

THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, May 8, 2024

Today is Wednesday, May 8 and we are studying the Gospel of John.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed and Holy Lord God, I pause at the threshold of a new day and seek your presence. I quiet my mind and focus my entire self on you - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Give me your vision and inspiration for what lies ahead, journey with me in my comings and goings and be my companion on the way. Remind me that you are always working for good in my relationships, activities and conversations. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.” John 15:1-9

REFLECTION

In his final words to his followers, Jesus gave this beautiful image of the people of God and their relationship to him. Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. His words speak to us over the centuries and say, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” In order to live and thrive, a vine must stay connected to the source of life. The branches are supported by the root system which delivers life-giving nutrients from the soil. In the same way, we must stay connected to our spiritual life source - Jesus. Jesus is the vine, from which his followers draw life and nourishment. This is how we will bear fruit for his Kingdom, by staying connected.

Life generously flows through this Christ-connection and we are invited to abide in it. We can gain our spiritual sustenance from many places in the modern world. We can choose to feed ourselves, we can order off the menu of secular delights, or we can satisfy our appetites with worldly things. We can feed our selfish interests and fleeting passions neglecting the life-giving connection the God of the universe designed for the nourishment of the soul.

I am set on this earth to bear fruit - fruit for God’s kingdom, fruit in relationships, fruit in my family, fruit in my church, fruit for the world. I am to live a fruitful life and offer tasty, life-giving nourishment to the people around me. How well am I doing in my fruit bearing? Jesus reminds

me that I cannot bear fruit on my own. If I do not remain connected to him, I will certainly fail at my life's purpose. It is most important for me to "remain" in the vine. I must be careful to not rush too far ahead or lag too far behind, striving to succeed in my own power. If I stay connected to him, Jesus will supply me everything I need to thrive as his follower and produce a fruitful life.

Ask: In what ways do I stay connected to the Vine Jesus on a daily basis? Where in my life am I striving too much in my own power, disconnected from the Vine?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, Jesus, you are the true Vine. Teach me what it means to remain in you and stay connected to the source of love, power and sustenance you provide. Show me where I am functioning too much on my own, and call me back to reconnect with you. Prune me where I need to be pruned and train me on the trellis of your grace to make me even more fruitful. Remind me how I am called to bear fruit in relationships investing my time and energy in others. Amen.