

That You May Believe & Bear Fruit

John 15

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, October 14, 2018

This morning I want to begin our sermon time by inviting you to turn in your Bibles back to the Gospel of John. So, if you would turn with me to the Gospel of John, as you're doing that, there's no better place to make disciples than in the Gospel of John. There's no better place to study the good news, because that's what this book is all about. Over and over and over again, John tells you about Jesus Christ and His plan to save sinners.

And just to get you thinking about what he says in our passage for today, I think there is no uglier word in the English language than the word “hypocrite”. Would you agree? Can you think of an uglier word to use than the word “hypocrite”? If you want to start a fight with someone, call them that and you will have a fight on your hands. If you want to offend someone, just throw that term around. Nobody likes being called a hypocrite.

Which is interesting because the word used to mean “actor” or “performer”. It referred to someone who did plays on a stage, because the Greek actors didn't have props or costumes or sets when they performed, they had masks. They had a disguise to cover their faces, and that's what the word originally meant. It comes from two words in Greek: *hupo*, which means “under” and *krités* which means “mask”. A hypocrite was someone who lived under a mask, performed under a mask. They hid their face from view. And over time, it began to refer to people who hid other things. And it became an insult and a way to rebuke people for their duplicity.

Many years ago, a famous painting was exhibited in an art gallery in London, which showed a monk engaged in prayer with his hands folded and his head bowed, looking very pious until you got closer, and you discovered that the monk was actually squeezing a lemon into a bowl of cider and getting drunk. He wasn't being pious, he wasn't praying at all. Some people are like that with their faith. They look like they're praying, they look like they're doing something holy until you get closer and you realize they're doing something else.

To tell another story, a very pompous looking deacon asked a boy at Sunday school class one time, “Why do people call me a Christian?” And the little boy at the back of the room said, “Because they don't know you very well.” Thought you guys might like that one.

But that's the mark of a hypocrite, right? People say you're a Christian because they don't know you very well. But when they get to know you and when they see under the mask, the jig is up. And it only makes sense that this would be a problem when you consider how many Christians, professing Christians are in the world today.

I just told you that there's about two to three billion people on Facebook. That's about how many professing Christians are around the world today. According to the latest numbers I could find, Christianity is still the largest religion in the world with two to three billion adherents. That means one out of every four people you meet in the world say they are Christians. And it can't all be true, can it? I mean, they're not all the real thing. According to some of the numbers I found,

the dominant religion in Canada is still Christianity, with something like half the population professing it. That probably changes as time goes on. But that can't be true either. When you think of some of the horrible things going on in our society, that can't be real.

So, the question is, how do you tell the real thing from the fake? That's an important question, isn't it? Can you think of a better question to ask right now in this day and age? How do you tell who the hypocrites are, whether someone is saved or not? More importantly, how do you tell if you're saved? How do you tell if you're living under a mask?

I can't think of anything worse than standing before God on Judgment Day and hearing Him say, "Depart from Me, I never knew you." Right? So, how do you avoid hearing that? And that's what I want to talk to you about this morning.

If you want to turn over to John 15, that's our passage for today (if you haven't already turned over there - to John chapter 15). And if you're joining us for the first time this morning, we're in the middle of a series called the "That You May Believe" series because John says that he wrote this book so that you may believe. That's the reason he wrote it. At the end of the Gospel of John in chapter 20:30-31, he says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book; but these have been 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." John actually says at the end of the book, "This is why I wrote it. This is why I gave this Gospel to you, so that you would believe and be saved."

The way John does this (as I've told you before), the way he helps you believe is by giving you a story, then an explanation. That's just his style of writing. If you read through the Gospel of John, he'll give you a story and then an explanation. Then he'll give you another story, then an explanation.

