

**John: The Word Became Flesh**  
**Abide in Jesus**  
**John 15:1-17, Part 2**

**Hello Grace Community Church Family. I am glad you are here for what is Part 3 of the sermon that was preached this past Sunday from John 15:1-17. The metaphor of the vine and branches that Jesus shared with his disciples is important to help us understand our relationship with Jesus, and it also helps us understand the mission he has given us. If you have not heard Sunday's message and, after that, the first five points of application that were released on Tuesday, I would encourage you to go back and catch those before going further today.**

**Although I will not take time to comment on the points of application we have already covered, I will list them here. First:**

- 1. Preaching the gospel to yourself every day is the only way to abide in Jesus**
- 2. Faith is required at every stage of the believer's life**
- 3. Fruit is expected and produced at every stage of the believer's life – believe it!**
- 4. Faith is increased by time in the Word and in prayer**
- 5. The more time we spend in the Word, the more we will look like Jesus**

**Time to get into today's list, beginning with:**

- 6. Abiding in Jesus and in his love includes both rest and effort**

**We are branches in the vine and cannot hope to produce fruit on our own. Is sanctification up to the Lord or is it up to me? It is God's doings, but there will be no sanctification, or, spiritual growth that gradually shapes us into the image of Christ unless I am willing**

**to discipline myself for the purpose of godliness, 1 Timothy 4:7 in the NASB. So, God does his part and I do my part, right? Well, yes, but this is not an equal partnership. That is why it is crucial to understand that my position in Christ, or, as a branch in the vine, is totally dependent on the Lord for strength to live as he has called me to live, which is, “As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” 1 Peter 1:15.**

**Jesus repeatedly told the 11 that they would prove to be his disciples by their obedience to his commands – and remember, Jesus’ standards are higher than the standards of the OT Law. It is not that we are forbidden to kill others, we are forbidden to hate them. We are called to pray and fast and give, but to do so in secret, not doing our works to be seen by others. And, we need not to wait on the Spirit to move us to obey because he has already moved us in God’s Word. The Word changes us, so get in the Word and obey what you read!**

**Maybe Colossians 1:29 gives us the best understanding of how the process works. The Apostle Paul, after writing about the mission God had given him to take the gospel to the Gentiles, says, “For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.” Again, “For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.” Colossians 1:29. I work hard, and I do so in *his* strength, with all *his* energy. Take time, this week, to think about obeying God in the strength he provides. Number 7:**

## **7. Jesus is serious about us loving one another**

**It’s simple – one of the primary ways we show our love for Jesus is to love those he has saved. Yes, we are supposed to love all people, even our enemies, but there is a special calling to love those in the body of Christ. The Apostle Paul often elevated love about all other Christian virtues. In Romans 13:8, the Apostle said, “The one who**

loves another has fulfilled the law.” In Colossians 3:14, Paul says, “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

I could read many more verses to affirm this, but you get the point. Before we move to the number eight, I just want to say – loving others is not always easy, but Jesus did not say “Love one another, as long as you are compatible or as long as the relationship is easy or as long as the other person is not difficult or as long as she doesn’t have political views that are different from yours.” He simply said, “Love one another.” Eighth:

#### **8. Jesus must be Lord before he is friend, but what a friend we have in Jesus**

Lord before friend. That is a concept that is more difficult to grasp now than it was 50 years ago. A general lack of respect for authority has hindered our attempts to relate with Jesus because it is easy to forget who the boss is. In John 13:13, Jesus said to his disciples, “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.” For three to three and a half years, the disciples had shown that they understood the relationship. The truth Jesus shared with them in John 15:15 is what took their breath away: “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”

When you are in an unfamiliar setting it is a good idea, if you trust the people you are with, to do as you are told or to imitate their behavior. When you are invited to a dinner where there are seven forks and three spoons and you are not sure about the etiquette, you might imitate someone who has been in this position before. You remember imitating your parents, don’t you? As you grow in all these settings, not only does your comfort level grow, but you will

**understand the whys behind the what's. Does this seem familiar in your Christian life? When you first begin, "What would Jesus do?" is a good question, but as you grow, you know what you are supposed to do because you just know. Why does he love us enough to bring us into such an intimate relationship? I cannot say for sure, but I can offer the next point of application with confidence – number 9:**

