

Abiding in Christ

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[0 : 00] Good morning, Watermark. Good morning. The scripture today comes from John chapter 15, verses 1 to 11.

I know it's printed 17, I'll read up to 11. You can find the scripture at page 848 in the Church Bible. 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 does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches.

Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers.

[1 : 11] And the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

By this, my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Let us believe and respond to God's true word. Are we on now?

Ah, good. Wonderful. It's so wonderful to be with you. Thank you, Kevin, for inviting me and for just the opportunity to bring God's word this morning as always a joy.

[2 : 22] And this is just a unique privilege for us to be with you here in Hong Kong. As you said, the greatest city in the world. And I do want to take a little bit of an issue with something you said earlier, Kevin.

You said that man may not live by dim sum alone. We had a wonderful dim sum yesterday with Franklin and Teresa and their family. It was just wonderful for us to be there with also our colleagues, Biao Chen and his wife, Shiguang.

So that is the connection. The Chens and the Tzins are connected to Watermark, and so now we are connected to Watermark. And we're so thrilled about that.

But the other part of it is that we do pray for our daily dim sum. That's right. That's right. We do pray for that. I want you to turn to the end of John's gospel just for a moment to chapter 20.

I know we just read from chapter 15, and we're going to be coming back there. But did you know that John's gospel has a purpose statement? And I'd like for us to read it together as we begin our journey through John's gospel this morning.

[3 : 35] We're going to look at several of the unique aspects of John's gospel, but we're going to camp out in John chapter 15 towards the end this morning. But I'd like to start with this purpose statement that begins in verse 30.

Now, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Now, life, that is going to be our theme this morning. The Jesus is a whole ecosystem for fruitful living.

That is the picture that John gives us that when Jesus says, I am the true vine or the true vineyard, that our Lord and Savior who defeated sin and death generates life.

He is the creator. He is the life giver. The word that was with God in the beginning became flesh and dwelt among us, and our life is in him.

[4 : 49] And so if you are hungry to suck the marrow of life, that you want to get everything out of life, you must know Jesus.

You must be introduced to Jesus because he is the source of life. He is the creator and the life giver. He is the whole dwelling place of everything that really pertains to life.

John has so many different adjectives. He has so many different words for life. He says abundant life, eternal life. Jesus is the life.

As we begin our journey this morning, let's pray together and ask for the Spirit's help. Lord Jesus, we come this morning like those Greek-speaking Jews who had traveled so far for the Feast of Passover.

But when they heard about you, they came to Philip, and they said, we want to see Jesus. We want to meet Jesus. And, Lord, that is what we want this morning.

[5 : 55] We want to see you in John's portrait, in his unique picture of you. But, Lord, we confess that we are distracted, that there are many things on our hearts that weigh on our hearts, many things on our minds.

And so, Lord, we ask that you would help us by your Holy Spirit, that you would give the helper, the advocate to us, who leads us into the truth, that you would illuminate our hearts, that you would illuminate our minds, and you would quicken us to believe and to trust your word.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Do you recall the first I Am statement?

Here's what we're going to do this morning. We're going to look at and remember one of the unique aspects of John's portrait of Jesus, and that is that there are seven I Am statements.

Now, we are going to build a house. We're going to build a tent on the seventh and the last one, I Am the True Vine. We're going to explore that further. But before we get there, we're going to take a little journey together, and we're going to look at the I Am statements.

[7 : 08] So let's go back through, if we could. Do you remember the first one in John 6? Jesus has just fed 5,000 men, and then even more women and children who are traveling with him to the feast.

This is one of the first feasts of Passover that we see in John's gospel. And there's so much food left over. There's 12 baskets of food. You remember the abundance of life that is a theme for John, right?

And Jesus said to them, Don't work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures unto eternal life, right? The food that the Son of Man is going to give you.

And they said, Well, what must we do to get this food? He said, You must do the works of God.

Well, what are the works of God? And we sang about it this morning, didn't we?

The work of God is to believe in the one that God has sent. And they said, Well, who are you, Jesus? Our fathers were the ones who traveled through the wilderness, and they had manna from Moses.

[8 : 14] He said, Oh, no. Moses was not the one who gave you the manna. It was my Father who gave you manna. And now he has given you the bread of life.