The story here in John 15 is about Jesus washing the disciples' feet. That's the setting for this chapter, that's the event. He gets down on His hands and knees and He washes their feet. And the explanation is found in chapters 14 through 17. This whole section is just one long explanation for that event. It was so shocking to the disciples. By the way, you would think after three years of His ministry, nothing would shock the disciples anymore about Jesus. You think about all the things He did, you would think toward the end of it, there just wouldn't be anything to surprise you anymore. This surprised them. So, He had to spend three long chapters explaining it to them.

And He says, essentially, that, "I did this because I love you." That's the point of John 13. "I washed your feet to show you how to love one another." And it says in chapter 14, "I did this so you would not be troubled." That's what we talked about last week. "I did it so you would not be afraid or worried when I left." Then He says in chapter 15, "I did this so you could spot a hypocrite. I did this so you could tell the real thing from the fake."

And just to give you a timeline for this, if you want to hold your finger in chapter 15 and look over in chapter 13:1, this is the timeline for this event. It says, "Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And during

supper ...” That's when this happens; during supper. That's a reference to the last supper Jesus had before He died. This is a reference to His last meal. It says the “Passover Feast.”

The Northern Jews ate the Passover Feast on Thursday night and the Southern Jews ate it on Friday morning because of the large number of lambs they had to kill for it. And so, on Thursday night, Jesus has this meal with the disciples, and on the next day, Friday morning, as the lambs are being slain for the Southern Jews, Jesus dies for the sin of the world. Talk about perfect timing. He dies as the final Passover lamb. And this supper happens the night before.

I've told you before, the Gospel of John is not divided up chronologically. Which means that the first half of the book covers three years of ministry and the last half covers one night or a night and a day, essentially. John 13 through 17 happens at one meal.

One of the men who was at this meal was Judas Iscariot. That name has come down through the ages as synonymous with hypocrisy; Judas Iscariot. It's interesting if you read the Bible, you'll see a lot of people were named Judas. As a matter of fact, there were two disciples named Judas. Today, nobody's named Judas. You wouldn't even name your fish Judas or your dog.

You think about how hypocritical this guy was, he sat there and got his feet washed with everyone else, didn't he? And then he went out and betrayed Jesus. You want to talk about a hypocrite. He sat there and let Jesus get on His hands and knees and serve him, and then he went on and betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver. He even did it with a kiss. Do you remember that? It was totally a despicable thing to do.

So, Jesus says this about him in chapter 13:10, He says, “And you are clean, but not all of you.” That means, “You're saved. You 12 disciples are clean on the inside, but not all of you because Judas is not. He is a dirty man.” He doesn't call him by name here, but He goes on to make references to him.

Then He quotes in verse 18, He quotes from the Psalms to say, “He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.” To lift up your heel against someone meant to betray them, and to eat bread with them meant to have fellowship with them. So, Jesus was saying, “The one who is going to betray Me, fellowships with Me. He's my friend. And he's going to go out and do this.”

Then He says bluntly in verse 21, He says, “Truly, truly, I say to you that one of you will betray Me.” He just calls it out right there. John doesn't say this, but the other Gospels say at that point in verse 21, the other disciples went around the room saying, “Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I?” In other words, they were wondering, “Am I going to be the traitor?” They knew after three years of ministry that Jesus knew more about them than they did. And they went around the table saying, “Am I going to do this?”

To clear that up in John 15, after Judas leaves, Jesus says, “This is how you can spot a hypocrite. This is how you can tell a true disciple.” And He says in chapter 15 that a true disciple bears fruit. That's how you can tell the real thing from the fake. That's how you take away the mask. That's how you can see what's going on - by looking at someone's fruit.

If you want to look in chapter 15:1-2, we're going to talk about this more in a minute. I just want to read it to you again. Verse 1 says, "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 so that it may bear more fruit." Some of your translations say, "So that it may be even more fruitful."

In the Bible, fruit was synonymous with life. To be fruitful meant that you had life. You were healthy, you were doing well. And to not bear fruit meant that you were not. You were dead or you were dying or sick.

