

The Divine Vinedresser

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Preacher: Dov Cohen

[0 : 00] Amen. Show us your glory this morning. Lord, come and speak. We're here to hear your word.! Amen.

So, please take your seats. And for the benefit of our guests, my name is Dove Cohen. I'm a pastor here at Providence Community, and I have the privilege of opening up God's word for us this morning. So, if you're a guest here, we're glad you're here this morning. Just pray that God blesses you and you hear from the Lord.

And for today's message, we're going to be expounding John 15, which is just a wonderfully rich passage. I'm so excited for this message for you guys.

John 15, the title of today's message is The Divine Vinedresser. The Divine Vinedresser. And the main idea of today's passage is that God, God will bear fruit through his children.

[1 : 27] God will bear fruit through his children. Now, isn't it just so sweet to sing praise to the Lord? Just to sing to him and just enjoy being in his presence and thinking about who he is, what he's done, and it's just sweet.

And kind of talking to sweet, I think that everyone should have the blessing of a sweet grandmother. I had a wonderfully sweet grandmother. Her name was Grandma Lee.

And she was just kind and thoughtful. She was a prolific writer. And she loved, Grandma Lee loved to bless her grandchildren with especially delightful foods.

So she would get pizza, doctor up the pizza, you know, tombstone pizza or something. She would doctor up soup for us. And she would especially, she made this cereal where she would just cut up bananas and strawberries, put blueberries on top.

And that was Grandma Lee. She was just a sweet lady, sweet grandmother. And so I became a huge fan. You know, I'm a little kid. I became a huge fan of good fruit because of Grandma Lee.

[2 : 39] And I love, so I'm a big fan of good fruit. So I'm also grateful for men like a John Chapman. If you ever heard of John Chapman, he was a determined cultivator of good fruit, especially apples.

So you may have heard of him, Johnny Appleseed. And he bore great fruit for Christ through his life, literally and figuratively. So he, he was a Christian, and one of his famous quotes, he says, do not grieve for me, for I shall pass on to where my apples will bloom forever.

So Chapman was determined to bear good fruit, delicious, beautiful, nourishing fruit for the Lord through his life. And he imaged, he imaged God because God is a fruit-bearing God.

God is a fruit-bearing God. And in John 15 this morning, our passage for today, we're going to get a glimpse into the heart of our Lord and his zeal to bear fruit through us, his children.

We're going to see many things about God in this passage. Things that are going to give us hope and joy and confidence in him that no matter what is happening in our lives, God is and will bear fruit through that.

[4 : 10] So we're going to see Jesus as the true fruit-bearing vine. We're going to see God's omnipotent determination, his utter determination to bear fruit through his children.

We're going to explore what that fruit is, and we're going to see that the way in which we bear fruit for God is by abiding in Christ. By abiding in Christ.

So by the end of our time together, I pray that we'll be encouraged and comforted and strengthened in the knowledge that God is the divine vine dresser, that Jesus, Jesus is the true vine, that we are the fruit-bearing branches that God is cultivating to bear delicious, beautiful, nourishing, good fruit through.

Before we get too far, though, let's read the passage. John 15. I'm the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser.

Every branch of me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean, because of the word that I have spoken to you.

[5 : 34] Abide in me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

I am the vine. You are the branches. Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.

For apart from me, you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers. And the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this, my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

[6 : 34] Abide in my love. 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.

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this, that someone laid down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you.

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends. For all 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 abide.

[7 : 35] So that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another. Dear God, would you speak now?

Would you please bless the preaching of your word? All right, so let's start out with the context of John 15.

The context of John 15, we're talking about, we're within Jesus' farewell discourse. His farewell discourse. And Jesus is doing many things in his farewell discourse.

He just celebrated the Passover with his disciples. He just celebrated the Passover, giving them vital instructions, and he gave them the ordinance of communion in this.

And he made an eternally meaningful memory with them. This meal, it was a deeply personal experience with the Lord.

[8 : 38] He's giving his final instructions before he's moving to his arrest and death. So these words are just exceedingly precious as Jesus is moving towards his arrest and death.

And he's aiding his disciples through them to believe in them, to believe in him, and bear fruit for him, and to not fall away.

So that being said, that's the context of today's passage. Let's now mine it out for all the gold that's in it. So point one. Point one for today.

Well, six points today. Point one. Jesus, the true vine. Jesus, the true vine. So the first observation I want to make about this passage revolves around Jesus being the true vine.

