

I AM Part 2: "The Vine" (11-12-2017)

This new series . . . As we begin to move towards Christmas this year, instead of exploring the Nativity, we will be looking at the **Identity & Mission** of the child that came into the world.

The series is titled: I AM . . . we will be exploring Jesus identity & mission through the eyes of the apostle John

There are 7 proclamations Jesus made in John's Gospel, about His Identity . . . The 7 "I am" statements

There are 7 proclamations Jesus made in John's Vision (Revelation), to His People . . . The 7 letters to the churches

We will be looking at the connection between Jesus' Identity & Mission, and our own.

John 15:1-8 (ESV)

(1) "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. (2) 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. (3) Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. (4) 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. (5) 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. (6) If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. (7) If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (8) By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Notes:

- Jesus is the Vine & His Father is the Gardener
- The branches will be cut – either pruned or removed.
Some branches need to be pruned, they are draining life & resources from the rest of the tree and it's long past time for them to go!
- Vine is essential for Life! So staying connected to the Vine is crucial
- Dis-connection from the Vine brings withering & death
- Abide and you thrive – you will bear fruit & glorify the Gardener

John 15:9-11 (ESV)

(9) As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. (10) 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. (11) These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Notes: See the progression & connection? Receive God's Love – Follow/Obey Him – Produces Joy. Notice this is the life Jesus lived while here on earth.

Transition to the letter to Ephesus in Rev. 2 (review Ephesian History Notes)

Ephesus . . . History, Geography, Art

History: When Augustus became emperor in 27 BC, the most important change was when he made Ephesus the capital of the whole region. Ephesus then entered an era of prosperity, becoming both the seat of the governor and a major center of commerce.

Map picture: Famous for the Temple of Artemis (Diana) - 1 of the 7 wonders of the ancient world

Temple picture: A model of the Temple of Artemis, at Miniatürk Park, Istanbul, Turkey, attempts to recreate the probable appearance of the first temple.

Diana Picture: Diana of Versailles (It is a Roman copy (1st or 2nd century AD) of a lost Greek bronze original attributed to Leochares, c. 325 BC) now on display at the Louvre in Paris

Artemis (Diana) – She was the Hellenic goddess of the hunt, wild animals, wilderness, childbirth, virginity and protector of young girls, bringing and relieving disease in women; she often was depicted as a huntress carrying a bow and arrows. (Think: Katniss Everdeen)

Biblical Significance: NT – church established by Paul (spent 2-3 years there), then Timothy became the church leader there. The Apostle John lived there and most likely wrote his gospel while there. For Further info see: Acts, Ephesians, 1st & 2nd Timothy

Revelation 2:1-4 (ESV)

(1) "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. (2) "'I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. (3) I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. (4) But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Notes:

- The opening image is that Jesus is in their midst
- Some good fruit – toiling & patient endurance & haven't grown weary
- Some pruning – they have tested & removed false teachers
- But, they have 1 problem, and it's the biggest problem: They abandoned the love they had.

My Depression & Cave story – the burnt up log that won't be lit again

Revelation 2:5 (ESV)

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

Note: The prescription to the problem of lost love is to **Remember** & **Repent**

See Paul's Letter to the Ephesians for a guide of what they should return to . . .

Ephesians opens in 1:3-14 with a description of the spiritual blessings of being in Christ.

In those verses, some form of the phrase “In him” or “In Christ” is used 11 times!

Then Paul says his prayer for them is this . . .

Ephesians 3:14-19 (ESV)

(14) For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, (15) from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, (16) that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, (17) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, (19) and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Note: The goal is to know the love of Christ – it’s the highest and best. It surpasses knowledge; it gives us the full picture.

Jesus offers us a good life now, and we are getting a taste of what’s to come in heaven . . .

Revelation 2:7 (ESV)

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Note: If we overcome by staying connected to our first love (The Vine) we will eat of the Tree of Life, and that’s paradise!!

Additional Notes not covered in the sermon from Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

Paul lays out the plan to walk this out . . . (after describing some roles in the church that help us grow)

Ephesians 4:15-16 (ESV)

(15) Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, (16) from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Note: Our purpose in gathering and all being connected together in unity is . . .

- Speaking truth in love, we grow in every way into Him! Now Paul uses the image of the body – Jesus is the head we are the rest. It's the same basic concept of the Vine & branches.
- And the point remains the same – we grow in an atmosphere of love!

And the final words of the letter . . .

Ephesians 6:24 (ESV)

Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

Note: This life of Grace is exactly what Jesus is describing in John 15 . . .