

Tending Ancient Paths

The Paradigms, Posture, and Practices of Jesus

Abundance...



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. The cashier would give me my change and I would look carefully through the coinage as sometimes I would find a treasure—a wheat penny. It was President Theodore Roosevelt who thought U.S. coins did not have artistic merit and set to resolve this issue by hiring sculptors to create designs for the coins. The penny still holds the image of Lincoln's head to this day but the wheat penny, named such because of the two wheat sheaves framing the 'one cent – United States of America', was last minted in 1958. It was intended as a message of hope to Americans at the time. The sheaves were to represent the blessings and abundance that America offered.

In John 15 Jesus proclaims - *'I am the Vine'* - and to those 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 just 30 years prior. It was called the Hasmonean Dynasty and they would have heard stories of 'freedom' from that time and longed for something different than the current Roman occupation. Maybe they had an old coin collection at home from those days. Those coins were imprinted with a Vine, but why a Vine? When Jesus refers to Himself as the 'Vine' was it just a picture of what had been in their past political and economic history? A reference to a political dynasty or was it something else? **The Vine**, throughout the Old Testament, was also a picture of God's promise and presence 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 Vines that the spies 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. 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 to man at the Cross we see in the imagery of the Vine. We see this same imagery in its fullness in the book of Revelation –where in the center of it all is a (Vine) Tree.



John records for us in John 14 Jesus telling His friends don't be troubled...I am going to My Father's house. Finally it is Thomas who says, 'we do not know where You are going...how do we know the way?' To which Jesus replies, in 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 Vine (Tree) of life you read about....that is about to get onto another (Vine) Tree to restore you to the abundance I promised (John 10:10)! Here is the Good News for both His disciples and us- our best hope for blessing and abundance is not an image printed on a coin, but a connection to the Vine, who is an actual Person! Jesus is the True Vine, the Person who connects us to an actual Place in Him with abundant peace, provision, security, belonging, and significance –for mankind. He is the great and glorious Planting of the Lord (Is 4, 11 and 53) and we have been grafted into that Vine whose fruit has touched every corner of the globe.*

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I am the Vine is not just an idea about a by gone political dynasty but a place absent of control, manipulation, or force – a place where **abundance** is not the by product of man's production but simply that we are connected to a Person! 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**. The word *Abide* in John 16 means to take up permanent residence. Interesting that Jesus affirms He has already made His choice, *remain in Me and I will remain in you.*

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And the secret is simply this: **Christ in you!**

Yes, Christ in you bringing with him the hope of all glorious things to come. Col 1:27b, JB Phillips

How do we abide or remain? I want to submit that this is more about surrender. At the core of Jesus' invitation, abide is an invitation to surrender to His abundance and rest. The world's message day and night is clear: life is found in conformity, consumption, and control. Jesus proclaims that life is about connection to Himself. I was thinking and praying about this and read something that Catherine of Sienna once said *'All the way to heaven is heaven, because he said I am the way.'* So here's the thought that hit me as I was meditating on her quote and Jesus' words in John 15, ***to live in the ways of Jesus is to live the way we will live for eternity.*** To live connected to His life, creativity, abundance, beauty, compassion — that is enough then, now, and always.

There is so much that can be said here yet Jesus sums it up clearly in John 15:5 *'apart from me you can do nothing'*. Connection, beloved, is at the heartbeat of what it means to truly follow Jesus. I do believe we face a modern missional crisis in the west but not so much because of method rather, our lack of revelation about connection! Origen of Alexandria - one of the early Church Fathers from Egypt who died from torture in 253—said something like this: *If the Christian is not like their Christ, then no argument can (or should) be made to convince others to draw near and believe in it. There is no argument strong enough to overcome a dysregulated, unordered, angry, bitter, and selfish Christian. There are no facts that can convince an unbeliever to embrace the views of one filled with hatred and condemnation, and there is no honest reason why a faith that produces such people should be defended at all.*

An excerpt from our friend Matt Tebbe, Co-Founder Gravity Commons and Priest at The Table in Indy: *The single greatest apologetic of the early church - the quality of life shared among Christians in the Kingdom of God - is not present in many Christian communities. We are more known for our violence, arrogance, abuse, prejudice, alliance with worldly power, etc. than by our love, and there are few pagan critics who respect the quality of our life together in the world. When people ask me 'what's mission or evangelism look like at The Table?' this is a significant part of what we say: **to recover a way of life that even those outside the church can acknowledge is good. So we have something of New Creation to offer; so we embody the good news as we announce it; so that the Body of Christ is seen in her beauty; so that the allure of the Lordship of Christ isn't just a promise or a pitch, but a participation in a beloved community.** (emphasis mine) *This task is monumental, but starting small and unimpressive, with integrity, is the only way to accomplish it.**

To live like that is to be connected to the Vine and to represent Him well in a world that hungers for Him...a world aching for connection.

El Salvador Outreach—2024

- Pastor Louis and his wife Doris have returned from El Salvador -so thankful for those who helped by sending resource. Please continue to pray for these in San Pablo TacaChico and the growing community of Jesus lovers there.
- This year 95 families were touched with the gifts sent. This includes monies given to the water authority to lay pipe to one of the

communities so they don't have to walk 2 hours to get clean water. Such a beautiful and organic opportunity to represent Jesus.



With gratitude and integrity we steward your gifts. Thank you for partnering with the mission the Lord has given us in this hour as we partner with Him for His kingdom to expand.

Please make your **tax deductible** contribution to:

Tending Ancient Paths (TAP) Fort Wayne
5907 West Wallen Road,
Fort Wayne, IN 46818

Ben and Denise, Please agree with us over these prayer needs for the next month...

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