

# “I Am The Vine”

John 15:1-8

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Jesus liked to use metaphors that the people would understand. He takes ordinary, mundane events in life and offers incite through them. In our Gospel lesson, Jesus compares Himself to a grapevine – a common plant in the ancient Near East.

He is the vine, we are the branches. He gives us life, we bear fruit. If we don't bear fruit, His Father, the gardener, prunes us off of the vine to be thrown into the fire.

The imagery is fairly clear. Many of Jesus' parables and metaphors used in preaching discuss the production of fruit. This always has to do with good works inspired by faith in God. How do we demonstrate our love for God? John says in our epistle lesson that showing love only with the words of our mouth is insufficient. Love is most clearly demonstrated through actions. John says, “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.”

And this is not true of just our love for God, but with all of our relationships. Love is seen through a series of actions over time.

A husband and wife are to be faithful and considerate of the needs of the other over a long period of time, and not just occasionally. Devotion to someone, and demonstrating that devotion through actions, and not just words, over a length of time, is the definition of love. It's why we will joyously celebrate Mother's Day next week. We celebrate long term love and devotion.

I believe that it is reasonable to conclude that, as God's people, we should put forth at least as much effort into our relationship with Christ, our vine, as we do with our relationship with any of the other branches – even if the branch is called husband or wife or mother.

But what does this mean? How do we accomplish this? How do we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind – as Scripture commands? How do we find time for such activities? We have busy schedules. Where can we possibly find time for God or for our neighbor? We don't even spend enough time with mom. Sure, next week we will send a card; maybe flowers; take her out for dinner – but can we possibly express thanks for giving life and selflessly giving love and bearing burdens? Where do you begin?

As I have now lost your attention as you ponder how to upgrade your Mother's Day plans, the greater question is concerning God. How can we possibly express thanks for giving life and selflessly giving love and bearing the burden of sin? Where do you begin?

The simple answer is that we start with words. Specifically, remain in God's Word, hear God's Word, read God's Word, pray, praise, and give thanks – for without Him you are a withered branch who has no vine. You then take what He has given you and pattern the actions of your life accordingly.

This does take work. This does have an effect on your schedule. But, oh, how much more joyful life is to be fed from the vine. You really notice this when you get outside of the comfort of the community of the church. This will be especially evident for those who in the next few months will go off to college. You will see a stark difference between those connected to Christ and His Church and those who are not.

Schedule some time for the Lord. Like most things in life, a little bit of work today saves many headaches and anxieties in the future. And bearing the fruit expected of a branch on Christ's vine is work, because first you must seek out what it is that God does expect of you. If we simply rely upon the standards that society sets, look around, and follow the crowd, then we dismiss the relationship between the branch and the vine.

As I said before, it is very much like a loving relationship with another person. When you meet that special someone, the first interactions are generally kind words. Soon thereafter, you may tell the person, "I love you." But we know that that is not enough for a meaningful relationship. If we make such a claim, we then need to demonstrate that love through consideration, kindness,

patience, forgiveness. If we don't see those virtues in the person who tells us, "I love you," then we tend to be suspicious of the words.

Through the Vine, that is through Christ, God feeds you and builds up His branches and gives you everything you need for life. But Christ comes to you not only through Word, but through action as well. When Christ came to bear our burden and rescue us and all the world from sin, He didn't simply come with words of comfort and compassion. Words without actions to back them up would be like a grapevine that bears no grapes. You can call it what you like, but the fact is that it's not worth very much.

Christ came bearing much fruit during His life on earth. His perfect goodness was seen in how He conducted His life every day. And finally, His life ended in the greatest act of love and devotion the world has ever seen. He bore our burden and we were rescued from sin and death.

We, in turn, are now asked to give thanks for what He has done for us by bearing good fruit, in sharing the Gospel, doing good to others, having consideration, kindness, patience, and forgiveness.

No matter where you have come from or where you may go from here, remain in Christ. He is the vine; without Him, we are withered branches. Christ and His Word is the only source of life. And it is to the Father's glory that we bear much fruit. Amen. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!