Israel was an agricultural area, it still is. It's a land of farmers, which means they knew about fruit and they wrote a lot about it in the Bible. So, if you go through the Bible, you see olives and grapes and figs and you read about almonds and dates and pomegranates ... I've had trouble pronouncing that word all week. Can someone pronounce that word for me? Yeah, there you go. All right. Forgot to ask my wife. My wife is smarter than me. I'll be reading something in the Bible, "Honey, come here and ..." She said, "But you were in Hebrew class, how do you not know that?" You see apples (I can pronounce apples) ... apples and wheat, which is a fruit of sorts, right? It's a crop. You see barley in the Bible. Those were things that Jews were familiar with. They knew about fruit.

So, for instance, in Galatians 5, you read about the fruit of the Spirit. It says, "For the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." That's what this passage in John 15 is talking about. You can tell a disciple if he has those fruits. Jesus says in Luke 6:43-44, "No good tree produces bad fruit, nor does a bad tree produce good fruit for each tree is known by its fruit." That's pretty simple logic. There's no rocket science to this, Jesus says. If you want to know what kind of tree it is, you look at its fruit and if you want to know what kind of person someone is, you look at their life. John the Baptist says in Matthew 3:8, "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance." Colossians 1:10 says a similar thing, but that's what this is talking about here in John 15. This is the idea. How do you know someone's a disciple? They bear fruit. It's not what saves you. You're saved by grace alone, but it shows that you're saved.

We could use an analogy this way, making apples doesn't make you an apple tree. That's not the way it works. But if you are an apple tree, if God has made you one by His grace, then you will make apples. And that's what this passage is saying. If you're a Christian, you'll do Christian things. And maybe some of you need to hear that this morning. I don't know where everyone's at on this, but maybe some of you are wondering if you're saved or not. You're wondering, "Am I a hypocrite? Am I like Judas?" I want to encourage you, if you're even asking that question, that puts you in good company because the disciples were asking that question. It shows some humility there if you're asking it out of a sincere heart. Maybe some of you are wondering that about someone else - if someone else that you know is the real thing. Jesus says, you can tell by looking at their fruit.

Just a quick word on this here, this sermon, this passage is not meant to be ammunition for you to go home and say, "Pastor Jeremy says you're a hypocrite because you don't have good fruit. You're a liar." I don't want to get any nasty emails over this sermon this week, okay? It's kind of

sort of a joke, but nobody's laughing. You guys are all like, "Eeh." Let me just say this ... I'm saying that with a little bit of sarcasm. But this is not meant to be ammunition, this is meant to be medicine. If you look in the context of John 15, Jesus is not writing this so that the disciples will go around Israel saying, "There's a hypocrite, there's a hypocrite, there's a hypocrite, there's a hypocrite." He's saying this, so they'll be soothed. So that they'll be comforted. This is a comforting passage. If you're wrestling with the issue of assurance of salvation, this is meant to settle that for you. It's not meant to make it worse. There are passages where the authors will say examine yourself. And the idea there is to go home and put yourself under a microscope with the issue of sin. But that's not really the intention of this passage. This passage is for you who are struggling with this issue of assurance to say, "I can see these fruits in my life and I'm encouraged and comforted by that." That's the intention of this.

With that said, if you're taking notes this morning, in John 15, Jesus gives us five ways to tell you're a disciple. So, that's our outline for today if you're taking notes: five ways to tell you're a disciple, five ways to tell you're the real thing and to be comforted in that. My prayer all this week is that this sermon would comfort you this morning, maybe give you some medicine for a troubled heart.

The first way is this, you can tell someone is a disciple by what they trust in for salvation. It's pretty simple. You can tell someone is a disciple by what they trust in for salvation. If you think about it, people trust in a lot of things for salvation today. They trust in a lot of wrong things, but Jesus says, "One way you'll know you're saved is if you're trusting in the right thing. You trust in Me." That's where it starts. That's where it begins. Before you get into all this discussion of works and fruit, He says this in verse 1, here's how the passage starts. He says, "I am the true vine."

