

John 15:1-17 – “I am the true vine”

This is the final of Jesus' “I am” sayings. He is now making the final revelation of himself. He spoke these words on the night he was betrayed, before being crucified the next day. They include his last instructions to his followers.

1. A Teaching: Christ is everything in true religion

Israel had many vineyards. In them, the vine-dresser (gardener) looked after the vines, to grow good grapes on the branches. He pruned (cut) them, and removed dead branches to burn. Jesus says that he is the true vine, and his Father is the vine-dresser (v1). Every branch that is to give fruit must draw all its life and energy from him. Without him, nothing at all is possible (v4-5). Do you really believe this? You should – it is true! There is no spiritual life, no access to God's strength or promises, no forgiveness or grace. None – none at all. Clearly, people do not believe this; they often leave Christ out of their religion, or just give him a small place. If your faith is real, then Christ must be the beginning, middle and end; the first and the last – is he?

2. A Challenge: Are you in the vine at all?

God put us in the world to be fruitful (v1-2). We should be fruitful for God. There is no other reason for a vine. We enter the world with nothing and will leave it with nothing. Eating, sleeping working, earning – it will all gain us nothing in the end. Rather, in whatever we do, even eating and drinking, we must do it for the glory of God. In verse 11, Jesus shows us our proper desire: to find all our joy in God. God is the true joy. Every good thing comes from him, and is just a shadow of who he is. Did you know this? Is knowing God your desire and goal? Have you discovered his greatness and love? Jesus says that we begin by receiving his word to cleanse us (v3). This is the word of the gospel – how Jesus died and rose to take away our sins. Then, v9-10, we must continue in him by obeying his commandments: especially (v12), to love one another. The great mark of a Christian is that he loves the people of God more than all people; even his own family or clan. Do you? Do you belong to God's vine?

3. An encouragement: What Jesus promises to those who remain in him

Jesus promises that those who remain in him will produce “much fruit”, v8. You do not need to be rich, educated or powerful to be a useful Christian. You just need to be faithful to Jesus alone. Then Jesus promises we can come to God in prayer and be answered (v7). Almighty God listens to us! We will then remain in his love (v10). The Son of God can love us, small and unimportant as we are! We can even be called his friends – not just servants, but friends (v13-14), who are taught by him all his great plans. The God who made the sun, the planets and the whole universe calls us his friends: if we are remaining in Christ. All these spiritual blessings come to us as branches from the vine. There is nowhere else. Jesus himself is that vine. Are you getting all these blessings from him?