

Abide in Me: Abiding

John 15:4

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Joshua Koura

Camden Valley Baptist Church

www.cvbaptist.com

The Gospel according to John Chapter 15, verses 1 through 8 reads:

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

Let us pray. Father, we come before You now, asking that You would send the Holy Spirit with power, with wisdom, with conviction, that our hearts might be open to the preaching of the Word, and that we would be raised in our affections to praise You, and that we will be humbled from our pride and drawn near to the Savior. I pray, Lord, that You would touch our hearts, grant me the power to preach the Word in a way that would magnify You, in a way that would declare plainly the truths of this wonderful Word of Scripture. We ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.

In our consideration of John Chapter 15 last week, we considered the very important question about what is fruit, and we saw that if we do not have a right view of fruit, we cannot have a right judgment and discernment as to whether or not we are truly bearing fruit. And a failure to bear fruit proves that we do not belong to the vine. And so, we saw the importance of understanding what fruitbearing is, and then we also saw what the Vinedresser, the Father, does so as to secure more of that good fruit on His branches.

Now today, what we are going to do is answer the fundamental question of the entire analogy, and the entire analogy is there to teach us about fruitbearing, how it is that the disciples of Jesus may bear fruit so that

they might bring glory to the Father. And Jesus here gives us the answer to that question, and so we're going to consider the how of fruitbearing.

Now, as true Christians in Jesus Christ, every true Christian should have a desire of some measure to bear fruit, a desire to want to know God, to walk with God, to live a life of true religion, to live a life that truly displays the fellowship that we have with our God, a life that reflects the fruits of the Spirit, a life that emanates, showing that we belong to Christ. Christians should desire to be effective, you should desire to be increasing and enduring in the practice of true religion. But the question is how? How are we to do that? What are the instructions before us to help us to that end?

We are often, as Christians, like a musician. A musician that has the excitement at the first when he discovers his passion to learn an instrument. It has a desire to pursue the knowledge of this instrument so that they might know how to play this. This happened to me years ago when I decided to play the guitar. I thought I'd teach myself, and so I began, but as most people do that perhaps teach themselves, they only rise to a certain extent and get to a point in their experience as a musician where they seem capped, and they feel like, "I know how to master all the basic chords, but don't ask me to play that B, or don't ask me to play that, you know, that difficult minor chord or whatever it may be." And so when they look at somebody who's a professional musician, per se, who has unlocked the secrets, who has the disciplines, who have applied themselves to the instructions, and they see them playing with such fluency, such liberties, such freedom, they recognize how much more there is to know and how much more they perhaps have lost sight of, or perhaps the very key they have missed.

And I feel like that's often the case with many of our Christian lives. We look at people of the past, we read biographies of great men and women of God that served the Lord, that loved God, did great things for God, and we wonder, "What was the secret? What was the difference?" I mean, we read our Bibles, we pray; they read their Bibles, they pray. What marked the difference? What made them what they were? Sure, there are great measures of service that God grants to others, different callings and giftings, we understand that, but still, the fruitfulness, the effectiveness, the power of their lives, from whence did it come? And how is it that we can have this? We feel capped, and I think for many Christians, we actually don't scale the heights of the possibilities that exist for us in the grace of God found in Jesus Christ.

We come to Him, we believe on Him, and our relationship to Him sooner or later begins to dry up. Sooner or later, we feel ineffective. Sooner or later, we go through the motions, but the power of the endless life of that vine

doesn't seem to have the same manifestation in our lives that it once had when we first believed. And Jesus here, about to go to a rugged cross and to die for the sins of His people, here instructs His disciples in this final discourse, telling them one truth that will change and revolutionize their fruitbearing experience, and it's found in these words in verse number four: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abides in the vine, no more can you, unless you abide in Me."

And so, this is the answer that Jesus gives, perhaps not an answer that we would expect. Perhaps you're expecting a long list of things to do and don't. Perhaps you're expecting a long list of activities. But Jesus narrows down the heart of the issue, the heart of the issue of the disciples' fruitbearing, the how of fruitbearing, and He says, "Just abide in Me. Learn the secret of an abiding life. Learn what it means to commune with Me."