And there's the first I am. Let's say it together. I am the bread of life. But did you notice something? He doesn't stop there, does he?

And this is true. We're going to see this as we go through the statements quickly together. Not only do the I am statements tell us something about who Jesus is, they tell us something very important about who his true followers are.

You remember? I am the bread of life, and he who eats this bread will never die. There's our theme again, the theme of life.

The second statement, Jesus makes twice in chapter 8 and chapter 9. He says, I am the light of the world.

[9 : 17] But notice again, this is not just a statement about Jesus. He also says something about his followers. He says, Whoever follows me will never walk in the darkness.

In fact, if you're in Christ this morning, not only is Jesus the light of the world, but because you are in Jesus, you too are the light of the world.

Matthew chapter 5, right? There's a theme developing. Jesus, the source of life and of light.

But his light and his life is so great, it's so uncontainable, it's so amplified that it flows through you.

If you know Christ, if you're part of the church this morning, these things that are true about our Savior are true of you as well.

[10:21] That's the kind of life that John is talking about. It's the kind of life that just overflows. It cannot be stopped. It cannot be contained. It flows in your family life, you who dedicated your children this morning.

It flows in your work life. It flows in your life as a citizen of this city. It touches everything because you are connected to the life giver.

He is the light of the world. He is the bread of life. But what are those other I am sayings? You remember?

John chapter 10, there are two more together. I am the gate. I am the door of the sheep, right? And in that same chapter, I am the good shepherd.

Now, these two sayings are not only related, but they continue to describe Jesus' relationship to his people, to his followers. If Jesus is the good shepherd, we must be the sheep, right?

[11:27] But there's only one way to life. There's only one way into the pasture and the green lands that give life. The good dim sum, the good daily dim sum. It's through the gate.

It's through the door. It's the only way of life. I am the way, the truth, and the life. Yes? So as we place our trust in Jesus, the good shepherd, we're given this different quality of life, this abundance of life.

Jesus goes on. He says, So Jesus' people, they know his voice.

They, as we're going to see later, they abide in his words. They recognize the sound of his voice.

They don't follow after those princes that we read about in the call to worship this morning.

They don't put their trust in the princes. They know that they're false shepherds. Right? It's interesting. Jesus, our rabbi, Jesus, the teacher, he knows his Bible so well, and he is remembering what the prophet Ezekiel said.

[12:49] You remember what Ezekiel said about those false prophets, those false shepherds? In fact, he said, the Lord will come to shepherd his people.

Right? And that's what Jesus is announcing. I am the good shepherd. The I am the Lord has come. And that's where we can just camp for just a minute.

We were hearing this morning about, what was the young man's name here? Elliot. Elliot gave us this wonderful tour of the Old Testament this morning. And he talked about the burning bush.

That's where we learn the name of God in Exodus chapter 3. That his name is what? Ah. There's a strong connection here.

Yes? Seven times Jesus says, I am. And then it has a predicate with it. And seven times in the Gospel of John, he just says it by itself. I am he.

[13:50] I am the one who's coming to you on the water. Right? I am present for you. I am powerful for you to redeem you, to give you eternal life.

So Jesus says that those who come over the wall, they're thieves and they're robbers and they're destroyers. Because he's referencing Ezekiel, the prophet.

Yet he is our good shepherd. Well, then we come to John chapter 11. And we're nearing the turning point of the Gospel. Jesus has come to Bethany at the request of Mary and Martha to minister to their sick brother Lazarus.

But he's arrived after Lazarus has died. And so Mary and Martha both say, if you had only come sooner, our brother would not have died.

They had seen Jesus' power to heal. They had faith in him. They knew he is the life giver. But what they did not know and what they had not seen was the glory of God.

[15:04] Jesus intentionally waited for two days. Why? He tells us. That you might see the glory of God.

You see, in John chapter 12, it's the hinge of the Gospel. It's the time for the Son of Man to be glorified. It's time for the Father to be glorified. And the whole next part of the book is about the glory of God.

The passion of Jesus. That he would be the Lamb of God. It would take away the sins of the world. That he had the power to lay down his life.

And the power to take it up again. And so when we get a preview with Lazarus in John chapter 11, he's going to show and display the glory of God, which is the power over life and death.

