

EASTER & THE DAYS THAT FOLLOW

"Abide in Me".

The Vine and the Branches

John 15:1-17

Devotionals for 2 – 8 May 2021

Adapted from - <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/reviced-common-lectionary/fifth-sunday-of-easter-2/commentary-on-john-151-8>

15 “I am a true sprouting vine, and the farmer who tends the vine is my Father. 2 He cares for the branches connected to me by lifting and propping up the fruitless branches and pruning[b] every fruitful branch to yield a greater harvest. 3 The words I have spoken over you have already cleansed you. 4 So you must remain in life-union with me, for I remain in life-union with you. For as a branch severed from the vine will not bear fruit, so your life will be fruitless unless you live your life intimately joined to mine. 5 “I am the sprouting vine and you’re my branches. As you live in union with me as your source, fruitfulness will stream from within you—but when you live separated from me you are powerless. 6 If a person is separated from me, he is discarded; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire to be burned. 7 But if you live in life-union with me and if my words[f] live powerfully[g] within you—then you can ask[h] whatever you desire and it will be done. 8 When your lives bear abundant fruit, you demonstrate that you are my mature disciples who glorify my Father!

9 “I love each of you with the same love that the Father loves me. You must continually let my love nourish your hearts. 10 If you keep my commands, you will live in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands, for I continually live nourished and empowered by his love. 11 My purpose for telling you these things is so that the joy that I experience will fill your hearts with overflowing gladness! 12 “So this is my command: Love each other deeply, as much as I have loved you. 13 For the greatest love of all is a love that sacrifices all. And this great love is demonstrated when a person sacrifices his life for his friends. 14 “You show that you are my intimate friends when you obey all that I command you. 15 I have never called you ‘servants,’ because a master doesn’t confide in his servants, and servants don’t always understand what the master is doing. But I call you my most intimate and cherished friends, for I reveal to you everything that I’ve heard from my Father. 16 You didn’t choose me, but I’ve chosen[o] and commissioned you to go into the world to bear fruit. And your fruit will last, because whatever you ask of my Father, for my sake, he will give it to you! 17 So this is my parting command: Love one another deeply!”

Prayer: I believe in you, Lord. You are my life and the source of all happiness. I trust that by being faithful to your inspirations, deepening my faith, and observing your commands, I will grow. I love you, Lord. I offer you this prayer to intensify my love and preserve my life in you. You are my hope and my strength. Without you, Jesus, I can do nothing. Lord Jesus, may I remain in you. Amen.

1.) Who is the vine? 2.) Who are the branches? 3.) What happens if the branches are not attached to the vine? 4.) How is Jesus like a vine?

The heart of Christian community is the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the vine; we are the branches. Living within the vine, we “will produce abundantly.” Separated from the vine, we are, “a withered, rejected branch which can do nothing.” The commandment that binds together this community is twofold: to believe in Jesus and to “love one another as he commanded us.” When following this commandment of faith and love, “we are at peace before him.” Such a community of faith, love and peace is possible, and Luke assures us that “throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria the church was at peace.”

Our world is not at peace; there is war and division everywhere. For our Church to speak peace to this world, it will have to be a peaceful community. There must be that faith in, and reliance on Jesus, and there must also be that love for one another. The world must be able to look at us and say that we are at peace. Only then will our message of peace get through to others.

That the Church may really be the sign of that solidarity which the family of nations desires, it should show in its own life greater cooperation between the Churches of rich and poor regions through spiritual communion and sharing of human and material resources.

In the promise of an “abiding” presence God’s Easter people find not some abstract speculation about a distant or imaginary Trinity, but an invitation to experience the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a saving and liberating presence in the midst of our day-to-day world.

Readers familiar with John’s gospel will recognize in the opening “I AM” of this lesson a linking of its imagery of the vine with other distinctive Johannine images of the identity and mission of Jesus in relation to that of his chosen community of followers (I AM bread of life, 6:35; I AM light of the world, 8:12; I AM the door of the sheep, 10:7; I AM the resurrection and the life, 11:25). The puzzle below is based on John 15:1-8.

The words below have been written in code. Use the hints in the decoder at the top of the page to help break the code (the letters on top are the correct answers, the letters on the bottom are the code). Write the correct word on the line provided beside each code word.

