

4/29/2018

“Stay Connected in Jesus”

Scripture: John 15:1-8

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Resurrection

**Theme: Jesus is the true vine, from which we draw the waters of life and spiritual nourishment, that we might bear good fruit. To do so, we need to remain connected to him and in him with other believers in Christ.**

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This past week, I had difficulty receiving email on two of my email accounts, including pastorneilg@verizon.net. Thankfully, I was able to go online directly to my Verizon account, which is now operated by AOL, since Verizon bought them out last year. Then, I remembered that it's happened before, when Verizon changed the incoming server name for security reasons. By seeing which name worked on another account, I was able to change the name of the incoming mail server, and reconnect the two that were not working.

The problem of not being able to get email whenever I wanted it made me think of what it was like only having postal or “snail mail”, received only once a day!

And, there are so many ways to be connected by various service providers like cable, satellite, dish antenna, WiFi, and even more.

In our world of modern technology most of us realize the importance of staying connected by the internet. It's something we may all too often take for granted, until there's a glitch, or we're no longer connected and can't find what we need or do the work we want to accomplish.

And, most of us find some value to being connected to others through various social media networks. Some are on Facebook every day or even more often than that. Then, there's texting or Messenger, and a host of others I'm not even familiar with.

**In today's gospel passage, Jesus tells us the one most important connection we will ever have.**

He doesn't talk about connecting with an internet “cloud” of computer data, but of a spiritual connection with God through Jesus himself.

Jesus is the ultimate server that won't fail us! Remember he said of himself that he came not to be served, but to serve. (Matthew 20:28) We can depend on him for grace and love. He can change our lives forever! He can make our other relationships more meaningful and loving.

Although in some ways there is a modern day metaphor here, Jesus uses one which would have been familiar to his hearers.

† **Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower.”**

*“... 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.”*

Our connection with God in Jesus is already good. We are accepted or made clean by his word which we have received.

Now we are to produce positive results from that connection. We are to bear “good fruit” as Jesus says.

Here, we realize that in his metaphor of a vine and its branches, Jesus is not talking about something like English Ivy or some other vine that does not bear fruit. He is not talking about some vine that may look good, but left unattended for a while, will grow up over and in just about everything in sight. It can choke the life out of plants, shrubs and even trees. It can leech the moisture out of brick, stone and mortar. Believe me; I know this all too well.

No, Jesus does not speak of a vine which strangles life out or even overtakes everything, but one which produces fruit to describe the relationship between his disciples and himself. He most likely means the grapevine, a common vine in Israel and long a symbol of the people of Israel (Psalm 80, Jeremiah. 2:21, Hosea 14:7, etc.).

And the “branches” of our lives, or of his disciples or followers, and of his church, which do not bear fruit, are cut off and thrown into the fire and burned. This could well be a parable of eventual eternal judgement.

On a more positive note, those “branches” that do bear fruit are pruned, so that they may bear even more fruit. Sometimes, we may feel God “pruning” the parts of our lives, including our thoughts, words, actions and relationships, which don’t bear the good fruit of the Holy Spirit. This is how we learn and grow in Christ, to be more like him.

He goes on to say . . .

† **“Remain in me as I 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. 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.”*

Jesus speaks these words, found only in John’s gospel account, at the last Supper. He shares them just after promising the coming of the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send to be their Advocate, comforter and teacher after Jesus has returned to God in heaven.

Actually, these eight verses in their entirety can teach us several things about our relationship with Jesus and with our Heavenly Father, but the central point of it may be summed up with the simple injunction and advice for all of Christ’s followers to remember – **abide in The Vine**. Or, as we may say these days, **stay connected in Jesus**.

**Stay connected with and in Jesus every day, even continually . . .** through prayer, reading and reflecting on his word, joining in Holy Communion, and following the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Remain in him who gives life and that in abundance. Remain in him who enables us to bear good fruit in our lives. Remain in him who makes all the other aspects of our lives more worthwhile and most fulfilling.

Jesus concludes . . .

† **“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”**

I invite you to join with me and others as we come to the table to be or stay connected in Christ Jesus.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, may your life be truly enriched, nurtured, sustained and blessed as you remain or stay connected in him!

**For Reflection:**

**1. What “pruning” has God done in your life?**

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**2. How do you “remain”, stay connected, in Jesus Christ?**

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**3. In what ways is God being glorified by the “fruit” of your discipleship?**

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