

The Vinedresser Lifts Unproductive Branches (John 15:1–8)
Jaunting through John (Message 39)

Dr. John Niemelä Grace Chapel www.mol316.com February 1, 2009

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND REVIEW:

The Last Discourse: John 13:1–17:26

Part 1: The Upper Room Discourse: 13:1–14:31 (Note 14:31: *Let's leave this place*)

Part 2: Discourse after Leaving the Upper Room (15:1–17:26) (Note 18:1: *He went out*)

NEW EXPOSITION

(15:1) Jesus compares Himself to a grapevine and the Father to the vinedresser

(15:2) The vinedresser props up the vine's unproducing branches and nips off suckers to make the producing branches more productive

The text should read *Every branch in Me which does not produce fruit He props up*

The Greek word is *airei* from *airō* (*lift up*), not *airei* from *aireō* (*cut off*). (Present tense forms of *airō* are identical with those for *aireō*). However, we have documents detailing how vinedressers worked the vineyards in ancient times, which have been examined by viticultural and biblical scholars. The ancient vinedressers did not cut off every non-fruit bearing branch. This word is used in John eight times.

John 5:8 “Get up,” Jesus told him, pick up your bedroll and walk.”

John 5:9 Immediately the man got well, picked up his bedroll and started to walk.

John 5:10 Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Judeans said to the man who had been healed, “It's the Sabbath; You're not permitted to pick up your bedroll.”

John 5:11 He answered them, “The man who made me well—He told me, ‘Take up your bedroll and walk.’ “

John 5:12 So they asked him, “Who is the man who told you, ‘Pick up your bedroll and walk’?”

John 8:59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him. But Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple courts, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

John 10:18 “No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have the authority to lay it down and I have power to take it up again. This command I have received from My Father.”

John 15:2 “Every branch in Me which does not bear fruit He props up; and every one producing fruit He prunes that it will produce more fruit.

(Recap: 15:2) The vinedresser props up the vine's unproducing branches and nips off suckers to make the producing branches more productive

The heavy trunk (which has bark) produces no grapes, except above an injury

The branches that come out of the heavy trunk do not bear fruit, but are the source of the fruit-bearing branches

Only branches that grow out of the non-barked branches can bear fruit

A better yield at harvest results from nipping suckers, excess sprigs, and excess leafage

(15:3) The eleven (as fruitbearing branches) have been cleansed (of that which would interfere with fruitfulness) by Christ's word (so they are prepared for fruitbearing)

Clean (katharoi) is a play on the word *kathairei* (*He prunes*), so pruning is seen as cleaning up the branches

(15:4–5) Abiding in Christ with Christ abiding in them is essential for them to produce fruit, just as a branch can only produce fruit through its connection to the vine

(15:6) If they did not abide in Him, they will have no role in producing fruit for Christ, but would face severe discipline and loss of reward

(15:7) If they abide in Him & His words abide in them, He will answer their prayers (making them fruitful)

(15:8) For the vine & the branches to produce much fruit glorifies the Father (the vinedresser), thus, the 11 will follow Jesus as disciples (in obedience to the Father)

CONCLUSION

The Father tends to those who are Christ's as a vinedresser cares for the branches of a grapevine; nurturing those not ready yet to bear fruit, causing productive ones to become more productive; so the eleven who were cleansed and ready to produce are expected to be productive and to glorify the Father, but the consequence of not abiding in Christ would be severe discipline and loss of reward

Summary

Messages prior to January 17, 2009, contain summaries that start with 1:1. Consult an earlier message for portions of summary not included here.

