

PRAISE INTERNATIONAL
CONNECTED
JOHN 15:1-11

Good Morning

Prayer Needs

The first thing I can remember collecting as a grade school kid was something that would show up in my hands from time to time when we went to the store for bubble gum...there in my hand would be a penny but not just any penny – a wheat penny. By then I knew that they no longer made wheat pennies and they would be worth something. I don't recall whatever happened to my little collection of wheat pennies but when Neice and I married I discovered I was not the only one who had been pulled into the vortex of collecting wheat pennies – she had some as well.

The wheat penny was a one-cent coin minted between 1909 and 1958. It was originally conceived by President Theodore Roosevelt, who thought that United States coins did not have artistic merit. It was first minted in the year that would have been Lincoln's 100th birthday. It was President Theodore Roosevelt, who thought that United States coins did not have artistic merit. He set to resolve this issue by hiring sculptors – the penny still holds Lincoln's head to this day but the wheat penny that had two wheat sheaves framing the 'one cent – United States of America'.

The wheat was intended as a message of hope to Americans. This is because the sheaves were to represent the blessings and wealth that the US offered.

In our text in John 15 Jesus proclaims - 'I am the Vine' - why would Jesus say 'I am the Vine'?

Jesus in John 14-17 is essentially giving His Last Will and Testament - these are the words of a man who is facing his last hours. This is just before the drama of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem followed by His betrayal and death. He is speaking to His friends who are feeling insecure, alone and insignificant speaking promises of His Spirit and Presence that they would be secure and provided for that they belonged and were significant.

I am the Vine - To these friends it had meaning – the Vine was a reference to the dynasty that ruled over Judea for a little over 100 years before the Romans crushed it was called the Hasmonean Dynasty - just fallen 30 years prior...they heard stories of 'freedom' and longed for something different. Maybe they had old coins at home - imprinted with a Vine - but why a Vine?

The Vine all through the Old Testament was also picture of God towards His people.

- Some theologians believe that the Tree in the garden was not an Apple tree but a Vine Tree.
- Interesting as it was a Vine that Noah first plants following the flood.
- It is the fruit of a Vines that the spy's bring back from Judea as evidence of the Promised Land.
- It is a Vine that the Prophets use to describe how God brought Provision, Position and Prestige to His people and that threats to God's people were described as ones who would lay waste to the Vineyard.

The Vine represented an actual Place – of Security, Belonging and significance -that began in a Garden! All that God had provided in the Garden and intended to restore man to at the Cross and we see this same imagery in its fullness in the book of Revelation - in the Center of it all is a Tree.

- When His friends felt the confusion of the moment just earlier as recorded by John in John 14 - tell us where you are going, how do we know the way?

And the secret is simply this Christ in you!
Yes, Christ in you bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.
Col 1:27b JB Phillips

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- John 14:6 “*I am the way, and the truth and the life* (Zoe) the word used for life by Jesus is the Greek word used in reference to the Creative life breath of God when He created the earth -
- So watch this if we put John 14:6 and John 15:1 together....Jesus is proclaiming I am the light, life, beauty and abundance you read about in Genesis 1-2 at the center of the Garden - **I am that Tree of life you read about....that is about to get onto another Tree to restore you to the Vine!**

Beloved the Good News we proclaim is that Jesus is the True Vine who has given true Peace, provision, security, belonging and significance to mankind. He is the Planting of the Lord (Is 4, 11 and 53) that is great and glorious and we have been grafted into that Vine whose fruit has touched every corner of the globe.

John 15 - Jesus is speaking to what is - in these first few verses:

1. I am the Vine

- I want us to see clearly is that when Jesus said ‘*I am the Vine*’ it was not just another word picture for us to paint pretty pictures of - He is speaking directly to all that it represented Mankind a place - Garden - Secure and cared for, not alone or abandoned but belonging and partnered representing Him on the earth - Image bearers!
- A place absent of control, manipulation, or force – a place where **abundance** is not the by product of mans production.
- This is not about resurrecting their best dream of an empire made great again but of man restored and made whole. God takes on a human body to restore all of humanity - so that in His humanity He will take onto Himself everything that has cut man off...its a place of **Connection**.
- Many like me have read these verses with some angst - Father is the Vinedresser and He prunes the junk...and the for a guy like me that sounds like oh no...am I bearing fruit - or I may get the ax! Beloved I really understand the angst...but its not the correct understanding of the passage.
- Jesus is not talking about or demanding productivity – He is pointing to Connection.
- **Jesus locates the Vine and the branches – He is the Vine and we are IN Him - I am NOT the vine** - the Father s work?
- I love the way the Passion Translation puts verse 2 ‘*He cares for the branches connected to me by lifting and proppin up the fruitless branches and pruning every fruitful branch to yield a greater harvest.*’ This is not a threat from the Father to try harder but a revelation of His passion to confront to remove what hinders love beloved. This is not about trying harder and doing better.
- If trying harder and doing better could have connected us to the Vine - Why did Jesus come?