It's a very short phrase in English. It's five words. But He uses the definite article here. So, this could mean "I am the only true vine. I am the only source of salvation for you, there are no others." Just to explain this a little bit, there are seven "I am" statements in the Gospel of John. So, there's seven times Jesus says, "I am something." So, for instance, in John 6, He says, "I am the bread of life" or "the bread that came down from heaven." In John 8, He says, "I am the Light of the world, the one who gives light to you." In chapter 10, He says, "I am the door of the sheep and the good shepherd." In chapter 11, He says, "I am the resurrection and the life." In chapter 14 He says, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Here in John 15, to wrap it all up and to tie it all off (this is the last one), He says, "I am the true vine." That's another way of saying "I am the life" like He did earlier. It's the third time He actually makes reference to that idea. And it means that "Just as a branch draws life from a vine, so you draw life from Me. Just as a limb draws its existence from a tree, it draws its identity, purpose, function, all those things, so you draw those things from Me."

You know, it's interesting, I've been in Canada for a little while, but I think a lot of us are from other countries, other places. And I've heard people wrestle with that identity of "my previous life in my other country." But let me tell you, no matter where you're from, you know what you are first? You are a Christian first. You're part of the vine. That's where your identity comes from. All those other things are secondary.

The context for this is interesting because at the end of chapter 14:31, if you want to look up there, He says something that seems kind of random, but it's not. The very last words of chapter 14, He says, "Get up, let us go from here." That implies that they left the Upper Room as He said this. As you're reading John 14 through 17, it doesn't stop and say where they're going until you get to chapter 18, and all of a sudden, they're in the Garden of Gethsemane. But the point or the idea is that in chapter 14, they leave the Upper Room and they go out into the streets of Jerusalem toward the eastern gate and up the Garden of Gethsemane, which was on a place called the Mount of Olives, because there were olive trees everywhere. As a matter of fact, some of those olive trees are close to 2,000 years old today. Some have speculated that there might be some trees today on the Mount of Olives that were there in Jesus' Day. It's pretty a wild thing to think about. And as they're walking by them, Jesus says to His disciples or as they're heading toward them, He says, "I am the true vine. I am the true olive tree. If you want to have life, you come through Me. If you want to produce fruit and be a disciple, you do it through Me. There is no other way." This is the mark of a disciple. This is the difference between the real thing and the fake. The real thing gets this. He doesn't try to come through another way.

I remember witnessing to a guy years ago in Georgia and hearing him say over and over again, "Is there something else? Is there something else?" There is nothing else.

Another way to say this, is that a disciple is a humble man. He's a needy man because he needs the vine. When they were building the Golf Hall of Fame in Augusta, Florida (some of you golf players might like this), they asked for quotes to go in the hallways. And the most popular one was two words, everyone says, who plays the game of golf, "Oh no! My bad!" Listen friends, you can't become a Christian until you say, "My bad. I'm wrong. I can't do it on my own, I need the vine. This is where it begins."

And this is important as well. Let me say it this way, when Jesus says, "I am the true vine," in one sense, He means that all other vines are wrong. Atheism is wrong, agnosticism is wrong, trusting in your own works is wrong, other religions are wrong, and even (and this is important for the context of this) Judaism is wrong. In the first century, many of Israel's coins ... and I don't mean true Judaism - if you are a true Jew, you trust in the Messiah, right? I mean the false stuff that was going on in the first century with the Pharisees and Sadducees ... In the first century, many of Israel's coins had images of a vine on them. And on the walls of Herod's Temple, you saw golden plated vines on the walls of the temple to say that you're saved by being Jewish. You go to heaven by being a child of Abraham. The disciples might've been wrestling with this as they went up to the Mount of Olives. And so Jesus reminds them, "Listen guys, Judas was Jewish and he's going to hell. Judas was a child of Abraham physically and he wasn't going to heaven. It takes more than that to be saved. You must be a child of Abraham truly in your heart. You must trust in the true vine. Trust in Me," He says.

