphor? Is this a helpful illustration for you in understanding your own relationship with Christ?
- What kind of pruning did the disciples experience? What part does pruning play in the life of a follower of Jesus? How do you typically respond to this pruning in your life?
- What does it mean to "remain in Jesus"? How, practically speaking, do we remain with Jesus?
- What does it look like for a whole community of faith to "remain in Jesus"? What fruit is being produced at SBPC? How does it give glory to God?
- How might our culture define fruitfulness or abundance? How do you think this aligns with what Jesus says about "bearing much fruit?"
- What is the difference in relating to Jesus in a transactional way verses relationally? In what way are your prayers influenced by your sense of distance from or closeness to Jesus?
- What promise or truth in this passage is meaningful to you? What warning do you hear from this passage?

PRAYER AND BENEDICTION

Prayer Requests: Considering the week ahead, how can we pray for you?

Benediction (taken from John 15:16-17)

Jesus says to us: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: That you love each other." Amen

DAILY PRACTICE: Continue to spend time with God daily in Solitude, Scripture, and Prayer (see Reading Plan & Playlist). Reflect on what is truly valuable to you from an eternal perspective. Ask God to deepen your connection to Christ, that you might produce fruit for eternity today.