<p>Abraham's Seed & Satan's Seed: 8:33–59: [Pharisees] retort that they aren't slaves, but JC said only He can free from sin; their desire to kill Him came from their father; they would love & believe Him if they were God's children, but they reject Him w/o disproving Him; they scoff when He said bels won't see death & Abe rejoiced to see His day</p>
<p>Healing Man Born Blind: 9:1–41: Sin didn't blind one born-blind, but blindness let God heal him, wash in Siloam & saw; people debate if is same man, said he is & sees, didn't know where JC is; told Phars how he sees; some say Sabbath breaker not of God, others deny sinner could heal, man said He = Prophet; parents say son born blind; Phars know he was blind; parents say ask of-age son; they oathed him & he said he now sees; they repeat query, he said they ignore him & don't want to follow Him; they claim to follow Moses; don't know JC's origin, only healer of born-blind, but God doesn't use sinners, so He is of God; they called him born in sin & banned him; JC asks if he believes in God's Son; after saying He = God's Son, he believed; He came so blind may see, sighted may be blind; Pharis scoff at being blind; culpable because say they see</p>
<p>Good Shepherd: 10:1–21: Leaders misunderstand Good Shepherd, whom gateman lets into pen (vs. sneaky rustlers); sheep follow Him, not coercive strangers; so He retold it: He is entryway; earlier shepherds bully, steal & kill sheep, but He even dies for sheep (vs. hirelings who let wolves steal/scatter); He knows sheep/they know Him, as He knows God who knows Him—He dies for sheep & has other (non-Judean) sheep who hear Him who makes 1-flock/1-shepherd; God loves Him, because (for sheep) He dies to be raised (no one takes His life), but He lays it down to take it up—as God commands; some called Him crazy demoniac; others denied His speech was demoniac & demon can't make blind see</p>
<p>At Hannukah: 10:22–39: Judeans demand if He is the Christ; He said they disbelieve His words, but works in Father's name also testify; they disbelieve because not of His sheep; Shepherd guarantees sheep (bels) EL & can't lose it, because Father & Son (in union) secure them; He asked (as they try stoning) which good work led to seeking His death; said they seek His death for making self God; He said God (ψ 82⁶) calls (wicked judges) gods; Bible is always true; so Father-sent One doesn't blaspheme in calling self God's Son; if He didn't do Father's works, they should disbelieve, but Father's works lead to believing His words (2nd witness) that Father & Son are united; they again seek His death, but He escaped</p>
<p>Lazarus' death: 10:40–11:16: Rec'd word that Laz sick; said illness not to death, but will glorify God; when (2 days later) He planned to go to Laz, 12 said Judeans seek death; said still is day (time to live) & He needs to wake Laz & it is good He was not there, so they would believe</p>
<p>Resurrection & Life: 11:17–37: JC came 4 days after Lazarus' burial; many mourners present; Martha hurried to meet Him; Mary stayed home; Martha said JC would have stopped Lazarus' death, if He were there; God answers His prayers; He said Lazarus will rise; she agreed; He said that He is resurrector & grantor of EL; asked if she believed; she affirmed this, because she believes He is Christ, God's Son, whom [God sent] to earth; she said that JC wants to see her, Mary went quickly to Him; some said she went to tomb & followed; Mary worshipped Jesus & said He would have stopped Lazarus' death, if He were there; crying of Mary & others moved JC w/ empathy, so He asked where they put Lazarus; they said <i>Come & see</i>; JC also wept, so some said He greatly loved Lazarus; others asked why He let Lazarus die (since He healed blind man)</p>
<p>Raising Lazarus: 11:38–57: Said <i>Open Tomb</i>; Martha spoke of stench; reminds re God's glory, if she believed He'd raise Laz; tomb opened; thanks God He always hears Him (saying this) so they might believe God sent Him; told Laz, <i>Come out</i>; did so bound; said <i>free him</i>; many believe; some told Phars (who try) to stop Him, lest Rome take their position & nation; Caiaphas urged His death for nation (prophecy His death giving Jewish bels life/gather in one flock); rulers want His death; went to Ephraim; feast's earlybirds said He'd avoid feast, because APB</p>
<p>Anointing & Entry: 12:1–19: At Bethany a meal was fixed for Jesus, Lazarus & others; Martha served; when Mary anointed His feet, Judas feigned concern for the poor & scolded her, but Jesus defended her; pilgrims came to Jesus & Lazarus because He raised him; officials sought Lazarus' death also, He rode donkey to Jerusalem, throngs hearing Lazarus was raised laid palm fronds before Him, leaders sought His death.</p>
<p>Helenized (Jews) at Passover 12:20–26: some asked to meet Jesus; He told Philip & Andrew that the hour of His glorification had come: One seed dies in earth that many seeds may sprout to life; loving the mortal life has detrimental effects on the immortal life; hating the mortal life enhances the immortal life; the Father will glorify servants who follow Jesus (where He goes)</p>