I want us to consider then what it means to abide in Christ as we come to understand our instruction here that is for us to abide in Him. The definition of the word "abide" means to remain, or to dwell, or to stay, and it always assumes or seems to always assume a prior relationship. Let me give an example: if I am to stay at someone's house, it assumes the relationship that I'm in the house, or that I have entered into the house. Jesus told His disciples, "When you go out and preach the gospel, and you enter into the house, if someone receives you and they receive you and they receive your word," He says, "abide with them, stay with them in that house." I mean, that's a physical application, but it assumes a relationship that they have entered, and now they abide.

It's a similar idea of dwelling. This is the idea of dwelling, and it means much more than just being present in the house. It's more than that. It's dwelling; it's being at home. It's the idea of settling, the idea of experiencing the home. Someone can enter in and enter out of the home, but when someone dwells in the home or abides in the home, their experience of their relationship to the home is much richer than those that just merely enter.

This could be also seen in the connection between the word "think" and the word "meditate." There's a vast difference between thinking and meditating. Both are connected to the concept of thought, but one goes deeper, one is richer, one has a greater experience of the thought than just the thought itself. And in this analogy, Jesus presents this idea of abiding in the context of an existing relationship. He tells His disciples this very truth: "I am the vine, you are the branches. You are in Me," is basically how He begins His discourse. "I am the true vine, My Father is the Vinedresser. Every branch in Me that bears fruit, every branch in Me that does not bear fruit." But He begins with this understanding, first and foremost, that they are in a relationship with the vine, and speaking specifically to the eleven

disciples at this time, He says, "You are already clean to the word that I've spoken unto you. You are a true branch in this true vine, and you are part of Me, and I am one with you. We have been united by faith, we've been united together as one by the powerful working of the word of God that has cleansed you, that has purified you, that has made you whole."

As Jesus already begins by establishing this reality that they belong to Him, that they are part of the vine, and so establishing that already, He now gives a commandment to them, and He says to them, "Now abide in Me, now abide in the vine." This is what Jesus is telling them. He's not simply telling them to hang around, nor is He simply just telling them to be loyal, although there is a sense in which that is communicated, to stay committed or connected, but it's more than that. He's saying to them, "You are in Me, you are united to Me, but now I want you to abide in Me. I want you to move and understand the relationship of our union so that you experience that which we have, that you know it, that you experience it."

They are joined to the vine, but just as thinking and meditation have the connection, so does joining and clinging. The vast difference, isn't it, when the child is holding your hand, and then all of a sudden, they cling. The relationship between their hand and yours has not changed; they are touching the hand, they are in union with you, but they move in a closer connection, in a deeper reality. They hang on, as it were, and they experience the embrace. They know the union, the communion of that. And what Jesus is telling His disciples here is that, "I don't simply just want you to be attached to Me and united to Me, but I want you to know all the realities of that uniting life that you are part of the vine."

And in the analogy itself, this is what it's about. He is a vine, and here are branches, and the branches, the Bible says, cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abides in the vine. What Jesus is communicating to His disciples here is that there is something in Me that you need to know, to experience, to have, in order for your life to be fruitful. Just being attached to Me is not sufficient to have the fullness of the fruitfulness that is a possibility in our union together as one.

And so, what Jesus is trying to explain to His disciples here is that, "I want you to cling to Me. I want you to be in an active, living, dependent, unified communion with Me." And just as thinking is related to meditation, and just as holding is related to clinging, so also is union has its relation to communion. And the best way that this can be explained is in a marriage. The day that you are declared husband and wife, a non-experiential declaration is made by the minister: "I now present to you so-and-so, husband and wife. The two shall be one flesh." And we witness that, we hear that, and the papers are signed so as to show that. But you do not experience

the union that you now have by declaration until you start communing with your wife or with your husband.

You know, there's a big difference between the minister just saying, "I now pronounce you husband and wife," and you looking at your spouse and making your vows to her and repeating your vows to him. And that is, that is a communion. It's vastly different. Yes, there's a union, a declaration, but the communion is more than that. It's a sharing, it's a fellowship, it's an experience of that union. And that union is felt in communion. And so, the husband and wife get married, they're declared husband and wife, but as they go on their honeymoon, as they share in the relationship, as they have intimacy one with another, they experience the one-flesh relationship that is by declaration, that is in reality, that is by position, but now in their experience, they come to know it, they come to feel it, they come to experience it. And it is in that union, is in that communion, that they really understand the joy of the union.

