

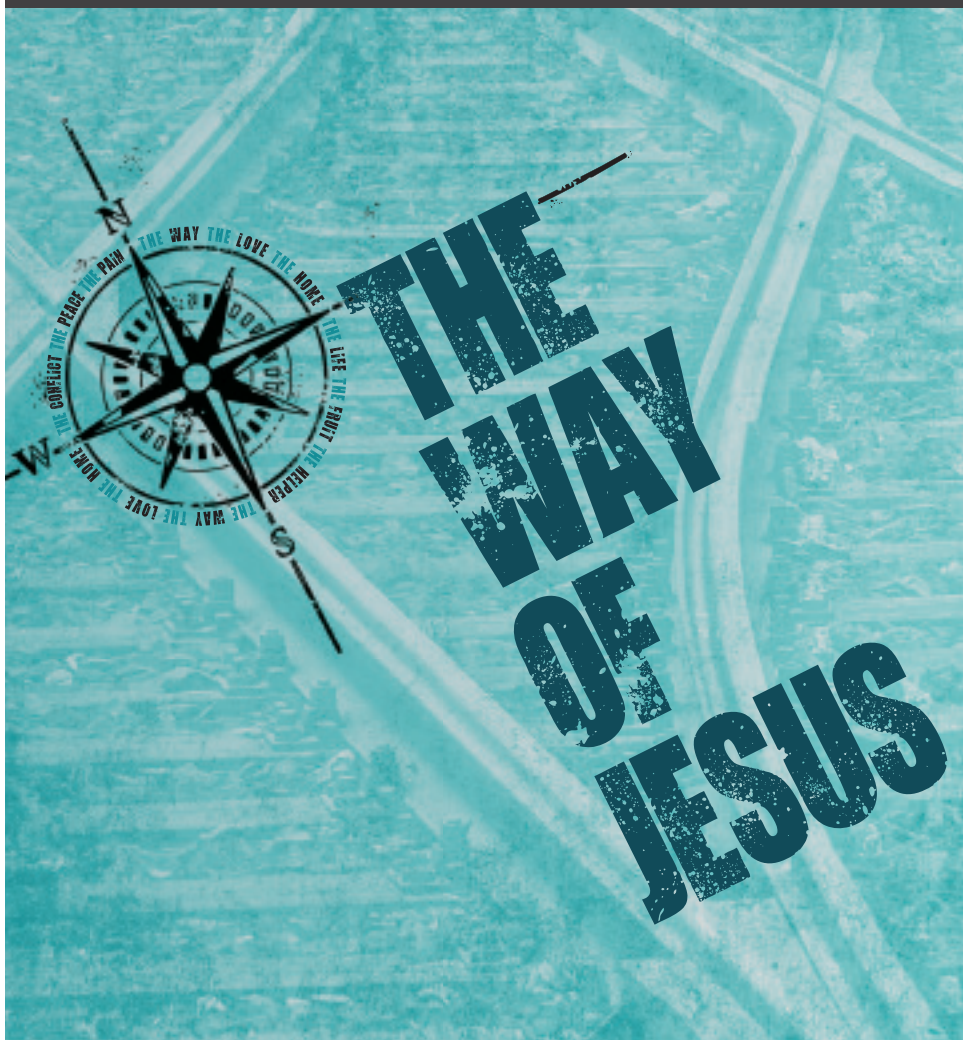
GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JUNE 8 - 12, 2020



MONDAY

John 15:1-8 - The Vineyard

A vineyard is an image that is familiar to many of us who have had the joy of living in a Mediterranean climate. We can picture exactly what Jesus was sharing in this allegory without having to travel to the Mediterranean or Israel—although that would be rather nice. We have seen the hills with vineyards in neat rows and may have even enjoyed a meander in a local vineyard.

It was no different for the disciples—Jesus chose the vine imagery as it was also very familiar in their everyday lives. Not only was it something they walked by daily, but the Old Testament frequently pictures Israel as a vine or vineyard. Sadly, these Old Testament references generally cast Israel in a negative light (Jeremiah 2:21; Isaiah 5:7; Ezekiel 15:6, 19:10-12). In these Old Testament examples, Israel was the vine and was subject to God’s judgment. Now, Jesus reverses this Old Testament image and declares Himself to be the True Vine—the Way, God the Gardener; and it is the “branches” (the disciples or the people of Israel) who are now subject to judgment.

