

AHH LIFE!

## REFLECTING ON JESUS' UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE

Water from Rock, November 28, 2017, Tim Smith

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*"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."*

John 10:10

### INTRODUCTION

In this series we reflect on Jesus' teaching about experiencing the life He came to give us. We will focus on what is customarily called "The Upper Room Discourse", or, Jesus' teaching in the Upper Room (and prayer afterwards) a few hours before He died. In John 13-17 Jesus describes how followers can now live in God's "eternal life", zoe aionios, ("life of the age to come").

TEXT: John 15:1-13

Today's text falls into three sections:

- vv. 1-8 Abiding in Christ produces fruit in believer's life
- vv. 9-11 Jesus' life is the model for a fruitful life
- vv. 12-13 A fruitful life is seen in sacrificial love

Christ is the Vine and believers are branches in the Vine. The Father cares for the Vine and the branches so they produce the most fruit. Fruit is the outflow of life from the Father through the Vine to the branches – love.

#### I. John 15:1-8

*"He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit."*

- The Greek word airo translated "removes" can also be translated as "lifts up". Fallen vines were "lifted up" into position with meticulous care and allowed to heal. (R. K. Harrision, "Vine", *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*) Since the focus here is fruit-bearing the translation "lifts up" is preferred. The

branch is lifted up on a trellis or stake so that it will bear more fruit.

- “What is the purpose of the husbandman? He goes through the vineyard looking for fruit. But here is a branch on the ground, not bearing any fruit. What does he do? Cut it off? No. He raises it up, so the sun can shine upon it, and the air can get to it. Then it will bear fruit... The husbandman must come along and lift the branch, raising it up and bringing the individual believer back into fellowship in order that he or she might bear fruit. God’s purpose is to gather fruit, not render judgment.” John G. Mitchell, *An Everlasting Love*

*Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.*

- The Greek word meno translated “abide” means dwelling in a place – remaining there – making one’s home there.
- What it means to “abide” in Jesus is expanded on in verse 9: *“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love.”*
- To abide in Jesus’ love is to be immersed, surrounded, and empowered by His love. Compare Paul in Ephesians 3 where he prays that believers be *“rooted and grounded in love”* and *“to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge”* (Ephesians 3:17, 19).
- As we abide in the Vine we receive the flow of God’s love into our lives. That love then flows through as fruit to other people.
- “Abiding in Christ” is the counterpart to what the apostle Paul calls “in Christ”. This is the idea found in Paul’s words in Galatians 2:20, *“And it is no longer I who love, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me,”* and Philippians 4:14, *“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”*

*<sup>7</sup>If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*

- Abiding in Jesus involves letting His words abide in us. Jesus connects His words abiding in us, and effectual prayer. When we pray we are not asking God to do whatever we want, but

asking God to do what He wills and has promised.

- “To have his words remaining in them means to share his mind and his will. They are to be caught up into his own focus on the doing of God's will. Accordingly, they will pray for his purposes rather than for their own selfish desires.” (Rodney Whitacre, *John: IVP Series*)
- Putting this together with what Jesus said earlier we see that abiding believers “pray in Jesus’ name”, asking as Jesus would ask (John 14:13-14).
- “An abiding disciple will ask only those things that are in harmony with or subject to God’s will, as Jesus did. The wishes of abiding disciples are the same as Jesus’ wishes.” (Tom Constable, *Expository Commentary on John*)
- God is glorified in answering the prayers of abiding believers.

## II. John 15:9-11

*As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.*

- Everything begins with the Father; the Father is the Vine-dresses; even as the Father has loved so Jesus loves.
- Jesus’ love is like the Father’s love.
- The emphasis is love; love begins with the Father and flows through the Son, to the branches, to other people.
- “Jesus' own love for the Father was seen in his obeying the Father's commands and remaining in his love (v. 10). For the disciples to remain in Jesus' love for the Father, therefore, they must share in Jesus' obedience.” (Rodney Whitacre, *John: IVP Series*)
- Obedience to Jesus’ commandments is key to abiding in His love. Context would suggest that the commandment Jesus has in mind is His commandment to love: “*This is my command, that you love one another as I have loved you*” (v. 12).
- Jesus’ life is the model for a fruitful life.

### III. John 15:12-13

*<sup>12</sup> ‘This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*

- Follow Jesus’ reasoning:
  - Jesus came to lay down His life for others;
  - Jesus’ life is the model for ours;
  - Therefore we are to lay down our lives in love.
- In John’s first letter he describes what love for others means:

*<sup>16</sup>We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. <sup>17</sup>How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? <sup>18</sup>Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. (1 John 3:16-18)*

- John 15:12-13 must not be taken out of context in an attempt to live this in our own power. Such love, humanly speaking, is not possible. It is only possible as we abide in Christ so that His love can flow through us to others.
- This kind of love for others is so central to the Christian life that Jesus says it is the evidence of being His follower: “*By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*” (John 13:35).

### CONCLUSION

In today’s text Jesus presents the way to a truly joyful life:

John 15:11 *“I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.”*