### **9. He chose me – blessed truth!**

**Jesus told the disciples in John 15:16, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide." You know what it feels like, right, when a teacher or a boss or a leader is going to choose someone to answer a question or be offered an advance or perform a prestigious task, and you think you are the man or the woman for the job? If you are in elementary school, your hand is already up saying, "I know, I know – pick me, please!" You know what it is like, don't you, when you get the job, or also when you are passed over for the assignment?**

**There were important rabbis in Jesus' day who chose the best students to follow them everywhere they went and to learn theology as they shared life together. The crew that Jesus chose was the most unlikely group of people to ever be chosen by the least important rabbi of all time. And yet, Jesus chose them to be his disciples and to take his message to the entire world and to bear fruit that remains, or, fruit that abides. Even though we do not have the role that the disciples had, we are on mission, and as we go, we are called to Exalt the Lord, to Establish believers, and to Engage the world with the gospel. In every aspect of our purpose, we bear fruit. "But," you say, "I have never led anyone to Christ." You have no idea how the Lord has used your life to bring others to Jesus! One sows, another waters, but God brings the harvest. We all have a role in this**

**mission, and if you have trusted Jesus, you can be sure of two truths: 1) He chose you to be his child, and 2) He has assigned you for a special role in the kingdom, and in your local church. Praise the Lord! Last – number 10:**

**10. What a privilege to be a branch that produces fruit that remains!**

**No matter what your job is, your greatest privilege is to be a conduit through whom the Lord produces spiritual fruit that has a lasting impact on the kingdom of God. As you abide in Jesus and obey his commands, and as you love others and you pursue the mission he has given you, you will bear fruit that abides. One day you will hear Jesus say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”**

**Abide in Jesus and abide in his love. Let his life flow through you and depend on him to use and guide the service you render in the kingdom. Love others as the Father has loved the Son, and as the Son has loved you.**

**I want us to close this three-part sermon by reading a passage from Philippians 3. I would love it if you would turn there, now. The Apostle Paul was always aware of his need to be dependent on Jesus. He saw the joy of walking with Jesus, even when walking with Jesus included suffering for the mission. Even the suffering brought Paul into a more intimate relationship with Jesus. This is a personal relationship, you know. The passage is Philippians 3:7-11 and we will read it, knowing that it is reinforcing the truth of Jesus’ words to his disciples in John 15. Philippians 3:7:**

**7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of**

**knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.**

**We died with Christ and we will be raised with him. Could there possibly be a more meaningful life than the one that is wrapped up in Jesus? In this time of isolation, go deeper into the truth we have learned – He is the vine, we are the branches. Let us live as though we belong. I know some of you are going stir crazy, but this time will not last and you do not want to miss this opportunity to go deeper into dependence on the Lord. Let's pray.**

**Father, our hearts are full to overflowing. Even though these days are bringing challenges that we did not know we would have to face in our time on this earth, our hearts are filled with joy because we belong to Jesus! Thank you, Lord, for saving us and for calling us into your wonderful family and for giving us true purpose in life.**

**Father, I want to pray for families during these days. Please give spouses and parents and children patience. Those who are not married, Lord, are every bit as much a part of our family as those who are married, and I pray that you will give them, not only patience, but joy and a sense of purpose and a closeness with you that exceeds anything they thought possible. Make us and keep us one body, Lord, even though we are apart. Make us grateful and use us for your glory. In Jesus, name, Amen.**

**On Sunday, Scott Culbreth is going to share a personal testimony about the beauty of the place that God has placed him in the vine as**

**a dependent branch in the Lord's perfect plan. I love the way Scott thinks and I am looking forward to him taking us even deeper into the truth we have covered in John 15. After the testimony, Scott will lead a three-person panel that will include Dr. David Calvert and Professor Bert Wallace as the three of them discuss the implications of John 15 and its place in the Farewell Discourse, which finds its place in John's Gospel and the New Testament, which describes the pinnacle of God's Redemptive plan that began in the Garden of Eden – and, I had best stop. I will be leading the prayer time on Sunday, and our focus this week is contentment, so be practicing between now and Sunday! I will see you then! God, bless.**