

John 15

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Preacher: None

[0:00] Well, if you were stuck on a desert island, what would be your desert island essentials?! So there's been a storm, and you've been thrown overboard, off your ship, and you've ended up! stranded on an island in the middle of nowhere, and you can have only three things to take with you on this island. What would it be? If you're wise and forward-thinking, you might take a knife, or a rope, or matches, or a bottle of water. These things would be critical to your survival, because without these things, you would die. And in this life, we are on a desert island. We are all in a desperate situation. In fact, we're in a far worse situation than any man on an island. We are on the brink of a severe judgment. And there's only one thing that can help us, one essential for survival. And this is what John 15 reveals to us, the key to survival in this life. So let's not hang around. This is urgent. Let's find out what it is. And here in chapter 15, Jesus is leaving behind this vital information to his disciples. He's leaving behind the key to survival, the key to the very source of life itself. And what is it? Well, the key is Jesus Christ himself. Jesus is the only thing you need to survive in this life. So if we want to survive, we need to know what this passage means. And

I've broken it down into three points which you can follow along with. Firstly, Jesus is the true vine. Jesus is the true vine. So this whole passage is built on an illustration. Jesus explains the key to survival with an illustration. So he paints a picture for us for what the world is truly like. He explains to us a model of the very fabric of reality. So forget what every textbook has ever taught you about the world. Forget what you've ever learned in school about human nature and humanity. This is the truth about the world. And Jesus says this, you are either a living branch attached to him, or you're a dead twig on the floor. This is the truth about the universe. And Jesus describes himself as the true vine. It's right there in verse one. I am the true vine, and my father is the vine dresser. So what we have here is an image of a tree or a plant. So perhaps picture a grape tree, a grape vine, and you have the vine, the main trunk in the middle, right in the centre. And that part, that's rooted into the ground. That's the heart of the tree where all the nutrients go through. That's the heart of the tree. That's the heart of the tree. That's the heart of the vine. And off the vine, you have all these smaller branches. So they spread out in every direction. And off those branches, you have the fruit. That's where the fruit appears.

So that's where you've got your grapes or your apples, whatever tree you're thinking of. And Jesus says, he is the vine. And the father, while he's the vine dresser, he's the gardener, you could say. So he trims and chops the tree to make it healthy and beautiful.

So look to verse 2. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit.

[4:18] So the father removes any branches that do not produce fruit. So he takes his clippers out and he snips them off. So the tree only has branches with good and wholesome fruit growing from it.

And where are we in this picture? Well, verse 5, Jesus says, I am the vine, you are the branches. His disciples are the branches. Christian, we are the branches. And we only have life if we're attached to the vine.

To Jesus. Jesus is the source of all life. So we find spiritual life, spiritual growth and eternal life only through Jesus Christ.

Only by being united with Jesus Christ. There's no other vine in this picture. There's no other source of life. No, Jesus is the true vine.

[5:33] No one can be alive, no one can bear fruit unless they're firmly attached to Jesus. Look at verse 5. Whoever buys in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.

For apart from me, you can do nothing. A branch can only have life if it's attached to the vine. So imagine if I went to Ealing Common and I went up to one of the trees there and I snapped one of the branches off the tree. What would happen to that branch?

It would die, wouldn't it? It would eventually wither and dry because it's not attached to the vine. It doesn't have life in itself.

No, it gets life from the vine. And so what this tree is picturing here, it's the church.

[6:40] This tree is the church. And the fundamental truth about this world is that you are either in the church and alive or you're out of it and dead.

Outside of Jesus and his church, you have no life. You're spiritually dead. You're like a dry and withered twig on the floor.

You cannot produce fruit. And the Father, he wants fruit from his vine. The gardener, he wants a beautiful and fruitful tree.

And lifeless branches have no place among it. Look what happens to these branches. Verse 6. If anyone does not abide in me, he's thrown away like a branch and withers.

And the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. Any branch that's not connected to the vine, any person that's not united to Jesus, will be thrown away.

[7:52] Burnt up. If you do not cling to Jesus as your only source of life, then when this life is over, you will be thrown into an eternal fire.

So his final words to his disciples, they're critical to surviving. Verse 4. Abide in me and I in you. Abide in me. This is the key to life. Abide in Jesus. Now, abide is a bit of a funny word, but we don't use it too much.

Another way of putting it is cling to me. Stay united to live in Jesus. Cling to Jesus and you will live. So do you? Do you abide in him? Being connected to Jesus is the only means of survival. The only way of being spiritually alive is to being spiritually healthy, to bearing fruits, is to receive life from Jesus.