So John 15, one. It says, Jesus says, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. Now this imagery of Jesus being the true vine, it is an Old Testament theme that is generally used to describe Israel.

[9 : 49] It reminds us of Isaiah 5, where the prophet sings of God's vineyard that God planted and cared for and cultivated.

And he'd done that for generations. Isaiah talks about how God had planted the vineyard on a fertile hill.

He had dug it and cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines. And he built a watchtower over the vineyard to watch over this vineyard.

So it would yield fruit, grapes. But it didn't. It yielded bad fruit. It yielded wild grapes.

So this image of God planting a vineyard and taking care of it, it pointed to Israel. God had rescued Israel from Egypt, as we know. God had walked with them on the Exodus, ultimately to Canaan.

[10 : 47] He planted them in Israel, a land flowing with milk and honey and with cities that they didn't build or deserve. And God had called Israel to walk with him to obey him.

But Israel, they didn't do that. They drifted. They rebelled. They walked away from God, their king and redeemer.

They poured wild fruit, bad fruit, disobedience, corruption. They didn't honor marriage or the Sabbath or children.

And so God disciplines them. He removes the hedge of protection around them and he allows them to be devoured. And so now, Jesus is coming and Jesus is proclaiming himself to be the true vine. He's taking the mantle from Israel and he's claiming it for himself. He is saying that he is God's chosen. That he's the one whom God will bear fruit through.

[11 : 58] That he is God's ultimate beloved. Israel, they failed. Israel failed. They didn't bear fruit for God and what the law, what the law was powerless to do, God's now going to accomplish through the gospel, through the salvation, through Jesus.

So it's a word of application to our Jewish friends, to my Jewish brethren. you are no longer the chosen people of God.

You're no longer God's vineyard. Jesus is God's chosen. Jesus is God's chosen and those Jesus chooses to be his own.

So, what should a Jewish person do? They should be grafted into Christ. They should bow their knee to Jesus.

To turn in for wisdom and joy and salvation and not look to themselves as the chosen people of God. All to be said, Jesus is God's vine.

[13 : 19] So point one, Jesus is God's true vine. All right, point two, God's utter determination. God's utter determination.

Look at John 15, one through two. He wants to bear fruit through his children. He says, I'm the true vine and my father is the vine dresser. Every branch of me that does not bear fruit, he takes away and every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes.

Let it bear more fruit. So the observation I want to make from this text is that with Jesus the true vine, God is utterly determined to bear fruit through his children.

He will take away every branch that does not bear fruit and he will prune every branch that does bear good fruit. So first, God's going to take away every branch that does not bear fruit.

This is part of God's utter determination because he wants to ensure that the branches truly in the vine and vitally connected to Jesus bear fruit. They have the nourishment that they need.

[14 : 27] They have the vital connection they need to bear fruit for the Lord. So this observation brings some questions, doesn't it? What does it mean to be a branch that the Lord cuts off?

Is it possible to lose your salvation? But I would argue that the branches not bearing fruit were never truly connected to the vine.

They were false brothers never truly awakened to the gospel and to salvation. And the reason for this I get is from John 10. Let's look at John 10 real quick.

It says, My sheep hear my voice and I know them. And they follow me. And I give them eternal life. And they will never perish. And no one will snatch them out of my hand.

My Father who is given to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one. Jesus' hand and the Father's hands are quite strong.

[15 : 33] Right? I would say safe to say omnipotent. Is there anything that can open their grasp? Clearly no.

So if Jesus and the Father cannot lose anyone then surely the branch that God is cutting off in John 15 must not be true followers of Christ that has never been grafted in in the first place.

But the major point of this section of John 15 is just that God he'll do whatever it takes.

He is determined to bring about fruit to the branches that are truly grafted into Jesus the true vine.

And then second Jesus states that the Father prunes all the branches that are bearing fruit.

God is so determined to bear fruit through his children through the vines vitally connected to him that he will prune them. And we're going to come back to that shortly.

[16 : 33] We're going to talk about what is pruning. But for now just note God's utter determination to bear fruit through us his children. So point two God's utter determination God's utter determination.

Alright point three God's unstoppable means God's unstoppable means So God is going to see to it that Jesus the true vine will bear fruit through two means and we've talked about that briefly a little bit I want to go a little deeper now.