Which leads to the next point, and that is this, you can tell someone is a disciple by what they trust in for salvation. They trust in Christ, they trust in the true vine. It leads to this, secondly, you can tell someone is a disciple if they bear fruit. I've already said a little bit about this, but if someone trusts in the vine, if they're part of the vine, they will bear fruit. As we said earlier, fruit is a sign of life in the Bible. It shows that you're healthy and doing well. And in a similar way, it shows you're a disciple. Matthew Henry, the great puritan commentator said, "From a vine, we

look for grapes and from a Christian, we look for Christianity.” Boy, that's simple, isn't it?” When I was a youth pastor, I used to tell my youth if it has webbed feet and feathers and quacks and hangs out at a pond, you call it a duck. And stop me if I'm going too fast. It smells like a duck, looks like a duck, hangs out at ponds, you know.

Jesus says, as He goes on in verse 1, He says, “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.” He says, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear even more fruit.” Just a few thoughts on this. A vinedresser is another word for a “gardener” or “one who takes care of the vine”. We might call them landscapers today. The idea is that Jesus is the vine. He is the life and the Father takes care of those who are connected to Him. He watches over them and protects them. Because verse 2 says, “Those who do not bear fruit, He takes them away. And those who bear fruit, He prunes so that they will be even more fruitful,” which we'll talk about here in just a moment.

But if you notice, there's two types of branches here, two types of people who connect them self to Jesus: the live ones and the dead ones. And this is where the analogy breaks down a little bit, because the idea is that the dead ones were never really connected to Him to begin with. But it says for the dead ones, the Father takes them away. And in the words of verse 6, “He gathers them and burns them.” That's a reference to hell. It's a reference to the eternal burning where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched as Mark 9:48 talks about. This is the place where Revelation 20 says, “It will be a lake of fire,” meaning it will consume you completely. You jump into a lake, you get entirely wet. You jump into the lake of fire, you're entirely burned. That's the idea of the analogy. The idea is that this is a place of judgment. You will be judged for your lack or absence of any fruit. I mean, the idea is if you're dead here, you'll be dead there. If you have no life in this world, you'll have no life in that world.

Now, Jesus doesn't go into a lot of detail on this here in this analogy, but the idea here is not that you're perfect, the idea is that you're just showing signs of life as a Christian. I talk to people all the time that say, “I'm not sure I'm saved.” And I say, “Well, the fact that you're even wrestling with this is good news for you. I mean, if you were a dead branch, you probably wouldn't even wrestle with that issue. You wouldn't care. And the fact that you care is good, because it's a sign of life. But if you have no life, the idea is that you're cut away and burnt.”

Like it is today, gardeners in the first century would go through a plant and cut off all the branches that would take away the strength or the life of the plant. They would pull out their clippers and snip, snip, snip, and put them in a pile and burn them. And in a similar way, Jesus says, “My Father does that with my disciples. He takes away the dead ones. He doesn't do it in this life because they're still dead branches in the church today. He doesn't do it in this world, but He does it in the next.” And if you want to know if He'll do that for you, Jesus says, you look at your fruit. You look at the things that are coming out of your life.

If you're wondering what kind of things those are, what kind of fruit this is talking about - this is talking about the fruit of the Spirit like we mentioned earlier. That's the kind of fruit we're referring to here. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control. It's not about perfection in those things, but direction. Are you growing more loving? Are you growing more joyful? Are you growing more peaceful? This is the peaceful fruit of righteousness from

Hebrews 12:11. Is your life growing in righteousness; the fruit that is pure, reasonable, full of mercy and unwavering in James 3:17.