The power to give life. Jesus' healings and his miraculous provisions of bread in the desert, of wedding wine, they are signs of who he is.

[16:13] He is the bread of life. But there's always more with Jesus. Jesus is not someone who just gives merely what we need to survive.

That is not the God that we serve. That is not the Jesus that we serve. No, he is going to show them the glory of God.

The power of life over death. And yet as we read about from the catechism this morning, Jesus is fully human. He sympathizes with our weaknesses.

And so what do we see him do with Mary? He weeps with her. He knows the sting of death. He knows it.

He will know it. And so he weeps with her. The one who's going to anoint him for his burial later. But then what does he say to Martha? He says, I am the resurrection and the life.

[17:16] And he who believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live. Again, not just a statement about who Jesus is, but a statement about those who are connected to him, those who entrust themselves to him.

He is the resurrection and the life. And those of us who believe in him. Though we know the pain of death. Though we know the sting of death in our families.

Yet shall we live. Amen. Amen. So the glory of God is the gift of life out of death.

The gift of eternal life in Christ's kingdom. Amen. And this brings us to the seventh and the final I am statement, which we read about.

Earlier. I am the true vine. And my father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away.

[18:21] And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes. That it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

So abide in me. And I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself. Unless it abides in the vine. And neither can you unless you abide in me. Wow. Seven times.

Seven times Jesus uses the word abide. Eight times Jesus uses the word abide. Put roots down in me. Build your foundation on me.

Make your home in me. Dwell in me. Dig deep into me.

[19:24] I am the source of life. I am the life giver. Now let's remember just for a moment the context of this saying.

Jesus and his disciples are gathered together in a borrowed upper room. It's the time of the feast. It's on the very night that Jesus would be betrayed.

And you remember that those who had witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus. When Jesus said Lazarus come forth. And Lazarus came out of the grave.

Well they were electrified. They of course could not contain themselves. And so as they went to celebrate the feast in Jerusalem. They were telling everyone what Jesus had done in Bethany. And so the religious leaders they plot to kill Lazarus. And they plot to stop Jesus. But life is unstoppable.

[20:28] The life that Jesus has. The life that Jesus is. It just keeps overflowing. You cannot contain it. You cannot stop it.

And so as Jesus is gathered with his disciples. There's a lot of fear. There's a lot of danger. What can Jesus say?

What can Jesus do? To give his disciples. To give his first followers. What they need to have courage. To bear witness to Jesus. When times are dangerous.

When there is a lot of fear. When death and the sting of death is real. What can he say?

What can he do? That is the story of the upper room. From chapters 13 through 17. Where this passage. Sits for us.

[21:27] Right? You remember what Jesus does. He. Takes off his outer garment. And he washes his disciples feet. He shows them.

The full extent of his love. He. He takes their filth. And you remember. In first century Palestine. There are no sewers. You remember this.

And so it's not just dirt. In the roads. No. There's all kinds of filth. In the roads. And so they had to wash their feet. Jesus takes. Their filth.

Onto him. He shows them. What he is about to do for them. Right? That's what John tells us. John was there. John was an eyewitness.

But second. He tells them the truth. That he is about to go. And return to the glory. That he had with his father. He's about to physically depart. And to take his rightful place.

[22 : 26] At the father's right hand. But he's going to send. A helper. He's going to send. Another advocate. Now that's very interesting. Have you ever paused on that?

That means that there's. A first advocate. If we're going to get another advocate. That means we have two advocates. Amen. In first John.

John. The same John. Tells us that we have an advocate with the father. Jesus the righteous. And if we confess our sins. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

And to cleanse us. Of all unrighteousness. But he's going to give us a helper. He's going to give us another advocate. The Holy Spirit. And the gift of this spirit.

Will continue to purify us. Guiding us into all the truth. And giving us peace. In the midst of many troubles. And this peace brothers and sisters.

[23 : 23] And not just a calmness of spirit. When we face danger. No. This peace. Is the shalom of fruitfulness. This peace is a flourishing.

That people want to be around you. They want to be around us. Because we. They see us coming. And they. They know that we're a source of blessing in their lives.

This is the life that overflows. This is the life we are connected to. In Jesus. And so 11 times in these verses. Jesus says.

