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I AM the true Vine; relationship status

John 15:1-17
Key verse 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches.  If a man remains in me and I in him he will bear much fruit.  Apart from me you can do nothing."

Today’s message is the next in my sermon series on Jesus Christ the Great I AM passages from Johns Gospel. I AM is called the tetragrammaton and it is the same name which God revealed to Moses at the burning bush on Mount Sanai in the book of Exodus. First, we studied Jesus the Eternal One, the before Abraham was born, I AM in chapter 8. Then the Eternal one who came down from heaven to give life to the world “I AM the bread of life.” Then Jesus’ purpose in coming “I AM the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. In the Easter passage John 11 “I AM the resurrection and the life”, Jesus fights our unbelief, fear, and mere theological faith until we see the glory of God personally.  Now in John 15 Jesus reveals "I am the true vine and my father is the gardener."  This passage gives us the secret of how to live as a Christian. It contains the whole shebang.  The Father the son and the Holy Spirit.  It explains our relationship with God including obedience, love, partnership, provision, Joy and fruitfulness in a package deal.  You can’t have one without the others in order to experience Gods best life.

What is your relationship status?  Many people use social media and dating sites to find a boyfriend or girlfriend.  To be successful it is important to complete a profile which describes yourself.  An important part of that is your "relationship status".  Categories are single never married, married, divorced, or separated.  It is personal.  Relationships are the most important thing for people.  Relationships define who we are.  A man who is a workaholic and thinks only about money might hurt his family by being absent even though he believes he’s working for his family.  A woman who never felt loved by her father may spend her whole life seeking that kind of fatherly love.  A student who doesn’t fit in may become a self-conscious loner with crippling anxiety.  A person with alcoholic or drug addicted parents might feel like an orphan.  The loss of a spouse or child due to death is considered the single most painful thing we can experience emotionally.  In today’s message I want to ask you a question.  What is your relationship status with God, with Jesus the great I AM?

Part 1    Remain in Me, the Vine and Branch relationship

v1-2 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.
Jesus says "I Am the true vine and my father is the gardener."  KJV "my father is the husbandman."   A husbandman is married to the land and the purpose of producing fruit.  Likewise, God is always working and seeking good fruit from his creation.  In the beginning God planted a garden of Eden where he placed the man he had created.  He walked with the man in the garden in the cool of the day in a beautiful unbroken relationship.  However, through disobedience sin entered the garden and cut the relationship.  Romans 5:19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." God sent Jesus his son so that through his obedience to suffer and die on the cross and solve the sin problem we can be reconciled to God.  Jesus came to restore our relationship to God.  Jesus is the True Vine.

What is the work of the Father, of the husbandman?  He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it may be even more fruitful."
KJV "every branch that does bear fruit he purges."  Once we are restored in the vine and branch relationship God begins his pruning work.  Pruning is not optional in a vinyard.  It must be done to bear fruit.  Pruning and cutting off are the only 2 options.  Cutting off is judgment.  Pruning is sanctification.  This is illustrated in Mth 21:43-44 Therefore the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit, He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."  v3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you."  Gods word is the knife by which we are purged and sanctified and made clean.  God is always coming to us with this knife, and we must submit to it or be cut off.   This is why we write our testimonies with struggling.  To allow God to prune us with his word.  This pruning work is Gods great and tender love for us.  It makes us clean beautiful and fruitful.  Let’s thank God for pruning us and not cutting us off and throwing us away as we deserve.

