

“Abide”
John 15:1-8

May 2, 2021



The Rev. A. David Paul

Calvin Presbyterian Church

Zelienople, Pennsylvania

www.calvinchurchzelie.org

I recently read about a **“Good Egg”** who had a fruitful tree in her yard. For some reason, however, one year there was no fruit. She did everything she normally did: The roots were deep, there was plenty of sunshine and, of course, the tree got the water it needed. Then the next harvest time came and the same thing happened, no fruit! She could not understand why this was happening. Her husband grew impatient and pushed to cut the tree down. She wanted him to give the tree some more time but he was unwilling to wait.

When they cut down the tree they discovered why the tree was not bearing fruit: a few branches had somehow been damaged, became sick, and was sucking up all the trees nutrients. Had they seen what the problem was before cutting the tree down, they could have pruned the broken branches, and the tree would once again bear good fruit.¹

While it is true that Jesus does say, 2 times in these 8 verses, that the vines that do not produce fruit will be pruned, it is important to note Christ never once suggests that it’s **our** responsibility to do the pruning. Not once does Jesus even suggest that it is our role to judge the value of the vines that is, to judge the value of our brother and sisters our neighbor or anyone for that matter. **Not once!**

Jesus is saying that while there may be some pruning done at some point, it is not our job. We are to leave that to the hand of the owner of the vineyard, the Devine vine grower, the only one who has the ability to measure the value of any vine.²

I find it interesting that Jesus also says 2 times in these 8 verses that every branch that bears good fruit will be pruned. Did you catch that? Branches that bear good fruit will be pruned to make it bear more fruit. The text very clearly says the opposite of how too many **“Good Christians”** take it.

Why prune fruitful branches? Because eventually in life everyone gets hurt. We are not immune to tragedy. In fact, Christianity’s most prized saints have experienced tragedy **BECAUSE** they ARE Christians.

You see, when the earth shakes and cracks beneath our feet—And you lose custody of your child, or the life of a spouse, or a parent. When you get a bad biopsy, when you lose a best friend to addiction or beloved daughter or son to mental health or even a job to COVID.... When tragedy comes, as it does in every life, there is little profit in asking God, **“Why did this happen to me?”** That is one question God never seems to answer.

Rather the question we need pray when tragedy strikes is, **“Lord, is there some way you can use this to prune me and cause me to bear more fruit?”**³ I guarantee that is one question that will always receive a positive answer from God.

That’s how little by little the cracks in our shell start to heal, we feel less unscrambled. And become more and more



*“Lord,
is there some way
you can use this
to prune me
and cause me
to bear
more fruit?”*



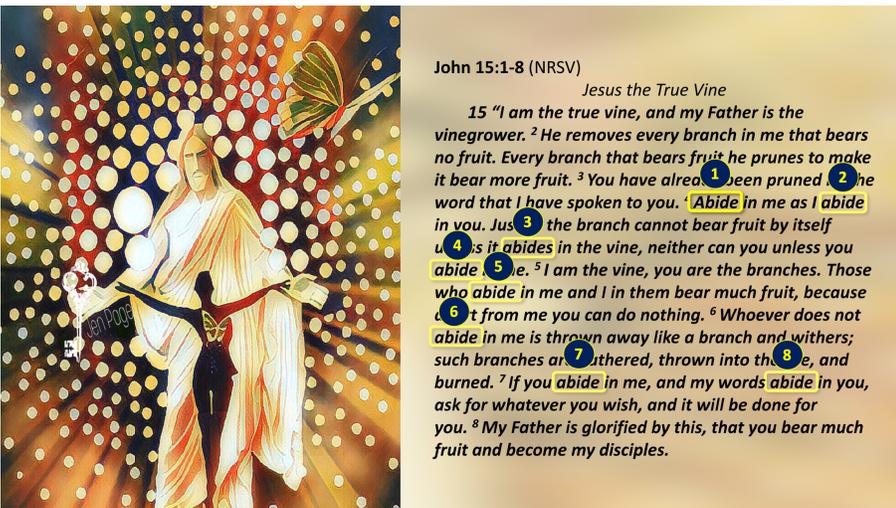
like ourselves. That's how we find a source of strength we never dreamed possible. That's how we become transformed more and more into who God created us to be.

Have you heard the story about the man who ordered a tree house over the internet? When the box arrived, it had printed on the top the words that have become every parent's nightmare: **"Some assembly required."**

The man began to assemble the tree house, but would you believe it? as he laid out all the parts on the floor and began reading the instructions, he realized that the parts were not for a tree house but much to his dismay, 😞 the parts were for a sailboat!! 😞

The next day, he sent an **ANGRY** e-mail message to the company complaining about the mix-up. Back came the reply: **"We are truly sorry for the error and the mix-up and the inconvenience. However, it might make you feel better to consider the fascinating possibility that somewhere today there is someone out on a lake 😞 trying to sail your tree house."** 😞

The point is clear: To put something together, you have to have the right parts and the right instructions. The only way we can put our life together is through an abiding faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. That's what makes life work.⁴ And that's why in these 8 verses Jesus says, **"Abide"** 8 times!



Christ alone is the source of our life. I pray that is the primary reason you are here in worship today. You desire to abide in Christ so that you can bear much fruit.

The story of the vineyard and vine is a story about abiding in Christ. Our purpose is to work together to abide in Christ so that when life happens, we can pray together, **"Lord, is there some way you can use this to prune me and cause me to bear more fruit?"**

Friends, when we abide in Christ, and life happens, and we pray, **"Lord, is there some way you can use this to prune me and cause me to bear more fruit?"** then we will bear more fruit, better fruit, the mouthwatering fruit of: joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness. Indeed, we will bear the fruit of the Redeeming, Unconditional, Nonjudgmental LOVE we celebrate at the Lords Table!

Amen?!

¹ The Upper Room magazine.

² Adapted from: John Jamison, *Simple Faith?: Cycle B for Lent-Easter based on the Gospel Texts*

³ King Duncan, *You Have Been Pruned*. Collect Sermons.

⁴ James W. Moore, *Collected Sermons*, www.Sermons.com