So first God will cut off all the branches that do not bear fruit. These are evil branches barren not bearing fruit for the Lord stealing space from the true branches that are truly connected into Christ. And God God hates this because he is so determined to bear fruit through the branches that are connected to Christ so he's passionate about bearing fruit and he's going to do whatever it takes to make sure his children can bear fruit for him including clearly distinguishing between branches branches that are bearing fruit and branches that are not bearing fruit.

So in application don't think that God's nicer than he is. God's passionate about bearing fruit so he's willing to distinguish between branches that are bearing fruit and branches that are not bearing fruit. [18 : 20] He's willing to call some branches dead branches and cast them into the fire. So be sober and be discerning.

First let's search ourselves. Are you bearing fruit from the Lord? And we're going to talk about what that means in a later point. But don't deceive yourself. If you don't see yourself as bearing fruit from the Lord be warned.

You may not be vitally connected to Jesus. don't be self deceived. Don't tell yourself nice platitudes of cheap grace that Jesus knows my heart or that he loves and forgives everyone.

Test yourself. Are you bearing good fruit for the Lord? And if you are be confident he will prune you. If not be sober be concerned he will cut you off.

He will distinguish between true branches and false branches at the end of the age and even now even now he is distinguishing between branches that are bearing fruit for the Lord and those that are not.

[19 : 44] Because he wants to bear the best and most fruit possible for his glory. All right. So second if you see yourself as bearing good fruit be confident he will prune you.

So what is pruning? Pruning the Lord is his fatherly discipline that positions us to bear more and better fruit for him for the Lord.

So this image suggests pain of some sort. In the pain of pruning God is tending to us positioning us to bring more and better fruit for him.

So what could pruning look like? It could look like persecution. It could look like a physical infirmity. It could look like a parenting challenge or a marriage challenge or simply a dry season in the Lord. Painful occurrences but with redemptive purposes aimed to help us to bear more and better fruit for God.

[21 : 01] So in the pruning of the Lord the key to remember is that God is wise and powerful and loving. He's perfect in all he does and as painful as the pruning of the Lord is it's so important that when experiencing his pruning to remember what the Lord is doing what he's bringing about and that God makes no mistakes nothing is outside of God's control and he wastes nothing so think about it I work in a factory my job is to make the factory run better and every factory has waste or loss in it in industrial engineering terms there are eight deadly wastes in a factory there's transportation waste there's wasted inventory there's wasted motion there's wasted waiting there's wasted overproduction and over processing there are defects and there are wasted skills and every plant no matter how good has waste no plant is perfect and the goal of the run of the plant is to eliminate that waste make sure every material every movement every talent in that plant is optimized and running without waste to the best of its ability well in the divine economy in every sovereign action of God there's absolutely completely totally zero waste zero waste no waste at all everything that God does in our lives whether we see it or not is driving to a wonderful glorious purpose our sanctification our being made holy and blameless before our king our bearing good fruit for his glory so in the pruning of the Lord it's essential to remember that God's economy is one of zero waste every act of hardship and discipline we go through is part of his sovereign activity to deliver as much good fruit as possible for his glory for our good so the question is today are you currently experiencing

God's pruning are you experiencing discipline of the Lord in some way pain in your life loss in your life hardship in your life well consider this word from Hebrews 12 my son or daughter do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord and be weary when reproved by him the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives in receiving God's discipline God's pruning we must receive it as his fatherly care we must interpret it in the right light that God is up to something good in this God by analogy God is a good author in any good story there is no just in the beginning and then they lived happily ever after right in a good story there's drama there's action there are challenges and hurdles to overcome the story of our lives are no different

I just cannot think of any Christian who's gone through the Christian life unscathed by God's pruning by God's activity in that way this is especially helpful to remember when we're going through pruning we must experience loss or hardship hopefully in the middle of it we must always remember that God is not done yet that our story is not over and that God is still writing and in that we look forward to the good fruit we will reap if we not give up so Christian are you discouraged today are you wavering in hope and joy ye fearful saints fresh courage take the clouds you so much dread are big with mercy and shall break with blessings on your head do not fear for I am with you do not be dismayed for I am your