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| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |

1. 16-18-21-14-5-19 _____
2. 22-9-14-5 _____
3. 20-18-21-5 _____
4. 7-1-18-4-5-14-5-18 _____
5. 6-18-21-9-20 _____
6. 2-5-1-18 _____
7. 18-5-13-1-9-14 _____
8. 2-18-1-14-3-8-5-19 _____

| | | | |
|--------|------|--------|----------|
| PRUNES | VINE | TRUE | GARDENER |
| FRUIT | BEAR | REMAIN | BRANCHES |

From a literary perspective this week’s devotional belongs to Jesus’ familiar address to his disciples just prior to his passion (John 14-16). In these chapters the resurrected Lord comforts and encourages both the Johannine community and hearers today with the promise that we and they are not abandoned or left alone, but can be confident of the Lord’s continuing presence with us in the world. These words thus belong to and help shape a distinctive Johannine eschatology that

understands life and salvation not as some distant or “heavenly” hope, but as the promise of an abundant life here and now constituted in the presence through the Spirit of the resurrected and living Lord (see John 3:16-18; 10:10).

Though clearly dependent on Old Testament images of God’s people as God’s vineyard (e.g., Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Ezekiel 15:1-6), that image is here developed in quite new directions by its association with the characteristic Johannine theme of “abiding” (when coupled with the occurrences in 1 John, a total of some 64 times out of 118 occurrences in the whole New Testament). Such frequency and focus supports understanding the word “abide” as an alternative and mutually defining word for “believe” (which never occurs other than as a verb in John). Together “believing” and “abiding” point both to the reality of “life in Christ” and to the characterization of that life not in some hope of a future reunion in heaven, but to the promise of that abundant life in the here and now.

The promise of God’s abiding presence in Christ has been anticipated already in Jesus’ words in 14:1-6, a passage whose frequent use primarily at funerals often disguises its intent of giving assurance for life in the present. Jesus speaks of “dwelling places” in the Father’s house prepared for those who believe. But use of the same word in 14:23 together with Jesus’ promise to “come again” and “take you to myself” makes clear that this image is not primarily about our going to heaven, but rather confirms Jesus’ promise as resurrected Lord to come and be with his followers. “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”

In the imagery of the vine and branches of our scripture, this “dwelling place” or “home” is now developed in the beautiful imagery of the intimate relationship of the Father, Jesus, and Jesus’ followers. Because the Father has raised Jesus from the dead, this Word of God now become flesh among us has an abiding and lasting presence, now continues to dwell among us. In the imagery of the vine, that presence is emphasized as abiding, lasting, and permanent.

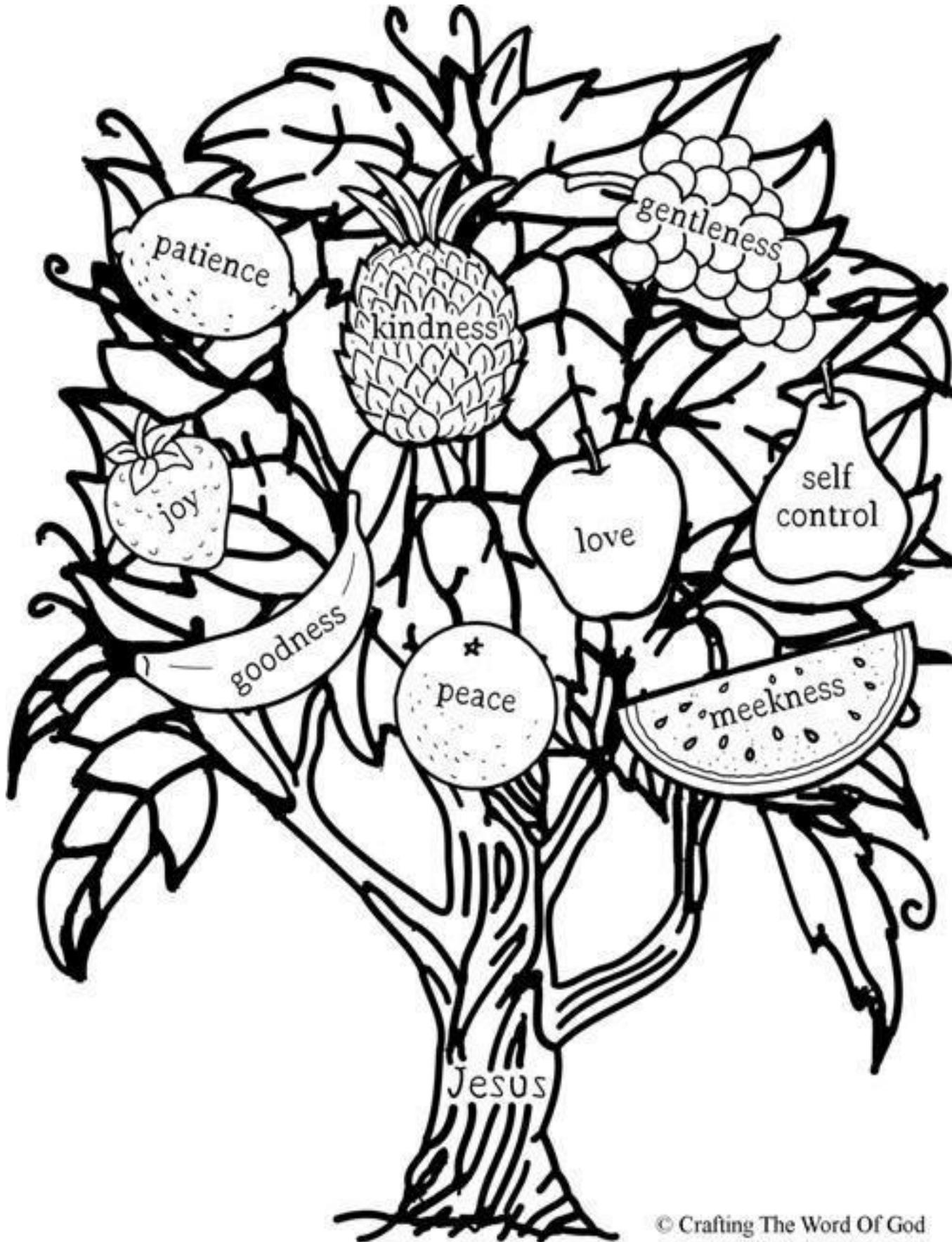
But now the resurrected Lord addresses us. Twice he promises “I AM the vine.” And in that promise, something happens. There is an event in which we “become” something new — we are transformed by a new reality in which we are empowered and commissioned as disciples.

