Waitara Anglican Church

"The vine and the branches"

John 15:1-27
Rev. Bruce Stanley
Sermon audio and text available at www.waitaraanglican.com.au
March 17th, 2013

What are you doing with your life?
Do you have a plan for your life? A plan for this week? For this year? For the next 10 or 20 years?
What are you doing? When you reach the end of your life, what will really ***matter***?
Will it be the career you've had? Or how much money you have in the bank? Or what assets you own? What will really matter at the end of your life?
Think about this past week. What mattered? What was important?

One of the key questions we can ever ask in our lives as Christians is this: "What is God's desire for ME? What does he ask of me? What can I do that matters? What can I do that will be meaningful? What in my life will last?

The gardener

And the answer is in this chapter today. Verse 8:
"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

Our aim in life is to glorify God. HOW do we do that? By bearing fruit and ***showing*** that we are his disciples. That's what chapter 15 is about. Bearing fruit.

And God the Father is the gardener. And gardeners do two things with vines.

1. They prune.
2. They cut off.

The Father prunes branches that are healthy, branches that bear fruit.
And He cuts off branches that don't bear fruit.
A healthy branch bears fruit. And God prunes it so it will bear ***more*** fruit.
An unhealthy branch does NOT bear fruit. And the gardener ***cuts*** it off.

So how can we be healthy branches?

The vine

Verses 5-6 – Jesus says:
If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; (5) If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers (6)

"Remain in me" says Jesus. And bear fruit.
Jesus is the vine and we are the branches of that vine. There's one very obvious thing about this relationship. The branches DEPEND on the vine. The branches cannot SURVIVE without the vine. Either the branches remain on the vine and live, or they do not remain on the vine and they die. To bear fruit, to glorify God, we are simply called to REMAIN in Jesus. THEN we will bear fruit.

But standing in a garage doesn't make you a car.
Sitting in church doesn't MAKE you a Christian.
Believing in Jesus, being a branch of his vine, means trusting him, putting our faith in him. "**Remaining**" in Jesus is about growing in him. Bearing fruit. And the strength to do that comes from the vine – it comes from Jesus himself. If we remain in him, if we rely on his strength, we ***will*** bear fruit and show that we are his disciples.

You see, it's not saying that WE need to bear fruit. He's saying that if we ***remain*** in Him, depending on his strength, relying on him, then we WILL bear fruit.

Just like the branch of a vine. The fruit comes out of the branch. But the source of that fruit, the strength, the power to produce that fruit, comes from the vine itself.

Ill – Look at these air conditioners here. The cold air doesn't come from there. It comes all the way back at a compressor, and it's pumped all the way through these pipes, and the cold air is delivered here. But it's produced way back there.

We are the BRANCHES! Jesus is the vine. Our fruit, the things that we do in life that really matter, the things that are eternally significant, come from him, the vine. The source. We are called to remain in him so we can faithfully deliver HIS fruit in our lives.

The branch

So what IS that fruit?
Jesus talks about 2 things here – Obedience and Love
Verse 10: "if you keep my commands, you will remain in my love."

Remaining in Jesus is about obedience, keeping his commands. And what are his commands?
Verse 12: "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."
Jesus' **command** is to love. Because love is what bears fruit. Love is what lasts. Love is what makes a difference.

What Jesus really wants us to understand here is that we are not ***separate*** from him. We are not a few million little pot plants on God's balcony that he individually cares for. We are all ***part*** of him and he is part of us.

Our strength and ability to love comes from him. But Jesus is not a power source that we plug in to when we need a ***recharge***.

Ill – I hate it when I forget to charge my phone at night. When I wake up and go to use it and it's completely flat, it's really annoying! And I have to stick it on charge and wait for it to be charged up.

But it's not like that with Jesus. We don't wake up one day and say: "Gee, I feel a little flat. Maybe I've been away from Jesus a bit too much. Maybe I need to plug in again and charge up. Maybe a good dose of Christian music or a few sermons, or a good church service, read my bible, pray a bit, charge up. It's not like that.

Jesus says: "Remain in me". He doesn't say: "Make sure you keep coming back to me occasionally!" The strength to be obedient and the power to love others doesn't come from keeping in touch with him every now and then. It comes from ***remaining*** in him. Being ALWAYS connected to him.

You can't disconnect a branch from a vine even for a second, and then plug it back in when it starts to die. It must **remain** in the vine.

Let's come back to verse 5:
5 *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

Jesus wants us to bear MUCH fruit. But he also says that without him, we can do NOTHING.
Of course, we can do stuff without Jesus. Can't we? What does he mean "Apart from me you can do nothing"?

He means that without him, we can't do anything of **eternal significance**. We can't do anything that ***lasts***.
Jesus doesn't **just** want us to bear fruit. He wants us to bear fruit that will LAST – verse 16. Fruit that has eternal significance. He's talking about sharing the gospel – that's what is eternally significant.

A few months ago I talked about us being like a river. I think that's a good picture to be reminded of again today.
A river has water constantly coming into it, and flowing out of it. If water doesn't come into the river, it dries out. If water doesn't go out of the river, it gets stagnant.

We are called to remain in Jesus. To be ALWAYS connected to him, ALWAYS relying on his power, ALWAYS getting our strength from him. But we're also called to use his strength to produce fruit. To be obedient to him. To love others so much that we want to bring the gospel into their lives because ***that*** is what glorifies God. Our strength to do that comes FROM him, and his fruit comes OUT of us.

If that's not happening, we will dry up or become stagnant.

Standing in a garage won't make you a car.
Sitting in a church doesn't make you a Christian.
Holding a Bible doesn't make you a person of faith.
Remaining in Jesus is about **obedience** and **love**.

Let me finish with verse 16:
You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

Remain in Jesus. Obey his command to love. And ASK him to produce fruit in your life, fruit that will last, fruit of eternal significance. AND HE WILL DO IT!

God WANTS us to bear fruit that will last. How?
Obey Jesus and love people!
What can you do this week that has eternal significance?
Share the gospel. With people at work, family, friends. Teach your children the gospel – read the Bible with them, pray with them.

If you share the gospel with ONE person this week, you will have done something eternally significant.
Do you know that statistically, in Australia, 80% of people said that if someone invited them to church, they would think about it. And 10% said that they would actually come. If we love people, we will ask God for opportunities to share his gospel.

ASK God to produce fruit in your life – to help you do something eternally significant this week. Ask him for opportunities. How your obedience. Show that you love people.

Let's pray now, and ASK him to bear fruit of eternal significance in our lives.