



## Sermon, Sunday May 5, 2024

### “Remain in Me”

**SCRIPTURE: John 15:1-8** <sup>1</sup>“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. <sup>2</sup>He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

#### **Introduction: Our life cannot bear fruit on its own**

Today is the sixth Sunday of Easter in the church calendar. The text of today’s sermon, John 15:1-8, is the **‘Parable of the Vine and the Branches.’** In this parable, Jesus is the vine, God the Father is the gardener, and Jesus' disciples are the branches that bear fruit.

Anyone who cares for fruit trees will have experienced that pruning helps the trees grow better and produce more fruit. The vine in today's parable is a tree that needs a lot of pruning. Verse 2 of today’s text says this: **‘He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.’**

In this verse, the words ‘to remove branches that do not bear fruit’ sound harsh to us. This is because, in general, many people think that it is God's love that cares more for branches that do not bear fruit. Additionally, there are many parables in the Bible that show God's love in this way. For example, in **'The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard'** found in Matthew 20:1-16, it is said that both those who came to the vineyard as workers and worked all day and those who came late to the vineyard and worked for one hour received the same daily wage of one denarius.

However, we must understand that in **'The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard'**, the workers did not work less because they did not want to work, but because they were not used as workers. In fact, in **'The Parable of the Vine and the Branches'** in today’s text, the branches that were removed did not bear fruit even though they were not under conditions that would prevent them from bearing good fruit. This reminds us of the verse in Mark 4:25: **‘Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.’** We must not overlook that this is the principle of the kingdom of God. In other words, you must know that a person who is rich in love will love more abundantly, and a stingy person will live more and more stingily.

Let’s give an example of how the saying in today’s text, **‘A branch that bears fruit causes it to bear more fruit,’** is applied in our daily lives. For the past three weeks, my wife has been visiting Korea and came back to the United States. I’m good at cleaning the house and doing laundry, but I don't like cooking. However, while my wife was away, I cooked hard while watching YouTube to feed my two children delicious food. At first, preparing food was a very burdensome task for me, but later, I began to find some enjoyment in preparing



food. Also, the thought of my children enjoying the food I try to prepare for different cooking. As a result, my cooking skills improved, and I became more aware of the value of working hard to raise children well while running a household.

So, what is the 'fruit' that today's text refers to? Does it refer to bearing fruit of evangelism? Does it refer to bearing fruit in helping those in need? Or is it referring to participating in politics for a just world? My answer to these questions is **'maybe yes, maybe no.'**

In fact, it is true that Christians live in the world just like non-Christians, , so they bear fruits of life like theirs. However, Christians do not live only in the world but also in the reign of Christ, so they have their own unique fruits.

However, Christians have prerequisites to bear fruit. Verse 4 of today's text says: **'Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.'**

This verse says that man cannot bear fruit on his own. Perhaps modern people or those who do not believe in the Lord may be offended by these claims of the Bible. This is because many people in the world live with the confidence that they can bear fruit on their own. In particular, the more people rise to a socially recognized position, the more confident they are in their abilities.

However, the utopia that humans claimed as an ideal world has not been realized. In addition, despite the social benefits brought about by the progress of scientific civilization, humans cannot completely solve the problems brought about by the development of material civilization. This is because the human 'sin, selfishness, and pride' that the Bible talks about are not something that humans can solve on their own. Therefore, we must understand that the text message that humans cannot bear fruit on their own is not simply a religious dimension but is directly related to our entire daily life.

### **Body: Abide in me as I abide in you.**

Today's text repeatedly states in verses 4 and 5, **'Abide in me as I abide in you.'** We must abide in Jesus, the vine, and when Jesus Christ abides in us, we bear fruit. Today's text explains our relationship with the Lord in more detail through verse 7. Today's text verse 7 says: **'If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.'**

According to this verse, **'Jesus' Words'** remaining in the disciples' means that the disciples remain in Jesus. In other words, we can bear proper fruit through the Words of Jesus.

The time when the Gospel of John was written was when the Roman Empire was at its peak. The Roman Empire ruled the entire area surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. You see, Roman architecture, medicine, art, philosophy, and law still influence the world to this day. In other words, during the time when early Christians lived, **'the law of the Roman Empire'**, or, as today's text puts it, **'words'** were the standard for bearing fruit in life. However, Jesus' disciples believed and claimed that Jesus' **'Words'** were the standard for everything in the world. Most likely, the claims of Jesus' disciples and Christians were ignored or ridiculed by many in the Roman Empire at the time.

This is no different today. In the world we live in, many people claim that there are many good things to say in religions other than Christianity. So, whether in Roman times or now, it is not easy to claim that the words of Jesus are the only way for us to bear fruit. Perhaps for this reason, there are quite a few Christians who accept Jesus' words as religiously comforting teachings.

However, we must think seriously about the following facts. The point is that we have only one choice at the ultimate level of life. To put it simply, we cannot become a true disciple of the Lord by straddling both sides. Christianity says that it cannot bear fruit unless one becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ, a specific historical person. Those who will become disciples of Jesus must put aside all their culture and common sense



and follow Jesus specifically. In other words, we must remain in the words of Jesus. And we must experience the power of the word in real life. Only then can we discern what is important in life and bear proper fruit.

So what is the fruit that the disciples mentioned in today's text should bear? Verse 8 of today's text says: **'My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.'**

According to today's text, **'fruit'** is related to **'the glory of God.'** In this verse, the glory of God is that we enjoy life abundantly. Therefore, bearing much fruit means entering the depth of life through a relationship with God. And the force that blocks this is sin.

Humans cannot escape the rule of sin through their own efforts. The lives of modern people have become materially richer than in the past. However, many people live without being freed from the rule of sin due to greed, selfishness, and pride. Therefore, the text says that the glory of God is the fruit that disciples should bear. In other words, the only way for us to live in life, not under the domination of sin, is to stay in a relationship with God, the source of life.

### **Conclusion: Our lives in which the words of Jesus bear fruit**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Now let's summarize today's message. According to today's text, what is essential for revealing God's glory is that we dwell in Jesus Christ and that the Lord dwells in us. However, it is difficult to experience this in our lives. This does not guarantee that we have achieved social success. On the other hand, it's not that we don't experience this just because we're ordinary people.

In this respect, it is the mystery and grace of salvation that we abide in Jesus and the Lord abides in us. Christians are people who worship, study the Bible, serve, and pray for their neighbors, hoping to experience this grace in their lives.

Sometimes, we may be frustrated because we cannot experience the grace of the Lord's indwelling that we desire. However, if we continue our life and religious life with sincerity, we will experience the 'words of Jesus' that have fallen into our lives sprouting and bearing fruit.

**Amen!**