 v4 Remain in me, and I will 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.  Remain in me.  This is Jesus’ command.  I will remain in you.  This is Jesus’ promise.  This relationship is symbiotic.  "Interaction between 2 different organisms living in close proximity for the benefit of both."  The primary objective of a Christian should be to remain in Jesus.  At UBF we do this by eating daily bread, having regular bible study testimony sharing and Sunday worship while feeding sheep and praying.  Remaining is not merely for Sundays.  Remaining is constantly abiding.  v4-6 Remain in me, and I will 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.  Remain in me.  I Am the vine you are the branches.  Here we see the church of Christ is not an organization but and organism.  It is a living relationship with Jesus, an organic relationship.  Only by remaining in Jesus can we bear fruit.  Jesus is the source of life.
The vine and branch relationship is a mystical union with God.  All the branches(disciples) form the vineyard (true church). This is the body of Christ.  It is the reason we feel a close kinship to fellow branches anywhere we go in the world no matter what culture.  It is much more than just a common understanding it is unity.  I pray that we may experience this unity at the isbc this summer with international harvesters.
Apart from me you can do nothing.  In Jesus the Vine we receive the nourishing sap.  It makes us a part of something far greater than ourselves.  Apart from Jesus we are merely ourselves, weak powerless and withered.  When we look back and see the results of this relationship in our lives, we are full of Grace and thanks to God.  When we experience Christ in us the hope of glory, we know with certainty that the future is as bright as the promises of God.  We value this relationship above all else.  If we are fools and take this relationship for granted, we do so at our own peril.  V6 I anyone does not remain in me he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers. Such branches are picked up thrown into the fire and burned. This is an image of judgment. Whenever we sense the vine and branch relationship is weakened or broken, we must immediately find out why, repent of our sins and be reunited fully with the true vine.  When we are faithful and remain in Jesus the result is natural and organic that we will bear much fruit.  Our own efforts are futile apart from Jesus.
Part 2    chosen for a purpose
v7-8 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.  This is to my fathers’ glory that you bear much fruit.
"ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."  Sounds great but Jesus is not a genie in a magic lamb that grants wishes based on people’s greed or evil human desires.  It is conditional. We must remain in him and his words must remain in us.  1)  we ask for anything which is for Gods glory.  wow anything.  Thats amazing. Let’s not limit ourselves in our prayers to ask for that which glorifies God. 2)  That you bear much fruit.  we should ask for that which is for fruit bearing.  3)  showing yourselves to be my disciples.  We should ask God to reveal our true identity as disciples so that people will take note.  When Peter and John once healed a crippled man who had been begging outside the temple even the great lawyer Gamaliel recognized that opposing them would be tantamount to opposing God.  When lives are transformed through 1:1 bible study people must acknowledge us as Jesus disciples.
Another way we are identified as Jesus branches is by our love. V9-12 As the father has loved me so have I loved you. Now remain in my love just as I have obeyed my fathers’ commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this “love each other as I have loved you. Jesús urges us to remain in his love.  The Vine and Branch relationship is a love relationship.  We cannot find this love relationship we yearn for anywhere else.  The Samaritan woman in John 4 sought this love with 5 husbands but found it in the love of the master.  True love or Agape love is different from human love and comes from God only.  How do we remain in this love?  v If you obey my commands you will remain in my love.  Love is the fruit of obedience to God.  Our once hard hearts became fleshy and tender.  I value this love of Jesus more than anything else.  It fills us with a sense of wonder.  It lets us know we are remaining in Jesus.  It fills us with a sense of well being regardless of circumstances.
 After I was briefly introduced to a woman from Montreal as a co worker candidate I joined Christian Filipina dating site January 1 2023 to look for a co-worker hoping and praying for a nurse born again candidate to help establish the house church I met a beautiful young Christian philopena and while spending every waking moment with her on VC singing Christian songs and studying the bible I fell deeply in love.  I hoped that through bible study with missionary Sarah she would be acceptable for me to God.  I made a plan and booked a flight to visit Regly and maybe even get married while considering LDR has a shelf life and not wanting to lose her. At the same time, I was committed to going to Toronto for easter to share Jesus “I AM the resurrection and the life.”  Missionary Joshua challenged me to believe and see the glory of God that my son John Mark would become a man of God and the house church vision became restored in my heart. On the way back from visiting Montreal in the car when missionary Joshua found out the extent to which I had made plans radically different from our prayers concerning my house church he was quite alarmed at the 2