You can say it this way, this is the fruit that washes people's feet like Jesus did. And it loves those who are your enemies. I saw a funny article this week that said, "A local Christian shines by loving people who are just like him." That's not what Jesus is talking about here. This is loving people that are not like you. That's something only a Christian can do. A woman took her husband to the doctor's office and after his check-up, the doctor said, "Your husband is suffering from a very serious infection." And the husband who is hard of hearing said, "What did he say?" And his wife said, "He says, you're sick." And the doctor went on and said, "But there's hope. You just need to reduce his stress and give him a healthy breakfast and be pleasant, kind and nice to him and never worry him, and don't yell at him or argue with him and give into his every whim." And the husband said, "What did he say?" And his wife said, "He says, we're going to die." Been waiting all week to tell you guys that. "I can't wait for Sunday, I got to tell them this." Okay, that's not the kind of fruit Jesus is talking about here, right? I think you understand that. It's good fruit. Fruit that will help your husband recover in a situation like that. Not kill him.

It leads to another way you can tell someone is a true disciple: that's by being pruned. You can tell by what they trust in for salvation. You can tell by their fruit, what comes out of their life. And a third one that's pretty convicting and interesting in the passage is that they're being pruned. If you're part of the vine, God will prune you. He'll put you through hard times.

John Bunyan said, "Christians are like bells, and the harder you hit them, the better they sound." And Jesus says, "Christians are like plants, and the harder you prune them, the better they sound. The more fruit they produce." And if you look in verse 2, it says, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, the Father takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."

The word "prune" there is an interesting word that means "to clean". It's actually the same word that's used for "clean" in verse 3. So, the word "prune" and the word "clean", they're both the word *kathairó* in Greek. It means to go through a plant and clean it of all the dead wood. You go through a plant and you remove everything that doesn't belong. For the previous branches, in verse 2, the Father takes them away and burns the whole thing. For these branches, the Father takes part of them away, the useless part, the dead part and He burns that. He doesn't burn the whole thing. He just burns the things that are unhealthy.

In his commentary on John, Merrill Tenney describes it this way. He says,

Gardening consists primarily of pruning. In pruning a vine, two principals are generally observed. First, all dead wood must be removed and second, the live wood must be drastically cut back. Dead wood harbours insects and disease and may cause the vine to rot. And live wood must be trimmed back in order to prevent such heavy growth that the health of the vine is in jeopardy. Vineyards in places like Israel and Palestine, looked like a collection of baron bleeding stumps in the spring. But in the fall, they're filled with luxuriant fruit. As a farmer wields the pruning knife, so God prunes His saints. He cuts dead wood out from among them and he often cuts back the live woods so far that His

methods seem cruel, but from those who have suffered the most, there often comes the greatest amount of fruitfulness.

I could ask some of you guys, how have you grown so much in the Lord? Do you know what you would say if you were honest? You would say, "I suffered. God was pruning me."

And verse 3 sheds a lot of light on this, because it says, "You're already clean because of the word which I spoke to you." In other words, you are clean by the Word. It's the Word that does the cleaning and the Father applies that to your life. I heard another pastor say that trials are the handle, the Word is the knife or the blade and the Father is the one holding it and applying it where it needs to go in your life. He puts you through trials and He prunes you here and He prunes you there. He puts you through pain and hard times and a trip to the hospital and He prunes you here and He prunes you there. You lose your job and He prunes you. You lose your friends and He cuts away the dead wood. You lose your health and He does it that way, all to drive you back to the Word of God.

See, that's how you know you're saved. It's not whether you suffer or not. Listen, lost people suffer, saved people suffer. Christians suffer and people of other religions suffer. The difference is, Christians go back to the Word of God. You don't go back to evil things. The Word of God is like a magnet to you and when you get shaken up and rattled by life and stretched and squeezed and whatever else, you just keep going back to it. As a matter of fact, you go to the hospital, the doctor says, "Do you need a book?" And you say, "I just need my Bible, that's all I want to read right now."

It's been said that the same sun that melts the wax, hardens the clay. And oftentimes the same trials that harden an unbeliever, soften a Christian. That's how you know you're a Christian.

