

8/16/20 Sermon Title: "Abide in Me"

Biblical Passage: John 15:1-8

Passage Background and Summary

John 15:1-8 takes place during the time in which Jesus gave his farewell speeches in preparing the disciples for his death, resurrection and ascension. As Pastor Warnock mentioned in his sermon, it is the final "I Am" saying in John. In this scripture Jesus uses the metaphor of the vine to detail the relationships at work. It is God who is the vine grower, Jesus who is the "true vine," and the disciples or us who are the branches. It is in abiding in Jesus that we can "bear fruit."

Sermon Points

In this time of social distancing, it is easy for us to become spiritually drained and disconnected. Some may feel like they're working more now at home than in-person before the pandemic. For others, there's the added factor that in addition to working from home, there's the need to care for and help children navigate virtual schooling. There are so many things competing for our attention and so little space for joy, recreation, and escape. We can get so caught up in all that's going on that our relationship with God takes a back seat. We may not pray or talk to God as much, and the loss of physical fellowship may result in a loss of faith. In times like these, we have to be anchored in Jesus as that is what will sustain us in the midst of the storm. We can't give up on ourselves, and we can't give up on God. In order to make it through, we have to be anchored in the vine. Jesus says I am the vine, the true vine. This suggests there are some things that look like vines but are not true. These are things we may think would feed us but will only drain us. Similarly, we may think they would help us, but they intend to hurt us. So, we must pray for discernment because at times weeds can look like vines. These weeds may work to get into the operating system of our souls, our faith. Thus, we as the branches must be connected to the vine and the vine grower; we have to abide in Jesus as he abides in God. Life flows to the branches from the vine. It is in being connected to Jesus that we get all we need. We have to know that we cannot do life on our own. We also must remember that it is not about us, but it is the vine that stands out. We are instruments of God.

Not only do we need Jesus, but we need each other as we are wrapped up together. Think about the large oak trees found in places like Savannah, Georgia. We need roots that go deep and must be rooted spiritually. We must be connected to the church of Jesus Christ. Additionally, the roots are wrapped around one another. In the same way, we must hold onto one another and support each other. Lastly, we must be planted by the river or connected to God who is the source of everlasting life.

Reflection Questions

1. How are you doing during this pandemic? Have you felt spiritually drained or disconnected lately?
2. What are some of the ways you are nurturing your faith during this time?
3. Have you ever been misled by some weeds you thought were vines? What happened?
4. How have you supported others and how have people supported you during this pandemic?
5. Share a time that you made it through a storm by being rooted, by holding on to others, and by leaning into your faith.
6. What can you do this week to connect or reconnect to “the true vine”?