Here is what is - I am the Vine and

2. You are Clean – you are enough....

- Jesus makes the statement - You are included - clean - guiltless because of ME!
- The Word - the Logos - the living words invasion of human brokenness.
- Please lets not miss that Jesus is giving His last words - He is about take all of man kinds judgment and invade hell - to establish His words - you are Clean because of My words.
- He is the one who will set affairs right - you are clean - means unstained.
- Now here is what I want us to remember - ‘I had nothing to do with making myself clean’
- **Jesus did all of that!**

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- The word spoken at the Cross did that over every human failure!
Here is what is True – I am the Vine and you are clean

3. Separated - apart from me - you can do nothing – remember Genesis 3....?

- The reach of man to find life apart from God....that is Genesis 3 beloved and that is the heart of every place we miss the mark.
- Beloved all the ideas of ‘earning’ approval and significance are based in religion.
- Jesus is the Vine Tree of Life beloved - our choice according to Jesus is to respond to His invitation - to Remain - To Abide.

Interestingly I have read this passage many times and made a chore out of it!

- Abide - I better try harder to make sure I am abiding.
- Prayer - study etc.
- This is not about production but Presence...being present to what is true!
 - Have you ever had that person you run into that you have worked with outside of work and it seems a bit awkward....because the connection – was always about production? And then there are those you see and somehow time and distance does not seem to sever this sense of being at peace....because coming from a huge family...I can just sit and say nothing – this is my family – I belong here.

The word used for Abide or Remain is to take up permanent residence - interesting Jesus affirms He has already made the choice - remain in Me and I will remain in you.....

How do we abide or remain - I want to submit that this is more about surrender -its about Rest

- At the core of Jesus invitation Abide is an invitation to surrender – the worlds message day and night life is found in conformity, consumption, control...and Jesus proclaims its about connection.

1. Real time surrender that my actual residence is Him.

- Christ is actually in me right now.
- I had read this quote from Saint Catherine of Sienna *'All the way to heaven is heaven, because he said I am the way.'* So here's the thought that hit the other morning me - **to live in the ways of Jesus is to live the way we will live for eternity.** My wife said it to me this way- *'In our being is our doing'*
- So here is what this means – Production is not the point of John 15 but connection!
- **Dare I say it this way condition in my humanity does not change things as much as I have believed.** My Anxiety – fear dare I say it failure has not driven Him away?
- Here is what I mean by that statement - last week we looked at Jesus meeting His friends in unbelief and He did not demand they change He simply meet them where they were - beloved He has not changed!
- When filled with fear and anxiety - not that I have ever struggled with fear or anxiety (I have) he met them.
- When you study the life of Jesus this common theme arises that He meets people not where they think they should be but where they are....and its like He meant what He said when He said come to Me all you who are weak and heavy laden....
- This past week Denise and I were sharing with friends and noticing this curious theme - how

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easy it is to feel negative about ourselves when we are convinced that we should not be feeling something like anxious. Its like we become a people convinced that He can't handle the sadness, disappointment, depression, grief, anger and disorientation we are actually feeling in our body. And yet in His humanity He embraces all of it and invites us to stay connected.

- Or said another way beloved if we read John 15 in terms of reward or punishment we have missed the point. Pruning is not judgment but in reality God's faith in mankind – fully associated and included in the incarnation – that in the worlds system that demands conformity and production He is revealing a restored humanity. Called the Kingdom where the fruit of Heaven can become visible in the present. Not as a result of productivity but connection – Jesus is actually proclaiming judgment on the worlds system and inviting man back into a Garden of light, life, beauty and abundance in connection to Him.

2. I want to invite us into a Real time exercise of Surrender

- Denise – breathing....the truth Psalm 23
- So in a world almost demanding that we live by its constrictions conformity consumption and control Jesus invited us to live in His ways of creativity and connection 'Co-creating ' heaven in the present?

3. Real time exercise of Imagination.

- What would it look like to begin to imagine that right where I am the fruit of Jesus could be seen in my life - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self control....fruit that is not the result of me trying harder but actually resting in the Person who is present - being Present to His presence - abiding in the Vine!

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Closing Prayer - Communion

Lord our God, loving Father,
You have given us Your Son Jesus Christ
as the true vine of life
and our source of strength.
Help us to live His life
as living branches attached to the vine
and to bear plentiful fruit
of justice, goodness and love.
Let our union with Him become visible
in our openness to one another
and in our unity as brothers and sisters,
that He may be visibly present among us
now and for ever.

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