My first opportunity to preach, I started preaching originally was ... Boy, it's been a long time ... 20 years ago in a nursing home. My college tennis coach knew I wanted to do ministry. He knew about a nursing home, they wanted someone to come in on Sunday morning and give a service to the people there. And you find out in nursing homes (at least I found in that one), there are people at the end of their life that are as sweet as candy, right? They're the nicest people in the world. And then there's some just crotchety people, some crusty people. They're both suffering, they're both in a hard time, but one of them is becoming soft, and that's how you know you're saved, is if you're going in that direction. C. S. Lewis was once asked, "Why do the righteous suffer?" And he said, "Because they're the only ones who can handle it." And that's what this is referring to here.

It leads to a fourth way to tell that you're a disciple (and I'll go through these next ones pretty quickly). And that is: you abide in Christ. You abide in Christ. You go through those trials and you don't do it perfectly, and you don't do it without sin, and you don't do it without struggling, but you stay with Jesus Christ. Some people go through trials and they fall away, but a true disciple abides with Christ. The disciples were about to go through the trial of their life. Their leader, their Messiah, their Lord was about to die on a cross. That's the worst thing you could think about happening to the Messiah. But they ended up staying with Him. They left at first and came back. In verse 4, Jesus refers to this ... (and I won't read all of this for the sake of time) ...

But if you just look in verse 4, it says, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.” If you look down in verse 8, tying it to all this, He says, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.” In verse 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.” I didn't read all of this for the sake of time, but if you want to go home and read verses 4 through 11, you'll notice that the word “abide” or “remain” occurs there nine times in your Bibles. Nine times, more than once per verse. Because Jesus says over and over again, “Abide in Me, abide in Me, abide in Me.” Why? Because verse 4 says, “You cannot produce fruit without Me. You won't know you're saved.” Verse 5 says, “Apart from Me, you can do nothing.” Verse 6 says, “If you don't abide, you will dry up and burn.” Verse 8, which we just read, says, “This proves that you're My disciple, by abiding.” It's been said the one fruit you can't fake is the fruit of perseverance. You just stay with Christ day in, day out, day in, day out.

You could say it like this, it doesn't matter if you're a Christian yesterday or the day before or the day before that, it matters that you're a Christian today. That's what God's concerned with. I meet so many people who were so terrified because they say, “I don't know when I was saved, I don't know when I first believed, I don't have a testimony like that,” and it keeps them up at night and it makes them anxious. And you have to remind them, “What matters is that you're saved now.” Let me tell you something, if you were saved then, you'll be saved now, amen? If you were saved ten years ago, you'll be saved right now. And that's what you have to focus on. “Am I abiding with Christ? Am I staying with Christ?” Listen, Judas left Christ, the disciples left Christ. The difference was the disciples came back. That's the difference. They both messed up, they blew it big time. Remember Peter's story? He denies Him three times? I think twice to a slave girl, and he came back. Kind of an interesting story (just a little note on that), when Peter denies Jesus, the next time you see him with the Apostle John, they're going to the empty tomb. Remember that? And the idea seems to be that it was John who pulled him back off the ledge. But Peter abided with Christ, he stayed with Him. And it showed that he was a disciple.

It leads to a final way to tell you're a true disciple. Just to review this, you can tell someone is saved by what they trust in for salvation. They trust in Christ, they trust in the vine. And you can tell if they bear fruit; fruit of the Spirit, fruit of repentance. You can tell you're a disciple if you're being pruned and abiding with Christ like we just talked about. You persevere, you stay with Him. All that leads to a final way to tell this, that you're a disciple, and this just flows out of other ones. It just ties off the passage. And that is: you don't look like the world does. A fifth way, a final way to tell you're a true disciple, Jesus says, is you don't look like the world does. You don't look like Judas. You don't look like a dead branch. If you read in verses 18 through 19, after talking about “abiding in Me” and those sorts of things, Jesus says in verse 18, He says, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. And if you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.”

