

# Make Yourself at Home

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## Oct 7

Text: John 15:1-9 (The Message Paraphrase)

1–3 “I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn’t bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken.

4 “Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can’t bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can’t bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

5–8 “I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you’re joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can’t produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.

9 “I’ve loved you the way my Father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love...”

Peterson, E. H. (2005). *The Message: the Bible in contemporary language* (Jn 15:1–17). Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress.

Intro: Lucky Californians know about grapes and vines. The destination wedding I officiated a few weeks ago.

The hard word: We aren’t the church we used to be.

Make yourself at home. Abiding is enough. Our joy comes when we don’t know where we stop and Jesus starts.

The reason abiding is enough is because abiding is how we experience fruit that lasts.

NOTES from 2011 sermon

1. Pruning ≠ Punishment

We assume if we are being pruned it must be because we did something wrong.

I believe we are more thoughtful, more humble, more compassionate, and more grounded in our convictions as a result of what we have learned.

Tough times lead to greater connection

## 2. Abiding is Enough.

We may not realize how potent this image is to Jesus' first hearers, nor do we realize how provocative it would be for him to say "I am the vine." The "I am" figures Jesus uses all come from ancient Jewish traditions. If Jesus left the Upper Room in 14:30, he may have stopped at the temple and come to the entrance of the Holy Place. Ancient sources describe how the steps there led to a linen curtain covered with purple, scarlet, and blue flowers. Solid gold chains hung alongside the curtain from the door beam. Above the curtain grew an enormous grapevine of pure gold, representing Israel. Wealthy citizens could bring gifts that would be added to the vine by metal workers as tendrils, grapes, and leaves. One grape cluster was said to be the height a person! This old and sacred image was meant to represent the covenant people of God, planted and tended by God so the Israel would produce fruit. In the Old Testament, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea all describe Israel as the vine, and then chastise the people for not bearing the fruit God expects.

In his final "I am" saying the gospel, Jesus claims this image for himself, replacing Israel and declaring that he is the true planting, the fullest expression of God's covenant love, and the means by which all people may be part of God's abundant fruit-bearing, life-giving purpose.

This is the only "I Am" statement that includes us. I am the vine *and therefore* you are the branches. This is the way it was always meant to be.

**Abiding means remaining. We want to "check in" with Jesus and go do our thing, or try to get ahead of what he's doing. That's not abiding.**

## 3. Abiding → Fruit that Lasts

Jesus doesn't offer happiness here, but his joy. It comes when we fully rely on God, hearing and obeying. The joy that Jesus offers is complete, mature, robust joy. This joy is a different from our temporary happiness as grape juice is from the finest vintage. They may look the same to the casual observer, but one taste... well, there is no comparison.

The invitation Jesus offers is to abide, and to love. His command to his disciples is to love one another as he has loved them, so that the quality of love would show they abide in him. John reflects on the quality of this love in 1 John 4:18 – "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear..." Abiding in Jesus means there is nothing to fear. We have nothing to fear in the future of our congregation, or the future of our denomination. Presbyterians have grown increasingly intolerant of one another. Genuine love, genuine tolerance are a choice.

But isn't abiding passive? Does it mean we do nothing? Hardly. Fruit proves it.

My prayer: That a few years from now someone would come back onto our campus and say, "This reminds me of the way things used to be," and a member of our church who has gone through this season of pruning and growing and fruitfulness will say, "I can understand what you mean, but things are really different here. Yes we have lots of people worshipping, and ministry happening, etc., but what's happening now has a very different quality to it.

If we abide in the Son, we are exactly where we need to be to bear fruit. It's not as complicated as we make it.

CONCLUSION:

The hard word: We aren't the church we used to be.

The good word: We are becoming the church Christ wants to us to be.