Abide in me. And you will. Not maybe. You will bear. Much. Fruit. You remember the verse. From Jeremiah 17. This morning. In a time of drought. You will bear. Much. Fruit. Amen. So this deep.

[24 : 18] Life giving connection. To Jesus. We are. A part of. The vineyard. We're a part of the vineyard. That produces. So much fruit. That we can make wine.

And we can celebrate. The goodness. Of life. The resurrected one. Has demonstrated. That life is stronger than death.

That love. Casts out hate. That light. Dispels darkness. Because you see. When a seed falls to the ground. Yes. It dies.

But it springs forth. And it produces life. You cannot stop it. And so.

Despite all the plots. Of the religious leaders. Despite. All the fears. Of the Roman occupiers. The powers of this world. The powers of government. The powers of corporations. The powers of money.

[25 : 13] All of those powers. Cannot stop. The kingdom of God. Cannot. Because this life.

Keeps overflowing. From the one who is. The life. So consider this. Statement again. But listen carefully.

If you would. I'm going to offer. Just a little bit. Of a different translation. I am. The true. Vineyard. You can go. I think.

To the next slide. If you don't mind. Keep going. There we go. I am the true vineyard. And my father. Is the husbandman. Every vine in me. That does not bear fruit.

He takes away. And every vine. That does bear fruit. He prunes. To make it more fruitful. Now you have been cleansed. Already. By the word. I've spoken to you. Abide in me. As I abide in you.

[26 : 06] Just as the vine. Cannot bear fruit. By itself. Unless it abides. In the vineyard. Neither can you. Unless you. Abide in me. I am the vineyard.

And you are. The vines. Now you notice. This different translation. Than the one. We're used to hearing. And I. I offer this.

This morning. Because. A New Testament scholar. A Swedish. New Testament scholar. Named Chris. Karagunas. Has offered. Compelling evidence. To show. That by the late.

First century. When John was writing. If there had been. A shift in meaning. In the two words. That are important. For this metaphor. That emphilos. The word that we. Traditionally translate.

Vine. Had come to refer. To the whole vineyard. And claim. The word. We traditionally. Translate. Branch. Had come to refer. To the whole plant. Or to the vine.

[27 : 01] Vineyard. And so. We read. I am the vineyard. And you are. The vines. Now I've offered it. This morning. Because. It gives us a sense. Of the amplification.

Of what John is doing here. Can you believe. That Jesus. Is someone. That. You can go in.

And live. That he is a. Capace. Capacious. Palace. That he is a. Huge vineyard. That's the image. That. That John is giving. To us. You are a vine. In this. Huge vineyard. You're. You're part of something. Really big. Called the kingdom.

Of God. There's a whole. Ecosystem. Of life. Giving. Goodness.

[27 : 55] That you're. Connected to. The gospel. Creates. Its own. Biosphere. Its own. Ecosystem. It's called. The church.

We are. Connected. To one another. And that's why. It's so important. The vows. You took. The promises. You made. This morning. To help. These families. Raise their children. In the fear. In the admission. Of the Lord.

I mean. That is just. A small. Picture. Of what God. Is doing. In the church. And how deeply.

Connected. We are. And so. Even though. Darlene and I. Have come. All across the world.

We are. Deeply. Connected. To you. By the spirit. Of God. By a savior. Who has bought. And paid. For us. And purchased. Us. For his glory.

And so. Here is the lie. That the. That the enemy. Wants to. Us. To believe. Is that. We are.

Rugged. Individuals. That we make. Our own life. That we're. The author. Of our own life.

[28 : 52] I mean. These are all. Of the messages. That we hear. That we scroll. On our phones.

Every day. You choose. What kind of life. You want. No.

Life is a gift. We did nothing. For our lives. We were born. Into a family. We received. A family's name. And we received. The name. Of our savior. Jesus.

It marks us. We've been given. Life. What did John say? In his name. Right? Amen. Let me just give.

A quick. Picture of this. From. The witness. Of a family. A Dutch family. That made their home. In Washington state. And they purchased.

Their first. Apple orchard. I want to build. On this image. Of. The vineyard. Of the orchard. They bought. Their first orchard. In 1968. And today.