Now, if you want to get closer to your spouse, the way to do that is not to get remarried to her again. You just commune. You don't reestablish the union. The way you establish the experience of that union is by your communion. And the same is true with our relationship as we are united to this vine, the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who believe in Him, those who know Him, those who have faith, saving faith in the true Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, are united to Him in that life, in that faith, they are joined to Him. But Jesus takes His disciples further. He said, "I want you now to commune with Me in such a way that My life may be manifest in you, that we might be sharers, that you as the branch might receive the fullness of My life in your branch so that you may bear fruit, because you cannot bear fruit unless you abide in Me. You cannot bear fruit unless you remain in Me, unless you learn to dwell with Me, unless you learn to live your life in Me. Cling to Me, hold to Me, and learn to commune in the union that has been established."

And so, the abiding in this passage is basically the command to dwell in the reality of your union with Jesus Christ, to cling to Him only, to cling to Him always, trusting in Him and for Him for all things. Jesus is teaching His disciples this very truth, that all fruitbearing is dependent on your constant communion with Me. You want to be fruitful, you want to be effective, you want to be used of Me, you want fruit to hang from your vine that the Father may be glorified in it, then one thing is essential and necessary, and that is not only your relationship to Me but your union, your communion with Me, your fellowship with Me.

And this is established also by what Jesus has in verse number four. He says, "Abide in Me," and what does He say there? "And I in you." What Je-

Jesus is saying is this: this is a reciprocal, this is communion. Communion is reciprocal. This is reciprocal in relation. You abide in Me, I will abide in you. You fellowship with Me, I'll fellowship with you. You draw near to Me, I'll draw near to you. You yield to Me, I'll bless you with life and with power and with grace. You come to Me in dependence, and you will see My life communicated in you.

This is the teaching that Jesus wanted His disciples to understand, that we must understand. And there was a translator of Scripture who didn't expand the translation; his name was Kenneth Wuest, to translate it this way: "He who maintains a living communion with Me, and I with him, this is the one bearing much fruit." "He who maintains a living communion with Me, and I with him, he is the one that bears much fruit."

There is a grave error to interpret abiding simply on the understanding that abiding means serving, or abiding means doing in the sense of activity. That's the fruit of abiding; that's not abiding. Abiding precedes the fruit. To say that abiding simply means doing this, doing this, doing this, doing that, you have missed the union and the communion from which every work of the believer should flow. You have missed the power source from which every effective work comes into the life of the believer. It is by their communion with the Lord Jesus Christ that the fruit comes, and it is a grave error to think that I abide in Christ by simply doing things.

And this is the failure of many. Lots of Christians go wrong here. We get saved, and we serve. We think this is the process: save, serve; save, serve; save, serve. But what Jesus says to His disciples here: saved, savor, serve. Save, commune, serve. Your service and communion are overlapping realities. Your service and communion are an essential part of each other. Your service is ineffective apart from communion. It is powerless apart from the life of the vine. The fruit is ineffective. The grace of God is not there apart from that life-giving stream that you are abiding in, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it's important for Christians to grapple with this and understand this, lest we go about our Christian life and, I would say this, becoming burnt out or discouraged. I wonder how many young people, that their experience of Christianity is nothing more than a list of do's and don'ts, and they never learn to savor Christ. They never experience the goodness of the union that Christ has purchased for them with His own blood. They never experience the grace of God, the peace of God, the kindness of God. They never stood in awe of the majesty of Jesus. They never tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious. They haven't stood in worship and honor of the great Savior and live the life with a sense in which, "I need Him. I need Him. I want more of Him. I must savor Him. If I ever gonna have grace to

move and do and serve, I must." And all they hear is, "Look, this is what we do. This is what we do." And they do, and they do, and they do, and they dry up in their soul. And is this all there is to Christianity? Is this it? Ticking boxes? "Oh, this is what these religious people do down the street every other week." Where's the life? Where's the fruit of the Spirit? Love, joy, peace, goodness, faith, longsuffering, meekness, gentleness, kindness, self-control? There's no experience of the life of the vine for many of them. They sadly either be dejected and turned away from the faith and discouraged, or they live on the low planes of the Christian experience, just on the low planes, getting by, merely hoping that Jesus will come again only to get Him out of a bad situation, not because they long to see Him, not because they long to know Him and see Him as He is, not because they long to be freed from their corruptions and enjoy the sweet fellowship of communion that they've been tasting down below, but simply because this is too hard, the burden is too heavy.

