



Pentecost 8

July 30, 2017 – 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Todd Goldschmidt, Pastor

**Theme: Jesus Is “The Vine” & We
Are “The Branches”**

Sermon Text: John 15:1-17 (NIV)

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain 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.

⁵“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. ⁶If 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.⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.”

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org



What kind of legacy will we leave when the Lord calls us out of this life to the next? Will it be a trail of tears, broken promises and heartache? Or a pathway alongside which we cultivated the **“fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”** (Gal. 5:22-23). Jesus cares deeply about our legacy, just like He did about the legacy He’d leave when He ascended into heaven. Ah, but are we as concerned about our legacy as He is?

Gratitude for all that Jesus did for us in His incarnation, death and resurrection is just the start for believers. We cherish the pardon, peace and eternal salvation Jesus secured for us thru those redemptive acts. But His work in our behalf has practical implications for us as well. As we view Jesus’ descent from heaven’s hallowed halls to earth’s vile cesspools and see the Lord of life suffer a shameful death, we’re struck with a profound insight: We’re to do what Jesus did! In our text, **“the Vine”** calls us His **“branches”** and says: **“My command is this: ‘Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.’”**

Earlier on that “Holy Thursday” evening, Jesus and the Twelve gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover—the most sacred meal in the Jewish faith, commemorating God’s deliverance of His people Israel from their bondage in Egypt. During that meal, He instituted the most sacred supper for His New Testament Church: Holy Communion. But He did something else that night that was also extremely significant. We’re told in John chapter 13: **“The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him”** (vv. 2-5). When He’d finished, He said: **“I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you”** (v. 15).

Jesus took off His respectable clothes and wrapped Himself in a servant’s towel. He washed the dirtiest part of the disciples’ body. There’s *nothing* glorious about the feat of cleaning filthy feet! There’s no recognition to be had there, no accolades for a job well done. The disciples had had their feet washed before—by “real” servants—and had likely never even said thanks. Why should they? The servants were only doing their jobs. Jesus spied the dirtiest, most thankless area of physical need for the disciples and met it as an illustration of His mission. Then He got up and told the disciples that they should behave in exactly the same way.

How often do we deliberately do acts of service that many consider pointless and unworthy of their talents? How often do we approach the needs of this world with a humble attitude that’ll stoop as low as those needs demand? It goes against our human nature. We’re always striving to work our way up, not down. We think if we can attain a higher status we can impact more people for the kingdom of God. At times, that might well be the case. But Jesus’ example should lead us in another direction: farther down. Lower. Toward less

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org



glory. With less recognition. The way our Savior tells it, that's the way to greatness in God's family. As odd as such behavior seems, it's exactly how He saved us. And it's how others will be saved. Jesus calls us to do as He's done for us: **"This is my command: Love each other."**

But we can't do that on our own! And so, He says at the outset of our text: **"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."** Jesus declares emphatically that He's the source of our life. This should be a huge relief for us! But at times it's an affront to our sinful pride. Our ego balks at Jesus' declaration in verse 5: **"apart from me you can do nothing."** But once we let that truth sink in, we realize this is the only way to accomplish anything lasting. Jesus adds, **"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."**

Doesn't it stand to reason that eternal fruit can only come from an eternal source? But our sinful pride gets in the way. Self-effort and self-reliance may be laudable qualities in the world's eyes, but nowhere in the Bible is anyone rebuked for being too dependent on God. But the Bible *does* contain many rebukes for being too self-reliant. Witness, for example, Jesus' dealings with the self-righteous Pharisees. Listen to His strong rebuke of them on one occasion: **"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean"** (Matthew 23:27). God's glory is the centerpiece of the universe, and whatever points to it is blessed! Self-reliance doesn't point to it. God-reliance does. Lasting fruit can *only* come from Jesus Himself.

Wouldn't it be a great way to begin each day with a **"declaration of dependence"**? Every morning could start with an emphatic acknowledgment: **"Lord, I'm insufficient in everything I'll encounter today. I have insufficient wisdom to make the decisions I'll be required to make. I have insufficient strength to resist the temptations I'll face. I have insufficient skills to manage the conflict that will inevitably arise. I have insufficient resources to minister to the people I'll encounter. I am entirely dependent on You."** The blessing of the gospel is that in our insufficiency, Jesus *is* sufficient. Salvation began when we recognized that our righteousness was insufficient to coexist peacefully and eternally with a holy God, and it has continued ever since into every arena of our lives. We're deficient in every meaningful way. Let's embrace that deficiency, friends, and let the eternal **"Vine"** be our life! Without Him, we can do nothing!

That **"Vine"** says to us, His **"branches"**: **"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."** We have no trouble with the idea that we're to love one another—by our definition of love. But Jesus raises the bar on love. His definition is the substance of this command. We're to love each other *just as He loved us*. What does that mean for us? To know, we must find out how He loves us. How does *He* define love? By serving His

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org



disciples—washing their feet, to be exact. He **“showed them the full extent of his love”** (John 13:11). It was a highly symbolic demonstration of the ultimately sacrificial love that Jesus refers to in our text: **“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”**

Jesus’ kind of unconditional love isn’t natural for us. In fact, it’s flat-out undoable. We *want* to love others like Jesus loves us. We really do. But we don’t. We hold it up as an ideal, but rarely ever live up to it. Was Jesus being unrealistic? Does He really expect fallen, corruptible human beings like us to act like the divine Son of God? Friends—Jesus’ **“friends”**—don’t forget that He knows our every weakness. He knows our feeble, half-hearted attempts to love others like He loves us. Is it any fluke that this verse comes directly after His teaching on the **“branch”**’s connection to the **“Vine”**? Love is a form of bearing fruit, and Jesus insists that we can bear no fruit on our own. Only when we abide in Him, and He in us, will fruit appear. It’s by the same union that love occurs, too. It’s not rocket science. It’s a simple fact: if we remain in Jesus—if we remain in His Word—we will bear much fruit; fruit that will last into eternity! He tells us, **“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”**

If we attempt to love others as Jesus loves us, we’ll fail. We can try to muster up feelings, but they’ll fall short. We can try to love independently of our feelings, but it’ll be a hollow, lifeless love. No, there’s no remedy for our lack of love other than the Living **“Vine”** bearing fruit through His **“branches.”** He’s the source. Do we want greater love for others? Of course, we do! Then we must remain in Jesus; dig into the life-giving Word of God; hold it fast in our hearts and meditate on it! Then—*and only then*—will we be empowered by God’s Spirit to live it out in our daily life. So, we bask in the love of Jesus, and see what happens next! Amen.

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Study 9 am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

(425) 868-9404 - www.lhlc.org, pastortodd@lhlc.org