The particular care of vineyards would have also been very familiar to Jesus’ disciples. Frequent pruning enabled abundant fruit on healthy branches, and the removal of bare branches that did not bear fruit is the perfect remedy in restoring the vine to being fully productive and vital, resulting in great fruit. To nurture branches that do not produce fruit serves no purpose, and it ultimately reduces the production and value of the vineyard. The vine grower, therefore, cuts away these bare branches

and destroys them. By this seemingly harsh act of cutting away branches, the vine is again productive and bears fruit abundantly.

In this allegory, of course, Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches. He gives us life to the fullest, and our response is to bear abundant fruit. We have been created for His purposes to bear fruit with the assurance that when Jesus is present in our life, we have all the resources we need to be fruitful.

This passage ends with a clear statement of being in His divine presence: We cannot bear fruit without being in an intimate relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS

Do you feel “connected” to Jesus as the vine providing all that you need to be His bearer of fruit? Is He really the “true” vine in your life, or do you rely on the resources of the world? How do you see Him pruning and are you enjoying being that bearer of much fruit?

PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWAN-BOIT AND LIVING ROOM MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Pray for Juli McGowan-Boit, who is serving in Kenya with Living Room Ministries International, a hospice community established to compassionately honor life and offer hope in the end-of-life care.

TUESDAY

John 15:1 - The Vinegrower

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the farmer." As we reflect on these 11 words, read and study Scripture, we are drawn to that absolute and distinct decree of Jesus, "I am." In the Gospel of John, Jesus uses "I am" (Greek: *ego eimi*) on a number of occasions:

- "I am the bread of life" (6:35).
- "I am the living bread that came down from heaven" (6:51).
- "I am the light of the world" (8:12).
- "I am the sheep's door" (10:7).
- "I am the good shepherd" (10:11).
- "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25).
- "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (14:6).

This "I am" language reminds us of Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush when God revealed Himself to Moses as "I AM WHO I AM," and declared to the disciples and us that "I am" metaphors identify Jesus as God. This is in keeping with the opening statement of the Gospel of John, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* (1:1). This is the last of the "I am" metaphors in this Gospel. Like the other "I am" metaphors (bread, light, gate, shepherd, etc.), the vine metaphor is reassuring, even comforting. Vines and vineyards were familiar to Jesus' disciples, and this would remind them of their childhood and their village life.

When Jesus identifies Himself as the true vine, He implies that there is a false vine. The use of the vine image in the Old Testament (Psalm 80:8; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 10:1-2) generally emphasized Israel's unfaithfulness to God, demonstrating that the Israelites did not bear the fruit that God had intended in the past. Jesus now declares that He is the **True Vine**, a God of righteousness, a God of love.

The way of Jesus is to give life and give life abundantly. He provides all that we need to bear fruit that advances the Kingdom of God here on this earth. However, His expectation is that we stay connected to Him through an intimate relationship of prayer and time in His Word.

QUESTIONS

How do you respond to Jesus being the "True Vine" in your life? Do you see Him "pruning" in your spiritual journey so that you may bear much fruit for Him? What can you do today to stay more "connected" to the True Vine?

PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWAN-BOIT AND LIVING ROOM MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Please pray for wisdom and protection over the Living Room team as they continue to care for patients in this time of COVID-19.

WEDNESDAY

John 15:4-8 - Remain in Me

There is nothing more inspiring than aspiring to share the Good News of Jesus through the call, gifts, and opportunities that God prepares for us. As ministers of His gospel, this is sometimes easier said than done. The endless scope of the work, long days, limited resources and distractions, can be enough to tire us, and maybe even discourage us. So how do we rekindle that joy and peace to be the Lord's hands, feet, and messengers in the world today? What message do we want to leave for the next generation? The simple answer is that Jesus answered these questions over 2000 years ago. In John 15, there are several key promises that navigate us through the questions of our impact for Him.

Rootedness—Are we ever in any doubt that we can be out of step with God's plans and desires for us, His precious children, if we stay rooted in being obedient to Him and confident of His promises? "*Remain in me, and I also remain in you*" (v. 4).

Refinement—As human beings, living each day as "salt and light," it would not be unusual for habits and distraction to hinder our enthusiasm, and yet we have a loving God who understands us, who wants us to be the most effective we can be, and so He prunes that which is of no impact (v. 2).

Relational—None of us can do this alone. First, we are reminded that we must remain in Him, but we are also reminded that the vine does not have only one branch. "*No branch can bear fruit by itself*" (v. 4).

Reward—The impact of our work is a result of remaining in Him, removing what is not necessary, and being resolute in being obedient to Him. For "*if you remain in me, you will bear much fruit*" (v. 5).

The promise for all who know Jesus is "*that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples*" (v. 8). May this be our goal and prayer for this important time—that we remain rooted in Him, be open to casting off all that is preventing us from bringing impact for His kingdom, knowing that we need to work as a community of believers so that we can bring glory to Him.