God I will strengthen you I will help you I will uphold you with my righteous right hand Isaiah 41 10 truly the prune of the Lord hurts it's meant to it is designed to but it's also designed to bring about good fruit and much fruit in our lives trust the Lord point three God's unstoppable means God's unstoppable means all right point four God's choice our confidence God's choice our confidence next how can we be confident that God will bear fruit through us we can be confident that Jesus will bear fruit through us for many reasons we talked about a bunch already but one that I want to highlight from John 15 that I think is especially sweet and strengthening comes from verse 16 check it out you did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide so the biggest observation from this verse is simply that God chose us to bear fruit he intentionally chose you to bear fruit for him so this language of choosing is not isolated to John 15 throughout scripture the idea of choosing or election is found check out Ephesians 1 3-4 blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ and with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him so I'm not

I don't know where everyone's at in terms of being a five or seven point Calvinist but we can take heart in the clear teaching of scripture that God chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him and that we should bear fruit for him that should give us hope and joy and confidence that we can look forward to the future with great confidence because God Jesus chose us personally he chose us intentionally he chose us specifically to bear fruit for him so think about it there's a lot of choosing in life right a lot of choosing in life there's choosing for the kickball team on the playground for the kids there's choosing for the fantasy baseball draft there's choosing for marriage and all this choosing is hopeful choosing the kickball team right you want to put together great teams it's going to score lots of runs or fantasy baseball draft you want to put together a dream team it's going to get you lots of points or marriage you want to pick a good spouse but this analogy breaks down because we're doing the choosing in that case [29 : 28] God did the choosing before the foundation of the world and how much merit did he see in us when he chose us nothing zero merit in and of ourselves he didn't put together a dream team when he chose us right God gets all the glory for consider your calling brothers many of you were wise according to worldly standards many were powerful many were of noble birth but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong God chose what is low and despised in the world even things that are not to bring to nothing things that are so that no human being might boast in the presence of God and because of him you are in Christ Jesus because of him you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God righteousness and sanctification and redemption so that as it is written the one who boasts boast in the Lord

God chose the weak God chose the low God chose the despised he chose the things that are not in his wisdom and love and power his divine vine dressing capabilities through that he is bringing about a people who will bear much and good fruit for him just amazing isn't it just glorious the choosing the cultivating the pruning the fruit bearing all resounds to the glory of God so this morning is your fruit small in your eyes or not what you'd want it to be take heart God will work with you God will work on you God will tend you

God will prune you so that you bear more fruit for him but beware when he starts to work on you he's going to do it through pruning and it's going to hurt it could hurt but it will be good so don't despise the Lord's discipline don't chafe under it embrace it rejoice in it cooperate with it look forward to seeing the good fruit that God will bring about through it so point four God's choice our confidence alright point five the nature of God's fruit so all this begs the question of what does the fruit look like that God is going to bring about in and through us so I think this passage points to four specific fruit we're going to go through quickly briefly four specific fruit love joy answered prayer and

obedience love joy answered prayer and obedience so love verse 17 these things

I command you so that you will love one another God is determined to bear fruit of love through us in our vital connection to Jesus he desires for us to love one another joy verse 11 these things I've spoken to you and this could be just a whole sermon that my joy may be in you and your joy may be full God is determined to bear the fruit of joy in us he desires for us to have the joy of Jesus in us to be pulsing in our hearts to be filled with God's joy all right verse 7 answered prayer if you abide in me and my words abide in you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you that God is determined to bring about the fruit of answered prayer in our lives I don't know about you but I sure desire to see more answered prayer in my life it is so encouraging in the mornings to sit at my diner room table with my note cards praying for my wife or my kids or for all of you and be able to check off yes

I see that yes God did that yes that's an answered prayer so encouraging don't we want to see more of that in our lives then verses 9 and 10 obedience it says as the father has loved me so have I loved you abide in my love if you keep my commandments you will abide in my love just as I've kept my father's commandments and abide in his love God is determined to bear the fruit of obedience through us he calls to keep his commandments as a way of abiding in his love and again this is a fruit of being grafted into the true vine abiding in the true vine so point five the nature of God's fruits we're looking at love and joy and answered prayer and obedience that's what Jesus is saying the fruit that he is going to bring about through us abiding so then point six finally point six abiding as the means abiding as the means what does it mean to abide in Christ if we're going to bear fruit for Christ we need to abide in him what is that so I think he gives us three answers from John 15 first abide in his word second abide in his love and third abide in his commandments so look at verse 7 if you abide in me and my words abide in you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you so if you want the fruit of love and joy and answered prayer and obedience in your life well we must be abiding in God's word there's nothing less than a fundamental part of the Christian life so let's think about fundamentals for a second my two older boys just finished up playing basketball and they learned the fundamentals of basketball in their in their season learned a lot about handling the ball dribbling the ball shooting the ball rebounding and there's a lot you can do in basketball with just the fundamentals sometimes