<p>Who Believes Rept? 12:27–43: Didn't ask to avoid cross, because came to die; asks for God's glory (God said He did so/will do so); voice was to benefit them; judging world involves Satan's defeat, cross to draw people to JC; object that Christ has EL; He said believe & be enlightened/regenerate before He leaves; He left; disbelief tho seeing signs fulfills Isa 53 & Isa 6, but many rulers believe & fear exclusion</p>
<p>His Command is EL: 12:44–50: Believing in JC logically entails believing in GF, who sent Him; seeing GF logically entails seeing JC, the Light of the world who enlightens bels; His words (from GF commanding EL) is what will judge unbels</p>
<p>Washing the Disciples' Feet: 13:1–20: JC (who knew He would soon leave) loved His own, when Passover was served, after the devil led Judas to betray Him, He began washing the 12's feet, but Pet objected; JC said refusal would disqualify him from a portion (inheritance) w/ JC; Pet offered also his hands & head; JC said bathed persons (the 11) only need footwashing, because he is already clean; JC asked if they understood; He, their Teacher and Lord, became their servant (washing feet) so they would serve one another; they are not greater than their master, so the 11 will be blessed if (knowing these things) they serve each other; He did not say this about Judas, whom Scripture said ate w/ JC & would rebel; the prediction was so the 11 would believe; the one who receives them actually receives Him and the one who receives Jesus actually receives the Father who sent Him</p>
<p>Predicting Betrayal & Denial: 13:21–38: JC's words about one of them being His betrayer puzzled them, John asked JC the betrayer's identity; JC said it was the one He would give bread & bitter herbs; Satan entered Judas when he received it; JC said to do things most quickly (the 11 thought Jesus sent him on an errand); Judas left; JC said both Father & Son are glorified; He will be with 11 briefly, so they won't find Him & can't (yet) follow Him to death; JC commanded them to love one another as He loved them; showing they were His disciples; Peter asked JC where He was going; Jesus said he can't now follow Him; Peter pledged to die for JC; He said Peter would deny Him thrice before cock crows</p>
<p>Another Comforter: 14:1–18: Rather than being distressed, they are to believe in both the Father & in JC to prepare a place so He can come back so they always will be w/ Him; JC said they knew His destination & the Way; Thomas said they knew neither, but JC is Way (to Father), Truth & Life, so all who come to Father come thru JC; knowing JC involves knowing the Father, so they will know the Father, because they have seen Him, but Philip asked to see Father; JC said that (after 3½ years) Philip should know the Father, because he saw JC; they should believe that JC & Father are in each other, so He only speaks w/ authority of indwelling Father; JC's works should convince them of this; the 11 who do (in fact) believe in Him will do greater works than JC, because [the HS will come] after JC leaves; He will do whatever the 11 ask in His Name, to glorify Father; they will love JC by keeping His commands; He will ask the Father to send another Advocate who will stay w/ them forever, but only bels can receive Him & the 11 know Him & He will stay w/ them & be in them, so JC is not orphaning them, but will return to them</p>
<p>Peace I Give: John 14:19–31: Soon the world will not see Christ, but the 11 will & they live, because He lives; then, they will know that Christ is in the Father, they are in Him, & He is in them; one who obeys Christ's commandments loves Him; Christ & the Father will (in turn) love him & Christ will reveal Himself to him; Judas of James asked how He would reveal Himself to them, but not to the world; Jesus said that He and the Father will love and will abide with those who keep His word, that came from the Father; Jesus said that, although He is telling them these things while He is with them, the Advocate, the HS, whom the Father will send in Christ's name is the one who will actually teach them these things; Christ grants them peace (not as a wish), which is how the world tries to give peace, but He will actually give them peace that will settle their hearts against distress and intimidation; He said that He has told them that He is going away and will return to them; if they loved Him (were focused on what is best for Him) they would rejoice that He is going to the Father (who has authority over Christ); Jesus has told them this, so they may believe, when it happens, but He will not speak very much more to them, because ruler of this world (Satan) is coming (to try to defeat Christ), but he has no power over Christ, but (rather) Christ (will die) so the world will know that He loves and obeys the Father; [Having spoken this] it is time for them to leave the upper room [and to walk to the Garden of Gethsemane]</p>