Look, Jesus said, "Come unto Me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Listen to what He says. He goes, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me. Joke up with Me, join with Me, be My disciple," He says, "for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." John says those that abide in Christ and know Him and have fellowship with Him, they understand that His commandments are not grievous. Why? Because they're living in communion with the living Son of God. And as they serve, they serve out of a love and adoration for Him because all they've been doing and doing is dwelling in their union. They've been abiding in that union. They savor, "Oh Lord Jesus, I'm joined to You, hallelujah."

The songwriter says, "I have found Him whom my soul so long has craved. Jesus satisfies my longings; through His blood, I now am saved." They've tasted of the water of life. They've ever eaten from the bread of heaven, and they say, "Feed me till I lack no more." They keep coming to Him. They come to Him. They cling to Him. And it is in that union and that communion that their branches bear fruit. They start serving affectionately and joyously and with the grace of God upon their lives.

You might say, then, "How can I abide in Christ?" If abiding in Christ means a communion with Him whereby I'm depending on Him and trusting in Him and experiencing His life, then there must be some practical way. You can't just tell me this and not tell me what to do. There's got to be something that's done. It is a commandment, right? So, what—how do I—how do I enter in? How do I come to experience all that Christ has purchased for me by His blood?

Well, first, very simply, acknowledge the union that you have with the vine. It's simple, but it's essential. If you do not know your union, you will never

pursue communion with Christ. In fact, it is the union and the understanding and the glory in the union that fuels the communion. Let me explain this to you. It is when your heart is so deeply moved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is at that very point when you reflect, meditate, are lifted up in the glory of the cross of Jesus Christ, and you see what He has done for you and what you now have in Him, it is at that moment when your heart and affections are raised that you most desire to commune with your Savior. It is then that you most desire to learn of Him, to hear from Him, to receive more from Him. But when you get caught in your life not thinking about the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, you don't care to add to your faith those virtues that Peter speaks of. But when you realize the union and the union is before you, and you are remembered, as it were, of the declaration that "I am His, and He is mine, and I am His because He bought me with His blood," you start to have desires and affections start to raise in your heart, and you want to be with Him. You want to stay with Him. You want to abide with Him.

It is when we sin and stray that the first thing we forget is the cross. You know, David, when he sinned, he realized that his fellowship with the Lord was broken—should I say, fractured. You know what he says? "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of my salvation." I know I'm saved. I know I have union with You, but I want the joy. I want the joy of the Holy Ghost again. I want the joy of the Spirit. I want the love of God shed abroad in my heart afresh so that I might know You and play on my heart praises to You and write another hundred Psalms or so, as he did. But he wanted that. He knew that those songs came from that communion. He knew that his life and his living and his service was effective because of what he had in him. And when he sinned, he got back, and he said, "Lord, restore unto me that joy. Restore unto me that communion. I'm saved. I know You. I'm saved, but I need to abide in You, as it were. I must draw near unto You afresh."

Christian, we are not simply servants. Paul says in Galatians chapter 4, verse 7, "Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." You know what he's simply saying here? You are no longer servants. Jesus said this: "A servant doesn't abide in the house forever, but the son does." Why? A son is united to the father in a way that a servant is not. And Jesus is saying to us, and Paul is saying to us, "Live in light of your sonship. You are joined to this vine. You are the sons of God and the daughters of God through Jesus Christ, and all that is Christ's is yours because you are His. You're no longer servants; you're sons. And you serve Him as sons because you realize that you are privileged to be called the children of God. For behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

Jesus told His disciples in John chapter 14, verse 20, says, "At that day, at Pentecost, you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." You know, Jesus is saying, "In that day that I send the Holy Spirit, just a chapter before this, because you're gonna know something. Oh no, you're not gonna know it just because I told you. You're not gonna know it as a set of propositions on a piece of paper that you convince yourself of. No, no, you're gonna know something in your experience, in your reality. And this what you're gonna know: you're gonna know of a truth that the Father is—I'm in the Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you. You're gonna know that abiding relationship by the Holy Spirit. You're gonna experience My life. I'm not going very far. Yes, I'm ascending into heaven, which seems like a high place and a far distance, and in one sense it is, but I am in you. And this is gonna know this."

