

REALITY CHURCH OF STOCKTON

Introduction

- A. If you were to describe Jesus' life and ministry in one word, what word would you choose?
1. Dallas Willard: "Relaxed"
- B. Where have I been abiding?
1. "I am the true vine." John 15:1
 2. If Jesus is the True Vine, what are the Untrue Vines in my life?
- C. **Ministry flows from Intimacy.**
1. Before Jesus calls us to do things for him, he calls us to be with him.
 2. What I do for God flows out of being rooted in joyful, intimate, loving relationship with God, through Jesus.
 - a) "Fruitfulness is the byproduct of abiding."
 3. We as humans are bent toward self-reliance.
 - a) "We actually slander and dishonor God by our very eagerness to serve Him without knowing Him." Oswald Chambers
- D. I needed to rediscover what it means to ABIDE IN JESUS.
1. The most important thing that I will ever do with my life, is Abide with Jesus.
 2. Context:
 - a) This portion of John is known as the Farewell Discourse
 3. It's here that Jesus turns to his disciples and introduces this timeless call:
 - a) "Abide in me, and I in you."
 - b) What does it mean to Abide in Jesus?
- I. **'Abide in Me' is a welcome home.**
- A. When Jesus says *Abide in me*, he is inviting us to find our home through union w/ him.
1. "Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you." Eugene Peterson
- B. Hook: "RUN HOME JACK!"
- C. We have these moments throughout our lives, that pop-up into our experience,
1. Crying: "Run home." and it causes us to pause and ask: "Wait, what?"
 - a) But almost as fast as it comes into our experience, it's quickly drowned out by something else - Some other voice to distracts us so that we can carry on with our busyness.
 2. There are points in our lives where we all experience a feeling that we are *out of place*.
 - a) But what if we stopped drowning it out? And listened?
 - b) "But then I had heard that I was in the wrong place, and my soul [began] to sing for joy, like a bird in spring...Because then I knew...why I always felt homesick at home." G.K. Chesterton

- D. “Our greatest affliction is not anxiety, or even guilt, but rather homesickness – a nostalgia or yearning to be at home with God.” Donald Bloesch
1. They’re telling us something.
- E. Luke 15, Jesus tells the parable of the Prodigal Son,
1. The son reaches a very low spot and experiences this homesickness:
 2. “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate. Luke 15:17–24
 3. When Jesus says: Abide in me - is that call home.

II. ‘Abide in Me’ is an invitation into intimacy.

- A. When Jesus calls us home to abide in him, he is calling us into loving intimacy with him.
1. “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.” John 15:9
 2. Jesus shares the unending and eternal love of triune God with us.
 3. Jürgen Moltmann - fellowship of the trinity as “an eternal love affair.”
 4. Jon Tal Murphree - the trinity as “intimacy that is complete.”
 5. C.S. Lewis described the triunity as a “divine dance”.
- B. But here in John 15, the dynamic of this “dance” seems to be broken open.
1. The tight-knit circle opens and a hand extends to us to join.
 2. Jesus says: “I choose you” and invites us into the divine life of the blessed Trinity.
 3. ‘Abide in me’ is God’s *passionate* + *intentional* invitation into intimate relationship.
 - a) “Each one of us has got to enter...and take his place in that dance. There is no other way to the happiness for which we were made.” C.S. Lewis
- C. As we respond in faith and join this dance, our status is forever changed:
1. 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. John 15:15
 2. It’s here, within intimate and abiding relationship, we hear his life-giving voice.
 - a) We develop and grow an awareness of God’s love for us.
 - b) It’s here, we are further rooted in our identity as chosen and beloved of the Lord
 - c) It’s here, we receive the life-giving nectar of the vine, so that we can be fruitful.
 - d) It’s here, that we receive the motivation and power for effective ministry.

D. Implications of this:

1. "I no longer relate to you as servants, but friends."
2. We don't work for him as employees - it's not about earning, proving, etc.
3. He calls us to friendship - he calls us to intimacy.

III. 'Abide in Me' is call to remain.

A. The life of the Christian is not marked simply by coming to Jesus by faith, but abiding in him by faith.

1. "The first coming gave but single drops to taste; it is only the abiding that can really satisfy the thirsty soul and enable you to drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at His right hand... The truth is, there is nothing that moved you to come that does not plead with even greater force: Abide in Him. *You did well to come; you do better to abide.*" Andrew Murray

B. "Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you." John 15:3

1. "What's next?"
 - a) Jesus says in verse 4: "Abide in me..." (v.4)
 - b) Abiding is not just the entry to the Christian journey, *it is the journey.*
2. We fail to make forward progress in our spiritual life, because we have equated growth with doing more.
 - a) "[People] blinded by their desire for ceaseless motion, for a constant sense of achievement, famished with a crude hunger for results, for visible and tangible success, they work themselves into a state in which they cannot believe that they are pleasing God unless they are busy with a dozen jobs at the same time." Thomas Merton
3. Jesus' refreshing words come to us, and simply say: "Stay put"
 - a) This was the conviction of the early church: You stay put to get somewhere.
 - b) Stability and growth is about going deep where you.

C. So how do we do this? What gives us the ability to remain?

1. Jesus says: "I am the true vine" John 15:1
2. Old Testament - God's chosen people were referred to as a "Vine that God" that had been brought out Egypt and planted in the Promised Land.
 - a) Called to remain faithful to God and spread out, flourish, and bare fruit.
 - b) But the Psalms and Prophets lament over the fact that they no longer flourished
 - c) As a result, they had become wild and desolate and torn down.
3. When Jesus says *he is the true vine*, he is saying that he is the greater Israel,
 - a) Who spreads out his vine, bringing flourishing to the nations.
 - b) He is the Messiah and the fulfillment of God's purposes.
 - c) He is the true vine that is faithful and keeps covenant.
 - (1) In other words: **He is all that we could never be.**

D. Why is this important?

1. The life-keeping grip of God's New covenant, through union with Jesus.
2. It's not the branch that upholds the vine, but the vine that upholds the branches.
 - a) There is a fashion today for exhorting us to "live into" various things: live into our baptism, live into our calling, live into our mission. I think that's a very 21st century humanist do-it-yourself way of speaking. We don't "live into" the vine who is the life of the church and of each Christian; the vine lives into us. We live *from* the vine, *from* the Word of God, *from* the body and blood of Christ, *from* the tireless work of the Spirit, new every morning. Fleming Rutledge
3. John 15: The night before Jesus' crucifixion.
 - a) Jesus is talking about a relationship that he will initiate and will seal with his blood, in just a matter of hours.
4. The very next day, Jesus, the true and faithful vine, who lived the most fruitful life imaginable, took the place of the brittle and breakable branches.
 - a) He offered himself to become the branch that was plucked from the vine, thrown away, and cast into the fire - only to conquer the grave in three days.
5. At the center of all our abiding, is the crucified and risen Jesus, who was cut off so that we could be brought in -and- rose to bring about life within us.

IV. Communion

- A. The Lord's Supper is vital to abiding.
 1. It is the meeting place that Christ has designed for his people to come and receive the life-giving nectar of the vine for a life of fruitfulness.
- B. And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" ... And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." Luke 22:14; 18-20
 1. Come to the table as a friend of Jesus.