



Text: John 15:1-17<sup>1</sup>

Series: *Life in His Name* – the Message of John’s Gospel

Title: What is Jesus looking for in our lives?

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## **What is Jesus looking for in our lives?**

- If we’re believers in him, what does he want to see in us?
- What is his purpose for our lives?

- Cf. “The Farewell Discourse” – John 13 to 17 – Today we’re thinking together about John 15, verses one to seventeen, the heart of the Farewell Discourse

- As Jesus prepared his disciples for the Cross and for what lay beyond, he told them what he expected from them.

- Let’s hear it as Jesus’ final words to us ... let’s listen to it with careful, prayerful attention as Jesus prepares us for what lies ahead.

I’m reading from John’s Gospel, chapter 15, verses one to seventeen. [p. 901]

Jesus said...

**<sup>1</sup> “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. 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. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.**

**<sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.**

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<sup>12</sup> “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

<sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. <sup>17</sup> These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

## **What is Jesus looking for in us?**

**One word:**

**fruit**

**“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5**

**Cf. “I am the true vine...” (v.1)**

- many OT refs to Israel as a vine, planted by God

Isaiah 5:1-7

<sup>1</sup> Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.

<sup>2</sup> He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.

<sup>3</sup> And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard.

<sup>4</sup> What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?

<sup>5</sup> And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

<sup>6</sup> I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briers and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

<sup>7</sup> **For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!**

God looked for “fruit” from his people



- “justice” – expression toward one another of brotherly love BUT instead he found “bloodshed” – Heb sounds similar, ie. They perverted justice!
- “righteousness” – expression of his holiness in their lives BUT instead he found “an outcry!” – Heb sounds similar, ie. They perverted righteousness!

**NB. God was looking for godly character and godly living, but he didn’t find it.**

**Cf. NT parables** which refer to vines & vineyards (**Matt 21:23-41; Mk 12:1-9; Luke 20:9-16; Matt 20:1-16; Luke 13:6-9**)– a ref to Israel ALWAYS with the sense that they have failed to provide the fruit he was looking for. (cf Carson, Borchert)

Eg. Mark 12

**“And he began to speak to them in parables. “A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country. <sup>2</sup> When the season came, he sent a servant to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.” Mark 12:1-2**

- servant after servant was sent – the tenants beat some and killed others
  - God had sent prophet after prophet to call Israel to “bear fruit”
- finally the man sent his “beloved son”
- the tenants killed him, thinking that they would now inherit the vineyard but instead the man destroyed the tenants and gave the vineyard to others

Jesus, the “beloved Son,” declares: **“I am the true vine...”**

## **The fruit that the Father had not found in his people Israel was found in his “beloved Son,” Jesus**

The Father found in his “beloved Son”...

- perfect justice
- perfect righteousness
- perfect obedience
- perfect submission
- **perfect love**

**NB. “Love” is the summary of everything that God is looking for in his people**

Cf. the summary of the Law of God

‘Which commandment is the most important of all?’ (Mk 12:28)



**29 Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ [Deut 6:4-5] 31 The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ [Lev 19:18] There is no other commandment greater than these.” Mark 12:29-31**

Notice a **transition** in John 15 – from **“fruit”** language to **“love”** language  
- v.1-8 – Words focus on the “vine,” the “branches” & the “fruit”

- v.9 a shift occurs – moves to “love” language (v.16 “fruit” occurs twice and establishes the love/fruit connection)

**9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.**

**12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**

**17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.**

“Fruit” language can carry the depth of what Jesus is saying only so far – “fruit” is a picture that is full of life, refreshing, visual and visceral

BUT Jesus isn’t talking to plants, he’s talking to people ... and the analogy with fruit-bearing only takes him so far

- what he’s really talking about is **a growing, dynamic love relationship...**

- **WITH** his disciples

- and **BETWEEN** his disciples

**The “fruit” that Jesus is looking for in our lives is everything that grows out of our love relationship with him and with one another**

**Everything of any value to God in our lives grows out of our love relationship with Jesus**

cf. Galatians 5:22-23 [p. 975]

**“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”**

NB. **The fruit of Christian character** that reflects the character of God grows out of “love”

- “love” is the central virtue ... each of these virtues flows from the lead virtue of “love”



Cf. 2 Corinthians 5 [p. 966] -- “The Ministry of Reconciliation” (v.11)

- **The fruit of Christian witness** for the Gospel grows out of “love”

**<sup>14</sup> For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; <sup>15</sup> and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.**

**<sup>20</sup> Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**

Cf. 1 Corinthians 13 [p. 959]

**The fruit of Christian service** of every kind grows out of love  
- v.4-8 “Love is patient...” – beautiful wedding Scripture / I’ll be reading these verse today at Daniel & Anna’s wedding this afternoon

**<sup>1</sup> If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.**

Notice the word “**nothing**” – cf Jesus said: “**apart from me you can do nothing.**” (v.5)

You’ve probably noticed the word “abide” in this passage (11times)

**“Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit...” John 15:5**

**What does it mean to “abide” in Jesus?**

**To “abide” in Jesus is to believe in Him**

**“Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.” John 6:56**

- Jesus had just fed 5000+ people in the wilderness with miraculous bread



- crowds were following wanting more bread but Jesus wanted to give them something more ... “the bread of life” – eternal life!