And the sad reality is, God's people, brothers and sisters, today, 2000 years have passed since this declarative statement by the Lord Jesus Christ about His disciples knowing, and for many of us, we don't know. We don't know. Is Christ in you? I'm not asking if the Bible tells you; is Christ in you? I'm asking the simple question: do you know the life of the vine flowing through your branches? Do you know the presence of the Holy Spirit indwelling in your life? Do you experience His love, His grace? Do you experience the communion of the Holy Spirit? This is the question. Do you know, in regards to our experience?

And so, first, we must acknowledge the Union, that what Christ has established is an important thing that should be mulling over our minds, and we should be living in the Union and then experiencing the communion. Then we must sense our need. You know, we must remember that we are but branches, and the Bible says that the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine. And what Jesus is simply trying to tell us is, remind yourself that you are a branch, meaning that everything that comes as fruit from you, true fruit from you, comes from the source, meaning you are in need. A branch without the vine is useless, nothing, can't do anything, can't produce any fruit, can't be effective. And Jesus is saying, "Okay, so understand and acknowledge your Union, but realize how you fit in that relationship. You're just—you're just a branch. I'm the vine. I'm connected to the soil," says Jesus. "The life comes from Me." And that's very important to realize.

How often is it that we think that it's all about us, and we go about setting—we're gonna do great things for God, and we're gonna do all these things, and we got a list of things we're gonna do. We're gonna do this, we're gonna do that, we're gonna do that, and we don't pray, we don't seek Him, we don't trust in Him, we don't look to Him, we're just simply thinking, "Okay, God saved us, He gave us all the machinery, now go operate."

Doesn't work like that. He stays connected to us in communion, and the moment we start running ahead, as it were, of God, thinking that it's all about us, that's the moment that we have forgotten that we are branches, and a branch does one thing. Listen to this: it receives. And communion receives from the vine. The branch receives in the vine, and communion with Christ is reciprocal, and so there must be a sense in our relationship with God where we are waiting on God, where we are expecting from Him, that we approach Him with an ear to Him to hear His voice, with an eye to Him to see His face, with a waiting on Him to do His will, a trusting, a looking to Him. "Lord, You've told us to do this; we're going, but be with us, help us." One eye to heaven, one eye to earth, one ear to heaven, one ear to earth, as a branch is connected to the vine. This is our need. We must sense it if we're ever going to understand need for communion with Christ.

We must yield to the vine. As I said, we are recipients, not to resist His operations. We are to, in all our ways, acknowledge Him, and He would direct our paths. We are to learn of Him, but also in a practical way, we are to commune with God by the means of grace. And I say this because it's very important. This union is not simply mystical in this sense; it is an experience within the heart. It is a spiritual union, definitely. However, it does not have—is not sitting in a corner doing nothing. It is not passive. In fact, if abiding in Christ is communion, what we must realize is that the means of communion are the means of grace.

This is important to make a distinguishing point here in our closing. We must realize that we are still and dependent upon God, yes. We are in communion with God, yes. But these are what they call—we call means of grace, okay? Reading your Bible, praying, attending church, sitting under the preaching of the Word of God, participating in the Lord's Supper, having fellowship one with another. And what we call means of grace, they are instruments—listen to this—that carry our soul to God. The danger is when we do not look at them as means, but we look at them as grace. What I mean by that is this: how many of us think that we have a walk with God simply because we are doing these things?

"Well, I'm in church every Sunday. I'm present here. Well, my Bible is open every morning. I pray. I do this. I do this. I do that." Look, this is the means of grace. You must come to those things, not to those things alone, but you must come to Jesus through those things. You must be looking to Jesus in those things. We do not worship the word; we worship the God of the word, is what I'm trying to say here. We are people that are seeking God, not seeking things. We're seeking God. Our mission is to know Him. We want to abide in Him, to learn of Him, but what the Bible teaches us is that Jesus speaks to us and ministers to us through means.

He communicates to us through preaching, through these things, through reading the Bible, through prayer, and we communicate to Him through those things. But just because you're doing those things, it doesn't mean that you're communicating with Him.