[29 : 47] Their company. Manages. More than. 6,000 acres. Of apple. And cherry trees. And every year. They ship. Nearly 7 million. Boxes. Of apples. Wow.

From one. Vineyard. From one. Orchard. Now. They're shipping. Over 7 million. Boxes. Of apples. Each year.

Well. In. The turn of the century. Around 2000. Out of concern. For. The children. Of the migrant workers. To have steady. Uninterrupted schooling.

And a stable. Home life. Because you know. The migrant workers. Would move. From place to place. Whatever they're picking. They're picking. Strawberries here. They're picking. Cherries there. They're picking. Apples here.

And they. They saw the effects. This was having. On the children. Who. Had to start over. In different schools. Schools. And they. Began a profit sharing. Venture. Called Vista Hermosa Foundation.

[30 : 46] And the foundation. Received a percentage. Of annual profits. To create schools. Affordable housing. And jobs. Even when the season. Was not picking season.

So that these migrant families. No longer. Had to keep moving around. This Christian family. The Broci family. They saw.

The kingdom of God. They. They saw. The light of the world. They saw. That they're part of this. Overflowing abundance. Of life. And they realized. That their work.

Was not just to be. Selfishly consumed. Upon themselves. And upon their family. That they should share. The profits. Of what they were making. With all those. Who were investing. In their company. And the goodness.

And the blessings. And the life giving. Money. Yes. Education. Yes. Houses. Yes. Flowed out. To everyone. Who participated.

[31 : 43] You see. That's how the economy. Of the kingdom. Of God works. It's the abundance. That keeps flowing. Not that we steal. And take it.

Upon ourselves. But that we share. The life. That God gives us. In all different ways. So this fruit. From John chapter 15. Yes. Of course. This fruit. That we bear. Are converts.

They're people. We're sharing. The good news. Of Jesus with. Oh. But it's so much more. Brothers and sisters. It's so much more. It's how we welcome people. Into our homes.

And share our food. It's. It's how we. Use our money. In our businesses. And the policies. That we create. Just like the Brochi family. Because we too. Are the light of the world. We too. Are producing. Much fruit. Jesus said. That even greater works. You shall do. Because I'm going to my.

[32 : 36] Father. Who's in heaven. So. When we choose to set our minds. On what the spirit desires.

Instead of the desires. Of our sinful nature. When we choose to put to death. The old way of living. And to replace it with a. A habit of life. Yes.

We will suffer pain. The pain of pruning. That Jesus talked about. Part of us is going to die. The old ways are going to die. But as they die.

New things emerge. New life emerge. This pain. Like the intense pain. Of childbirth. Is generative. It results in joy.

As these new habits are formed. As these new practices emerge. As blessings flow out. From us. As well. And so. Verse 7.

[33 : 33] And verse 16. Of John 15. Notice what they said. This is where we'll close. This. Astounding statement. It says in verse 7.

If you abide in me. And my words abide in you. Ask whatever you want. And it will be done for you. And then notice down in verse. 16.

Says. I chose you. And appointed you. That you should go. And bear fruit. So that whatever you ask. The father. In my name. He may. Give it to you. Now what is this about?

This is echoing. The start. Of John's gospel. In John chapter 1. At the very beginning. When the disciples first follow Jesus. He turns around.

And he says. What do you want? Do you remember? And that's the question for us this morning. Brothers and sisters. What do you want?

[34 : 35] Do you want life? Do you want life? You remember what the disciples said? Where are you staying?

It's the same word that Jesus uses in John 15. Abide. Where are you dwelling? Where are you abiding? What did Jesus say to them? Come and see.

Let's pray together. Lord we give you praise. Because you are the life giver. You are the life.

You are the life. You are the truth. You are the good shepherd. You are the word who was with God from the beginning. And yet you took on flesh.

Lord. That we might be. Reunited to the father. Because of your sacrifice. Because you stood in our place. But also because you were raised from death.

[35 : 34] To give us a whole new life. That we might be a source of blessing to our families. We might be a source of life and blessing to our workmates. To our schoolmates.

Lord thank you for Watermark Church. Thank you for what you're doing here. How you're flowing. Your life is flowing through this church. Send your helper. We pray in Jesus name.

Amen.