[36 : 34] Christian life doesn't have to be fancy it doesn't have to be behind the back pass slam dunk through the legs dribble it can simply be cracking open your Bible reading your Bible meditating on your Bible figuring out how to obey what you just read so this is a warning anyone if you're not in God's word your ability to bear fruit for God will be severely hampered if you abide in the word though you will bear fruit you will hear from the Lord you'll be pruned by the Lord you'll be transformed by the renewing of your mind you'll be conformed increasingly into his image as you read and listen and consider and obey so abide in God's word second abiding looks like abiding in Jesus' love look at verses 9 and 10 as the Father has loved me so have I loved you abide in my love if you keep my commandments you will abide in my love just as I've kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love so

Jesus calls us to abide in his love and we abide in his love by keeping his commandments one of which is believing reckoning true to us that he loves us so to obey this command we must remember the gospel we must preach the gospel to ourselves every day consider Galatians 2 20 I've been crucified with Christ it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me and the life and I live in the flesh I live by faith not in ourselves but in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me 2 Corinthians 5 21 for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God

Ephesians 5 2 and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God Titus 2 our great God and Savior Jesus Christ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works just recount scriptures like that just one way of preaching the gospel to yourself so if you want to bear fruit for God if you want to be a fruitful Christian abide in God's love hear of God's love believe his love reckon it to be true for you thank him for it regularly and in doing so you will abide in Christ and Christ will bear fruit through you third abiding looks like abiding in Christ's commandments and his great commandment that he hiles in John 15 like in John 15 17 these things

I command you so you will love one another so abiding looks like loving one another looks like laying down our lives for one another for sacrificing ourselves for one another abiding looks like forgiving encouraging spurring on being kind to being generous to serving confessing sins to being devoted to living in harmony with building up admonishing one another brothers and sisters we don't need to get a lot of fancy things right to be a fruitful a fruitful church we simply must just love God love others and we will bear fruit so let us love one another with passion with zeal with intentionality with consistency and in loving one another that we abide in Christ and bear much fruit for him so to wrap things up this morning we've explored one of the most poignant deepest densest passages remember

Jesus is going to his arrest death and death and this is what he's given to us these words and he reveals so much to us in this passage we've seen a lot of it there's more to mine may we leave church this morning remembering that God is determined to bear fruit through Jesus the true vine that God will do what it takes through joy and through pain to ensure we bear fruit in Christ that this fruit that God will bear is good fruit fruit of love and joy and answer prayer and obedience and ultimately that the way we bear fruit for Christ is by abiding in Christ abiding in his word abiding in his love abiding in his commandments so just like how

[42 : 41] John Chapman Johnny Appleseed was determined to bear fruit for the Lord through his life well God is determined to bear fruit through his children so let's walk out of church this morning so humbled that God chose us to bear fruit for him so thankful that the God of the universe is our divine finder putting in thought and effort and wisdom to ensure that we bear fruit for him and so confident that in every situation we know that God is going to bring about good fruit through it to God be the glory our divine vine dresser let's pray to God we just praise you because you are good

Lord thank you that you've called us into bearing fruit for you thank you that you're bringing about good fruit in and through this church because we are connected to Christ Lord we pray we pray for more sack we pray for more fruit we just want to live for your glory and for your pleasure for your joy so please help us to abide in Christ that we may bear fruit for you in Jesus name we pray amen now for communion this morning I want to hone in on verse 13 make one final gospel connection John 15 13 greater love has no one than this that someone laid down his life for his friends just consider Jesus' love for you this morning specific love personal love passionate love great love Jesus laid down his life for us and he gave his life for us the infinitely glorious son of God for unworthy sinners like us that is grace he laid down his life so we can be forgiven of our sins kind of righteous in Christ secure in the father's love and ultimately be his friends beloved providence if you're in Christ today if you're abiding in Christ you're vitally connected to the true vine then you are a friend of Christ and what a friend we have so this morning come to the table humbled thankful and joyful that Christ laid down his life for us so that we could be his friends fully accepted gloriously loved and wondrously cared for every moment of our lives so come if you're a follower of Christ today come to the table take the elements and then

I'll lead us in communion once everyone has their elements