



THE VINE & the Branches

Part 8: Parting Words

Introduction

Today we come to the end of our journey, the *joyful* opportunity we have had this fall to explore the rich imagery and revelation which Jesus presented to His Apostles and, through John, to billions of people throughout church history. The sacred text we have been reading in John 15 is nothing less than the inspired, inerrant, infallible, and authoritative word of the Incarnate Lord, the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Lord of Glory. And now, having carefully examined Jesus' final message to his beloved disciples before His arrest, it is my prayer that we (the Branches), will reap the abundant blessings of abiding in Christ (the Vine) and glorify the Father (the Vinedresser) by bearing fruit, more fruit, and much fruit for the remainder of our earthy lives.



The Red Vineyards at Arles, 1888
Vincent van Gogh
Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow



Introduction

The eleven men who accompanied Jesus to Gethsemane were His chosen Apostles, the ones He had personally appointed and trained to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. His concern at this late hour was on the *future work* they would be engaged in after His death and resurrection. This was the opportune time for Jesus to lead them into a deeper understanding of the nature, honors, hardships, and joys of their calling. A.B. Bruce writes: “Jesus wanted the men He selected to understand that He expected more of them than just not being discouraged when He left the earth. They must be great leaders in the world and permanently leave their mark on its history. In fact, they must take His place, act in His stead, and carry on the work He had begun. They would do it in His name and by His power.”

Introduction

As we have already seen, Jesus began His allegory by identifying the various roles related to a vineyard: Vine, Vinedresser, and Branches. By using extended metaphors, He was opening their eyes to the realities of living life *coram Deo* (before the face of God) and the absolute importance of understanding the mystical union (sap) they would have with their Savior and Lord. “My Father desires fruit,” Jesus would tell them; “and I do as well. The way He deals with you will be regulated by His objective to increase your fruitfulness.”

The revelation Jesus gave them in the first 10 verses, He now applies in verses 11-16.

John 15:11-16

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves; for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you” (NASV).

Themes From John 15:11-16

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves; for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you” (NASV).

An Outline of John 15:11-16

- **Fulness of Joy** (vs. 11)
- **Love One Another**
 - As I have loved you (vs. 12)
 - Lay down your life for your friends (vs. 13)
- **Friends vs. Slaves**
 - Friends - if you do what I command you (vs. 14)
 - I have made known to you all that I have heard from My Father (vs. 15)
- **Chosen and Appointed for Fruit-Bearing** (vs. 16)
 - I chose and appointed you
 - The fruit you bear must have staying power (abide)
 - In the name of Jesus: Whatever you ask of the Father (prayer)



“That My Joy May Be in You”

- **Joy**, *n.*, “a vivid emotion of pleasure arising from a sense of well-being or satisfaction; the feeling or state of being highly pleased or delighted; exultation of spirit; gladness, delight” (OED).
- “Joy is bred from that peace which all who are justified freely have with God” (Calvin).
- “True joy, Christ’s joy, springs out of the self-sacrifice of love....The love of Christ was the love of absolute self-sacrifice. Such self-sacrifice is the fulness of joy” (Westcott).
- “Joy is delight in God because of the salvation in Christ, the reconciliation, and being received as children” (Ridderbos).

St. Augustine: “This Is It”

“There is a joy which is not given to the ungodly, but to those who love Thee for Thine own sake, whose joy Thou Thyself art. And this is the happy life, to rejoice to Thee, of Thee, for Thee; this is it, and there is no other. For they who think there is another, pursue some other and not the true joy. Yet is not their will turned away from some semblance of joy.”



Augustine of Hippo

AD 354 - 430

C.S. Lewis on *Joy*

“I call it Joy – an unsatisfied desire which is more desirable than any other satisfaction.” It “is a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and Pleasure. Joy (in my sense) has indeed one characteristic, and one only, in common with them; the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again...I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world. But then Joy is never in our power and pleasure often is.”





“I sometimes wonder
whether all pleasures are
not substitutes for Joy.”

C.S. Lewis
1898 – 1963

Jesus' Joy



“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of faith, **who for the joy set before Him endured the cross,** despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1-2).

Our Only Source of Joy

- “But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that **they may have My joy made full in themselves**” (Jn. 17:13).
- “And the **disciples were continually filled with joy** and with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:52).
- “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and **joy in the Holy Spirit**” (Rom. 14:17).
- “Now **may the God of hope fill you with all joy** and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13).

Our Only Source of Joy

- “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).
- “You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with **the joy of the Holy Spirit**” (I Thess. 1:6).



Fresco of the Holy Spirit Among the Angels

St. Francis of Assisi Church
Prague, Czech Republic

Joy Made Full

- “...while He was blessing them, He parted from them. And **they returned to Jerusalem with great joy**” (Lk. 24:52).
- John the Baptist: “...the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. And so **this joy of mine has been made full**” (Jn. 3:29).
- “Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; **ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full**” (Jn. 16:24).
- “And the **disciples were continually filled with joy** and with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:52).
- “Be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).



A.B. Bruce

“What Jesus is saying is that the continuation of His joy in the disciples and the completion of their own joy as believers in Him depended on their being fruitful. The emphasis in the first phrase lies in the words “may be in you.” Jesus has joy in His disciples even now, even though they are spiritually immature, in the same way that a gardener has joy in the clusters of grapes when they are green, sour, and inedible. He rejoices in them now, not because of what they are, but because of what they will become - ripe fruit. If that promise is not fulfilled, He would feel like the gardener feels when the blossom is nipped by frost or the green fruit destroyed by mildew. He would feel like a parent feels when a son does not live up to the potential he demonstrated in his youth.



A.B. Bruce

He can endure delay but not failure. He can wait patiently until the growth process is completed. He can put up with all the immaturity, because He knows they will ripen. But if they never ripen - if the children never become men, if the pupils never become teachers - then He will exclaim in bitter disappointment: 'Woe is Me! My soul desired ripe fruit. Is this what I find after waiting so long?'"

Joy In Heaven

- “Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, **enter into the joy of your master**” (Mt. 13:21,23).
- “I tell you that in the same way, **there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents**, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance...There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Lk. 15:7,10).



Joy in Sorrow and Affliction

- “Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but **your sorrow will be turned to joy**” (Jn. 16:20). “I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and **no one takes your joy away from you**” (Jn. 16:22).
- “I am filled with comfort, I am **overflowing with joy in all our affliction**” (II Cor. 7:4; cf. 8:2).



No Greater Love



- “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (Jn. 15:13).
- “The implied end of Christ’s love – death for another – is regarded as the final aim of human self-devotion” (Wescott).

Christ's Friends

- “You are my friends, if you do what I command you” (Jn. 15:14).
- “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of **Abraham, my friend...**” (Is. 41:8).
- “And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,’ and he was called **the friend of God**” (James 2:23).
- Jesus takes the Apostles into His confidence: “All things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you” (vs. 15).



Conclusion

“You didn’t choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won’t spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you.”

- *The Message*, Eugene Peterson