This was the trouble of the children of Israel, and this is the trouble of the Christian Church today. The Word of God says this, and God the Father, the Lord, said this in Hosea 6:6, "I desire mercy and"—listen to this—"not sacrifice." He said, "The knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Hang on a minute, Lord. You gave us burnt offerings. You said to approach us with burnt offerings. Now you're saying you don't desire burnt offerings anymore? This is what He desires: "I desire that you would know Me." And if you come to Me by means of burnt offerings, you're coming to Me because you want to know Me, because you want to be made right with Me, because you're trying to walk with Me and talk with Me and commune with Me. You see the difference? Vast difference.

This is what the psalmist said. David said in Psalm 51, "You desire not sacrifice, or else I would give it. If this was just a matter of sacrificing, I could burn a thousand rams to the Lord, but I don't want that." God says, "What do you mean you don't want that? You asked for that. You told us to burn sacrifices to You, Lord." This is in the Old Covenant. He says, "You do not delight in burnt offerings." Then he says this, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." You know what David's saying? "I can offer a million sacrifices upon the altar to God, and the smoke of those offerings can rise, but God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He wants my heart. He wants my broken spirit." And then those offerings will be sweet to Him.

In Amos, He says, "I despise your sacred feasts. I despise your offerings. I despise—I despise—I despise." God, how can You despise the very things You gave us to do? Can God really despise Bible reading? Yes, if you don't seek Him in it. Can God really despise prayer? Yeah, if you pray like the Pharisee. Can God really despise people sitting under the Word of God? Yes, if you come to the Word of God to sit over as judges and not to come to receive from God's Word, or you come to preach in the power of your own strength and not independence upon God. Yes. Don't be deceived, my friends, that we can go through the motions, and the wheels can be turning, but is there the life of the vine? Is there the manifestation of the power and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that is coming through us, manifesting in our lives?

So the question is simply this: not what am I doing for God, but how is my communion with God? That's the question we need to ask ourselves. Do you know the Lord? Paul said, "Oh, that I might know Him." Do you

know the Lord? I'm not asking, do you know Him as Savior, and if you don't, this is where it begins. But I'm asking, do you know Him as friend? Not asking if you know Him just as Redeemer, but do you know Him as your older brother who sympathizes with you in your weaknesses? Is He a living, breathing part of your Christian experience, or is your Christian experience nothing more than a lifeless set of propositions that is better described as dead orthodoxy? We have a form of godliness, but where's the power?

All this can change, my beloved brothers and sisters, if you would but abide in Him. You will lack nothing if you abide in Him. A life that communicates with Christ has everything that Christ has. You say, "I need strength." Where are you going to go to get it? To Him. Take it from the vine. You say, "I'm lacking joy, and I'm lacking contentment." Where are you going to get it? Abide in the vine. You say, "I'm lacking peace. My heart is troubled." Where else will you taste of the peace of God but in our Lord Jesus Christ, as you abide in the vine?

You say, "I need assurance. I want to know that I am His, and He is mine." Where else will you have that but in your communion with the Lord Jesus Christ? For it is in communion with Him that you will hear Him say, "I give unto them eternal life, and they will never perish."

The question is, people, have you come to Christ? You say, "Yes." Well, if you've come to Christ, let me encourage you to go a step further and abide in Him. Cling to Him.

I'll finish with a quote from Andrew Murray. He says this: "You did well to come to Christ, but you do better to abide. Who would, after seeking the king's palace, be content to stand in the door when he is invited in to dwell in the king's presence and share with him in all the glory of his royal life?" Think about that. "Who would, after seeking the king's palace—salvation, the kingdom of God—be content to stand at the door when he is invited to dwell in the king's presence and to feast with the king and enjoy the royal life?" You know what he says? "Oh, let us enter in and abide, and enjoy to the full all the rich supply of His wondrous love that He has prepared for us."

In a moment, we're going to sing the song, "I Need Thee Every Hour," most gracious Lord. No tender voice like Thine can peace afford. "I need Thee, oh, I need Thee; every hour I need Thee. Oh, bless me now, my Savior, I come to Thee. I come to Thee."

Let us pray.

Oh Lord our God, You have given us such wondrous things in and through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. We've been joined to the world's greatest treasure, Him who is light and life and joy and peace. Oh God, but we confess that our experience of You is not as we ought to have. Our fruit is not much; our grace is little. Father, we have failed to abide in the vine, Your vine, the true vine, and I pray this day that this would change for Your people, that we would cling to Christ and marvel at the cross, and that we would glory in our Redeemer and say with the Apostle Paul that "I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

We ask all these things in Jesus' name, amen.