Talking to Our Heavenly Father - *If we have faith, our prayers will be answered.*

You're Not Alone, Let Us Pray with You & For You

- Our hearts and deepest sympathies go out to Ms. Debra Matties whose mother-in-law, Ms. Evelyn M. “Evie” Matthies-Reichert, passed away on Monday, April 19, 2021 after an extended illness. Cards of condolences can be mailed to: Ms. Debra Matthies, 1466 North 12th Avenue, West Bend, Wisconsin 53090.
- Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, prayers for successful upcoming surgery and containment of growth; Mr. Alan Kempf for strength as he’s provided times of rest and refreshment; alankempf33@gmail.com; 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.
- Bro. Martin Martinelli, healing and restoration after open heart surgery and rehab after Ischemic stroke; 659 South 14th Ave. West Bend. WI 53095
- Mr. Ted Meilahn, restoration of strength and courage as he lives into his “new normal”; 1085 Fondu du Lac Ave., Box 23, Kewaskum, WI 53040
- Ms. Vivien Loomis, healing and strength after surgery; 1119 Schmidt Road, #1, West Bend, WI 53090
- Ms. Julia Stettler, strength and ability to meet the challenges and changes that will occur during the next few months; 107 Cedar Ridge Dr. #N313, West Bend, WI 53095
- 5th Avenue UMC’s Laity, Laity Leadership, Pastor & Bro. Martin – Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.
- Bro. Bob Krell, continued prayer for healing; 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090
- The welfare and security of the United States of America and democracy itself.
- Mr. Roger Sacia, prayers for healing; Mrs. Nobi Sacia words of encouragement and prayers for healing; 502 Crocus Court, West Bend, WI 53095
- Ms. Nancy Whitson, healing and strength after hospitalization; 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095
- Mr. William (Bill) Hornung, in inpatient rehabilitation; Mrs. Ginger Hornung, strength and courage; W193 N16339 Lea Fon Circle, Jackson, WI 53037

Prayer: Dear Lord, help me to experience you and your love in prayer. Enable me to foster my relationship with you by listening attentively to your word taught to me authentically by your Church. May my life give validity to my faith and words! How often I hunger after the world's withered husks that could never satisfy my inner longings! Lord, help me to hunger for you alone, so that I will turn to you and be filled with the comfort and joy of your intimate friendship. Amen.
Enjoy this coloring activity.



**Breathe
your
Spirit
upon
each of
us;
your
humble
Pastor-
servant
leaders,
Pastor
Clarissa
&
Bro.
Martin**