[9:06] So a church that is not preaching Jesus Christ, and a church that is not focused on Jesus Christ, that is a dead church. It has no life.

It cannot bear any fruits. And I recommend you that you run from a church like that immediately. So do you truly love Jesus? Do you cling to Jesus as your source of life?

Do you think about him if you go about your day? Well, a life that doesn't do that, it's no life at all. You're lifeless. And so Jesus is saying to you today, abide in me.

Cling to me. me. But how can we do that? What does it look like to cling to Jesus? Well, this is my second point.

So obey Jesus. Jesus is the true vine, so obey Jesus. So what does it look like to abide in Jesus?

[10:15] I get the picture of the tree and the vine, but what does it actually look like and mean to abide in him? Well, look to verses 8 and 9. So by this my father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

As the father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. To abide in Jesus, to cling to him, he says, is to abide in his love.

So can you see, he's kind of drawing a parallel here. If you abide in Jesus, it means you abide in his love. Okay, but Jesus, what does that mean?

What does abiding in your love mean? Well, he clarifies that. Verse 10, if you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love.

To cling to Jesus, to be attached to the vine, means keeping his commandments. commandments. If you love Jesus, if you are a true disciple, you will obey Jesus' commands.

[11:28] So that means following everything that this book says. The Bible, the book that's in your lap and in your hand right now, that is

the word of God.

It is Jesus Christ's commandments for you. And by obeying his words, by doing what it says, that's how you love Jesus. That's what a true disciple looks like.

It means believing everything this book says, even if it doesn't immediately sit right with you.

Sometimes you might read the Bible or hear a sermon and you think, oh, I don't like the sound of that.

The Bible says that, really? You might think, I'll accept the important stuff. I'll believe the gospel basics just fine, but I can't accept this or that.

Well, Jesus says that is not what a living branch looks like. If you're abiding in Jesus, and if he's abiding in you, then every single word of this book you will obey.

[12:39] you will follow what Jesus says because that's what loving him looks like. And that's true even in our relationships. So, kids in the room, if your mum and dad tell you to do something and you say to them, no, mum and dad, I'm not doing that, well, that isn't valuing their love at all, is it?

That shows you don't want anything to do with mum and dad. well, that's the same with us and Jesus. You cannot have Jesus' love without obeying him.

If you refuse to obey him, then you're a dead branch, and the father will cut you off and you will be thrown away. But disobedience, this isn't just kind of mindless slavery, as if Jesus is saying, look, just do what I say and put up with it.

No, this obedience is a joyous experience. Look to verse 11. Verse 11, these things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Jesus is saying all this to a group of disciples with troubled hearts. They're on the edge, they don't want him to leave. So Jesus says to them, this is where you will find joy.

[14:07] This is where you will find comfort, by keeping my commandments. Now, this is a wonderful thing to say. To be a Christian is a truly joyous thing.

To follow Jesus and to live a godly life, it's a joyous thing. It's to live out your salvation that Jesus has won for you. Obeying Christ, it goes hand in hand with knowing that your sins are forgiven. It goes hand in hand with knowing that you will have eternal blessings, and that you have life by the grace of God. And this, it's a deep, everlasting joy that won't fade.

Jesus says it's a joy that fills us. So, all other joy and happiness and fun in this world, it cannot compare to the joy that you have from being loved by Christ.

Worldly joy, it's fleeting. It won't last. Christ's joy will last for all eternity. So, as branches, we only have life and bear fruit if we're attached to the true vine.

[15:33] We only have life in Jesus Christ, and that means if we're true disciples, we will obey all his commandments. But actually, Jesus hones in on one commandment in particular.

So, yes, we should obey everything the Bible says, but as he departs from his disciples, he gives them this one commandment. Did you notice this?

Verse 12. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. He says, if you're a true disciple, if you truly love Jesus, you will love the church.

And this is my third and final point. Jesus is the true vine, so obey Jesus by loving the church. By loving the church. This is what an obedient Christian looks like.

This is what a fruitful Christian looks like. This is what a branch looks like when it's attached to the vine. They love the church. If you are truly clinging to Christ, and if he's truly giving you life, then you will love the church.

[16:53] So I wonder what you think is a sign of a healthy and lively church. I guess you could look on their website, and you could think, oh, wow, they have two creches throughout the week.