<sup>47</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> **I am the bread of life.** <sup>49</sup> Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup> **This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.** <sup>51</sup> **I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”**

**NB. John’s Seven “I Am” Statements...**

- 1. I am the bread of life ... John 6:35**
- 2. I am the light of the world ... John 8:12**
- 3. I am the door of the sheep ... John 10:7**
- 4. I am the good shepherd ... John 10:11**
- 5. I am the resurrection and the life ... John 11:25**
- 6. I am the way, the truth and the life ... John 14:6**
- 7. I am the true vine ... John 15:1**

Rooted in God’s revelation of himself to Moses in Exodus 3

- Moses is sent by God back to Egypt to lead the people out of slavery
- “Whom shall I tell them has sent me?”

**“God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” Exodus 3:14**

Jesus is God come to save his people and lead them to everlasting life!

- He calls us to believe in him ... to trust him ... to follow him

**NB. Jesus refers to what happens to those who don’t abide in him.**

**“If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.”  
John 15:6**

- If we believe in him there will be fruit – of some kind, of some amount...
  - **Christian character** will begin to form
  - **Christian service** will begin to happen
  - **Christian witness** will occur

**IF NONE OF THE ABOVE, then we have to ask ourselves: Do I really believe in Jesus Christ?**

**To “abide” in Jesus is to receive his love**



Jesus said...

**“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.” John 15:9**

God to the people of Israel...

**“I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.” Jeremiah 31:3**

A love that is unchanging, faithful, everlasting, dependable!

NB Jesus calls us **“friends”**!

**v.15 “I have called you friends”** – I’ve told you everything the Father told me

**To “abide” in Jesus is to listen to him and obey him**

Jesus said...

**“If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” John 15:10-11**

The words of Jesus are our life!

- listening to him & - obeying him

- Our obedience to Jesus’ word is one of the ways in which **the Father prunes** our lives to enable us to bear more fruit (v.3)

- Jesus’ words bring conviction of our need for repentance and change – more fruit!

Cf. our rose bush – full of blossoms!

This isn’t “slavish” obedience ... we listen and obey because he loves us and we love him! AND as we listen and obey His joy comes into us in deep ways and fills us up!

AND talking with him. Jesus said...

**“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” John 15:7**

- As we listen to Jesus, his words re-shape our heart’s desires

- Prayer is an aspect of our “abiding” in Jesus



– dependent prayer – we express our need to him and he provides us with what we need so that we can bear fruit for him

## To “abide” in Jesus is to love like him

**Jesus said...**

**“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:12-13**

Our love relationship with Jesus is defined by God’s Word, not by our emotions or our romantic ideals.

Above all, our love relationship with Jesus is defined by His love for us.

“...as I have loved you.” – **the Cross** is in view in Jesus’ words  
- John wrote this after the Cross – as he wrote these words he understood their meaning

cf. John’s First Letter...

**“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” 1 John 3:16**

- cf Christian broadcaster in the news this week...

**[Unnamed]** latest controversial remark came in response to a viewer who related that a friend whose wife has Alzheimer’s was “bitter at God” and seeing another woman. The ... host told the viewer that his friend “should divorce and start over,” while arranging adequately for his deposed wife. He argued that the woman, due her Alzheimer’s Disease, had died a kind of death and was “gone.”

“I certainly wouldn’t put a guilt trip on you if you decided that you had to have companionship,” [the host] said. “You’re lonely.” (Christian Post)

**Joni Eareckson Tada, a disability advocate and a quadriplegic herself, strongly disagreed. “Alzheimer’s disease is never an ‘accident’ in a marriage,” she said. “It falls under the purview of God’s sovereignty. In the case of someone with Alzheimer’s, this means God’s unconditional and sacrificial love has an opportunity to be even more gloriously displayed in a life together.”**

When that man married his wife he made a vow to love her and the Bible tells us that the model for his love for his wife is the Cross of Jesus Christ.



Paul wrote...

**“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...” Ephesians 5:25**

**The Cross of Jesus establishes the standard of love that is to be applied to all of our relationships.**

**What is Jesus looking for in us?**

**One word:**

**Love**

**Invitation to Prayer Ministry**

**Final Song:** The King of Love

**Benediction**