very different roads I was building in different directions.  We began to resent each other.  My relationship with missionary Sarah was also strained as she counselled both Regly and me that believed our relationship was not Gods will.  Then when I was a week away from going to the PH the whole government of Canada passport and other services were shut down due to a strike. I could not pick up my passport. God did such a big thing just for me. To keep me from running ahead of him. Then when I went to pay for my lot in Palawan PH as I went to the teller my heart slowed down to 30 bpm and I passed out on the floor of the bank. There was already an ambulance at the bank waiting for me and I was rushed to hospital where I diagnosed as “perfectly fine” with pristine blood work. I testified to my son what happened and that in the ambulance and hospital 7 times I prayed to the lord to be sure he was the one who had done this to me because I knew how determined on the course of action I was.   7 times the Spirit confirmed. I realized death was always very close at hand and my relationship with Jesus is most important.  It was a wake-up call from God that life is short and I shouldn’t be afraid to lose my life in this world any more.  Knowing all that had happened to me confirmed it was not Gods will. I was devastated and eyes became a fountain of endless tears. I suffered so much to accept Gods will and believe his love for me and turned to Jesus who always leads us to the way of cross sharing sweet and painful communion.  When I contacted Regly after several days she seemed in a very dark place of sorrow and confusion and didn’t eat for three days. Things could not be the same after stating Gods will had been revealed. She felt I was following only sister Sarah’s direction and didn’t fight for her.  I told her it was God I cannot fight.   Latter I was convicted by the Holy Spirit over and over every time I looked at my phone to call her.  It is not a human thing or psychological but God who directly lets us know in our conscience and in elevated heart rate and anxiety and hindered relationship with Jesus and Gods servants.    Sometimes I still long for Regly but I have determined that I must obey Gods will in all things and remain in Jesus my beloved Lord and Saviour at all costs. I could not share this message until I had finally come to acceptance. Now I hope that at summer bible conference God will give me a renewed vision and direction and we may see Gods glory.
Obedience produces love.  1 Pet 1:22-23 says "now that you have purified yourself by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love each other deeply from the heart for you have been born again not of perishable seed but of imperishable through the living and enduring word of God."
v13 Greater love has no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends.
Jesus calls us to a greater love.  Greater love is a sacrificial love.  Jesus showed us this by laying down his life for us, dying on the cross as the expression of Gods great love.  May we learn this from Jesus.  I feel like I already laid down my life for my son John Mark after being a single dad for 23 years and now its my time to be selfish.  I realize that "laying down your life love" is truly needed to help him and other campus students in my house church.
v14-17 You are my friends if you do what I command.  I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master’s business.  Instead, I have called you friends; for everything I have learned from the father I have made known to you.  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; love each other.
Jesus calls us his friends.  We are in his inner circle.  We share in business partnership with Jesus.  As a result, his resources are available to us and we may ask anything we need in doing Gods work.  This is a great privilege.  He chose for a purpose and to live a purpose driven life, the highest purpose.  He chose you to Go and bear fruit that will last.  This purpose can never fail.  It has value eternally and results in saved souls.
Part 3    Relationship with the Holy Spirit
v18-25 If the world hates you keep in mind that it hated me first.  If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own.  As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world.  That is why the world hates you.  remember the words I spoke to you "no servant is greater than his master “If they persecuted me they will persecute you also, if they obeyed my teaching they will obey yours also.  They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.  If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin.  Now however they have no excuse for their sin.  He who hates me hates my father as well If I had not done among them what no one else did they would not be guilty of sin.  But now they have seen these miracles and yet they have hated both me and my father.  But this is to fulfill what is written in their law "they hated me without reason."
When we enter into a relationship with Jesus our relationship with the world also changes.  Jesus is not of this world and as his chosen ones we have been chosen out of the world.  The world doesn’t know him but we know him.  When we become beautiful and strong in Jesus, we expect to be loved by others for doing what is right.  It is a good sign when people hate us.  It means we have relationship with Jesus.  We are hated without any reason.

 v26-27When the counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the father, he will testify about me and you must also testify for you have been with me from the beginning.
The Counselor is the Holy Spirit.  He testifies about Jesus. He is God the Holy Spirit.  16:8-11when he comes he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment; in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness because I am going to the father where you can see me no longer; in regard to judgment because the prince of this world now stands condemned.
The testimony of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of sin based on the words Jesus spoke.  You must also testify.  We have a symbiotic relationship with the Holy Spirit.  We need each other to testify.  We testify about Jesus outwardly and the Holy Spirit works inwardly in us and those who hear us to be convicted of sin, repent and restore their relationship with God.  Apart from him we can do nothing.   Pastor Ron emphasized that the Holy Spirit gives us a sense of urgency and I pray we may have this.
what is your relationship status with Jesus? Are you in his word? Is his word in you making you clean?  Are you obedient?  Are you chosen?  Are you confident to ask for anything for Gods glory?  Are you a partner in Gods great redemptive work?  Does the Spirit witness alongside you?   If so, remain in me, Jesus says, and you will bear much fruit!



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