QUESTIONS

The starting place is to be rooted in God's purpose in creating you to be exactly who you are. How will you use His unique creation (you) to bring glory to Him today?

PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWAN-BOIT AND LIVING ROOM MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Pray for the health and safety of the Living Room team as they continue to do the work God has called them to do.

THURSDAY

John 15:4 - In Christ Alone

“As the branch can’t bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you, unless you remain in me” (v. 4b). With the advent of technology (read Google), it is so easy to find resources for our spiritual growth. Bible commentaries, YouTube videos, online sermons and much more are available for our study of the Word—almost too much to the point that we read a lot about the Bible and spend less time in the Bible.

Jesus tells us that fruitfulness (bearing fruit) starts in a very different place. It must begin and remain in His presence; His strength must become ours; we must remain in Christ alone. As soon as we turn our backs on Him, or are perhaps diverted away from knowing about Him, we lose the strength and energy of being connected to Him personally.

We may be tempted to believe otherwise, but the pattern slowly emerges: Our prayer life gets swallowed up in the busyness of the day; we know that we must also pray, but prayer too easily gets lost in the rush. We hope that a quick cry for help is enough, but Jesus says, “Remain in me.” Our natural human values are revealed in the way that we set the day’s priorities—or allow priorities to set themselves. We become tempted by other loyalties. We know that abiding in Jesus is central to who we are, but we also know that loyalties to family, career, friends, clubs, and exercise compete daily. But Jesus says, “Remain in me.” Living a life that places Jesus at the center—alone—

before anything else seems so hard, perhaps even unfair. Perhaps you are even thinking about the rich ruler (Luke 18:18-30) and saying, “It is too hard, Lord,” but Jesus says, “Remain in me.”

Jesus is the True Vine and “no branch can bear fruit by itself.” Focus on the promise that we are not grafted into a vine, but we are the branches of the vine. We are precious children of God and there is nothing He cannot or will not do for us in our efforts to bear fruit.

QUESTIONS

What one thing could you do today that would make Jesus more central in your life?

PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWAN-BOIT AND LIVING ROOM MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Pray for the Living Room team as they engage with the community in working together to provide food stability in a time where the economic crisis in Kenya is increasing.

FRIDAY

John 15:7-8 - Bearing Fruit

“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (v. 7). These words may sound very much like the “Ask and you will receive” narrative in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:7-8); but upon a closer look, Jesus shares an important condition. It is only the person who abides in Christ who can expect to receive whatever he or she asks (count the number of “you’s” in these two verses. We have great power to ask for anything, but only to the extent of our connection to the source of our power, Jesus Christ. Such connectedness then shapes our asking.

Jesus says, “Whatever you desire”; but we must be the individuals who remain in Christ, knowing that there is one ultimate purpose in remaining in Christ and bearing fruit: “This is to my Father’s glory” (v. 8a). The word “glory” is used in the Bible to speak of various wonderful things; but it is used especially to speak of God’s glory—an image associated with God’s appearance that reveals God’s majesty to us humans.

This verse (v. 8) tells us that we, too, can glorify God by our actions and fruit bearing. Fruit was an important source of food for the people of Jesus’ day (as it still is in the Middle East). It was also an important cash crop. A good fruit-bearing tree (one that grew abundant fruit) was a blessing to the owner of the vineyard or orchard. Good trees enhanced his standing in the community, and bad trees could lead to his impoverishment.

In this verse, fruit is a metaphor for the fruits of disciplined living—Christ-like living. That kind of life gives glory to the Heavenly Father, because Christ-like lives manifest themselves as faithful, hopeful, and loving (1 Corinthians 13:13). People are drawn to people with those qualities, and that gives Christians an opportunity to witness to the Lord, who makes that kind of life possible by “showing yourselves to be my disciples” (v. 8c). The word *disciple* means “one who learns from the teacher—and practices what the teacher (Jesus) teaches.” While none of us will ever follow Christ perfectly, this verse reminds us that there is a clear connection between fruit-bearing and discipleship. The person who bears fruit (Christ-like living) becomes Jesus’ disciple.

QUESTIONS

What fruit are you bearing that shows God’s glory and your love for Him as one of His disciples? Is there any small thing in your life that you could change today that would make this more evident?

PRAYERS FOR JULI MCGOWAN-BOIT AND LIVING ROOM MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Pray for the Living Room team as they are engaging with the larger Kenyan health sector. They have offered their new hospital in Eldoret to be used as a treatment site for COVID-19 patients. They are praying that the crisis doesn’t escalate in a way that makes this necessary, but want to be prepared if needed.



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