They must be thriving. Or, wow, they get over 200 on a Sunday. They must be a strong church. Well, what does Jesus say?

Jesus says a fruitful church is one that loves one another. This is the sign of fruitful branches, of branches that are connected to the vine.

The fruit is Christians loving one another. So imagine that tree again, with Jesus as the true vine in the centre, and all the branches spreading out.

When you look at that tree, how do you know if that tree is healthy and alive? Well, it will have lots of fruit on it, won't it?

[17:54] All the branches will be producing rich and plentiful fruit. Well, when we look at the church, a sign of health and life is that its people are loving one another.

These are Jesus' final words to his disciples. As he departs, he wants them to love each other. So it's a bit like that moment in a film when someone's on their deathbed.

So let's say it's kind of a mother in a hospital and her kids come in and she's saying a final goodbyes to them. What does she usually say in the film? She's something kind of like, you be good to each other.

Billy, you take care of your little sister, okay? Sorry for my bad acting. But it's kind of like that. Jesus is leaving behind how he wants his church to be.

He wants you to love the church. church. But this is no ordinary love. No. Jesus tells us what kind of love this is.

[19:09] Look at verse 13. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus wants us to love the church to death the way that he has loved us with his sacrifice on the cross.

That is the way Jesus wants us to love each other. So is that you? Do you love the church to death? This is a serious challenge for us all because for most of us, I don't think death is the limit for our love. I think inconveniences.

So we might be happy to wash up the mugs after church and put some tables away. We might be happy to host some people for lunch. But if serving the church and loving each other start to encroach on our home life or our family life or our marriage, I think that's usually where we draw the line, isn't it?

[20:21] You might think, absolutely, I will serve the church. I'll stay behind our service and love my lonely brother and sister, but I can't have them over for dinner tonight.

Tonight's family time. It's been a long enough week already. I'm drawing the line there. Or you may think, I'll help my church family as much as possible.

I'll help them move house and concern when they're ill. But you need to understand, my marriage comes first. I need to prioritise my wife. No, Jesus says that isn't quite right.

We must love the church to death. And that means sacrificing our comfort, our convenience, and our time.

So we need to ask ourselves, will you reschedule that holiday so you won't miss another Sunday? Will you stay up into the small hours on the phone to that struggling brother or sister and be prepared to be shattered the next day?

[21:30] Will you take someone into your home, even if it will make family life chaotic? Will you continue to tithe even when money seems to be getting tight?

Will you keep making meal after meal every Sunday just to host your church family? will you give up every Sunday evening to come to church to be with your eternal family?

This is what loving each other should look like. But it may also mean actually dying for each other. It may seem unlikely to happen in this country, but just look around you right now this evening.

Look at your brothers and sisters. Would you die for them? Would you literally take a bullet to the chest for them? Because Christ is saying, I died for you, so you must be prepared to die for them.

To love the church family is to invest in something far greater than anything of this world. It's to invest in something eternal. all. And so that means it should be of primary importance in our lives.

[22:52] Sinclair Ferguson, a Scottish theologian, he spoke at a Catholic conference in the summer. He said something very striking about how we should think about the church. Ferguson said this, if there's no marrying or giving in marriage in heaven, if everything these human relationships are intended to satisfy will be fully satisfied in the glory of Christ

and the fellowship of God's people, then I need to see that my family takes a secondary place to the church family.

The church family alone will last for all eternity. My family as it's presently structured will last only until the death of its members. Now that is an earth-shattering truth, isn't it?

That really should make us rethink our lives. Now it must be said that loving our wives and our families and children is a very good thing to do and we need to do it more.

But she's just saying that loving the church, it needs to be at the top of the list. Because we love our families best by loving the church.

So do you love the church? Do you love God's people to death? That is Jesus Christ's command for us. That is what branches that abide in the vine look like.

[24:23] This is what a fruitful church looks like. So if you're feeling at any point how can I love Jesus more? How can I grow more? Well, love the church.

Sacrifice your time and your convenience and your energy for the people sat around you. Sacrifice your life for the church. That is obedience. That's what clinging to Christ looks like.

The gardener, he wants a fruitful and healthy tree. The father, he wants a fruitful and healthy church because it glorifies him.

it reflects the love of the father to the son. It shows the glory of the gardener. So look at verse eight. By this my father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. People should be looking in from the outside and thinking, wow, what love what a God they must have.

[25:41] So Christians, we are attached to the true vine. Let's make this tree beautiful. Let's go out and love one another to death.

Let's glorify our God. Let's pray.