The word “world” has a lot of meanings in the Bible. But here it means “the worldly system” or “the worldly way of thinking”. Jesus says, “Because you don't think like the world, the world hates you. Because you don't fit into their system or do what they do, they can't stand you. The world is not indifferent to you, they hate you. Why? Because you take away their mask. You

show them what loving God truly looks like.” Verse 20 says, “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” If you remember the setting for this, Judas left the disciples. He went out to betray Jesus because Jesus took off his mask. He pointed out his hypocrisy. And Jesus says, “If they did that to Me, they’ll do this to you. If they hated Me, they’ll hate you for a slave is not greater than his master. But when it does, when that happens,” the Lord says, “Be encouraged because it shows that you’re My disciples.” And this comes in all sorts of different forms and ways.

Some of you make your neighbours mad at you because you’re faithful to one man, you’re faithful to one woman. And they feel guilty about that, when they look at your life and the hatred comes out. Some of you do this because you’re parenting your kids and the world sees that and makes them feel guilty. There’s lots of ways this happens. In one of his journal entries, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, gave a really interesting illustration of this. He said,

On Sunday morning, May 5th, I preached in St. Anne’s Church and was asked not to come back again. Then on Sunday evening, May 5th, I preached in St. John’s Church and was asked not to come back there. On Sunday morning, May 12th, I preached in St. Jude’s and was told to get out and stay out. On Sunday morning, May 19th, I preached somewhere else and was told never to return. Then on Sunday morning, May 26th, I preached in a meadow and I got chased away by a bull someone let out during the sermon.

I mean, that may not happen that way to you, but it could happen another way because you take away the world’s mask - you’re different.

And let me just ask you this this morning, are you different today? That’s the point of this passage. Do you stand apart from the world? As we’ve walked through these marks of a true disciple, do you have these? Are you trusting in the vine? Are you producing fruit? Are you being pruned? Are you abiding in Christ? Had a bad day today, okay, you get up tomorrow and you run back to the Saviour. Are you doing that? I don’t know everyone in here, but I was encouraged as I was reading this passage, because I see this in your lives. I mean, from what I can see, I think this list describes our congregation. You’re doing a great job of this. But I still need to ask, what kind of branch are you? Are you a live one or a dead one? Are you healthy or are you sick?

And if you are sick this morning, what are you going to do about it? If you’re dead, how are you going to respond? I want to tell you that you can live this morning by trusting in Christ. You can be a live branch by coming to the vine. The door is open for you to do that. You can come right where you are. One more story. A carpenter once showed up for a tent meeting after it was over, and he asked one of the workers, he said, “How do I get to heaven? What must I do to be saved?” And the worker said, “You can’t do anything.” The carpenter said, “What do you mean I can’t do anything?” And the worker said, “The work has already been done for you. Jesus already died on the cross. Now, there’s nothing left for you to do, but believe. Will you believe today? Will you be saved?” And I want to ask you the same thing this morning. Will you believe? Will

you trust in the one that did all the work for you and be different from the world? Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for this Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for the depth of what He has done for us. We are spending this whole series studying one topic and one topic only, and that is the life of Jesus, and we'll never get to the bottom of it. Even in a passage like this, I feel like we've just scratched the surface. But Lord, I pray that Your Word this morning would go deep into our hearts. I pray for those who are here that they would be comforted. I pray that they would look at their life, not in a microscope, legalistic way, but in a comforting, reassuring way and say, "By the grace of God, by His mercies, I see those things in me. And I see them because of the vine. I don't see them because of me. I see them because of Your mercy, Lord, not because of what I've done." Lord, I pray for our dear people here this morning, that they would see that.

If there are any here who don't see that Lord, I pray that they would remember the one who has done the work for them on the cross, and they would come to Him in faith and repentance. I pray Lord, that somebody would come now and not wait. Lord, thank you that this gift is a gift for all to receive. Thank you for that what Jesus has done, can save any sinner, and it can save any who are here today. Lord, I pray it would do so and You will be glorified. And we pray this in Christ name, amen.