



## Christ, Grape & Vine:

*"Jacob spoke of our Lord as a grape (Genesis 49:11), because Christ hung on the wood like a grape. He is the vine; he is the grape. He is the vine because he cleaves to the wood and the grape because, when his side was opened by the soldier's lance, he sent forth water and blood... water for baptism, blood for redemption. The water washed us; the blood redeemed us."*

—St. Ambrose of Milan

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## Around the Word BIBLE STUDY Eastertide, 2016

# The I AM sayings of Jesus John 15:1–17

### Session 7: "I AM the Vine"

On December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004, an 8.3 magnitude earthquake hit just off the coast of Indonesia, and a massive tsunami soon followed. The destruction was catastrophic. Water, mud, and debris covered the coastline. Thousands were killed on land, and thousands more were washed out to sea. In the aftermath, the BBC reported a story of a woman named Malawati who was among those swept out to sea. She was stranded, surrounded by sharks, 18 weeks pregnant, and survived 5 days before a cargo rescued her. Unlike her husband, and countless others, she survived. And when reporters asked her how, she said, *"I almost drowned twice as I could not swim and was thrashing in the water trying to keep my head up when I chanced upon the tree trunk"*. She survived by clinging to a sago palm tree and eating its fruit.

We survive the same way. Cling to the tree and eat its fruit. *I AM the Vine; you are the branches*. Jesus the Vine redeems us from the curse of the law by becoming the curse for us. Jesus, the Vine, withers and dies; you grow and live in Him. Jesus is cast off and you are grafted into Him who is the Vine. You are a new plant, thriving in the fertile soil of the tree of life. In Jesus the Vine you have everything you need: daily you are watered in in the living waters of your Baptism. Jesus feeds you with the fruit of his crucified and risen body. Jesus' radiant warmth and joy abide with you by his Word and promise: *I AM the Vine; you are the branches*. And that's how we live. Cling to Jesus' tree, and eat of its fruit.

### Opening: Psalm 80:8–19

<sup>8</sup>You brought a vine out of | Egypt;\*  
you drove out the nations and | planted it.

<sup>9</sup>**You cleared the | ground for it;\*  
it took deep root and | filled the land.**

<sup>10</sup>The mountains were covered | with its shade,\*  
the mighty cedars with its | branches.

<sup>11</sup>**It sent out its branches | to the sea\*  
and its shoots to the | River.**

<sup>12</sup>Why then have you broken | down its walls,\*  
so that all who pass along the way | pluck its fruit?

<sup>13</sup>**The boar from the forest rav- | ages it,\*  
and all that move in the field | feed on it.**

<sup>14</sup>Turn again, O | God of hosts!\*  
Look down from | heaven, and see;  
have regard for this vine,

<sup>15</sup>**the stock that your right hand | planted,\*  
and for the son whom you made strong | for yourself.**

<sup>16</sup>They have burned it with fire; they have | cut it down;\*  
may they perish at the rebuke | of your face!

<sup>17</sup>**But let your hand be on the man of your | right hand,\*  
the son of man whom you have made strong | for yourself!**

<sup>18</sup>Then we shall not turn | back from you;\*  
give us life, and we will call up- | on your name!

<sup>19</sup>**Restore us, O LORD | God of hosts!\*  
let your face shine, that we | may be saved!**

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\*  
and to the Holy | Spirit.  
as it was in the be- | ginning,\*  
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

### Read John 15:1–17

**v. 1: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser."**

In this seventh "I AM saying" of Jesus, he continues to draw upon and expand Old Testament language of God's relationship with Israel to reveal his own person and work. Throughout the prophets, the language of the vineyard is used repeatedly. See Isaiah 5:1-7; Isaiah 27:2-6; Jeremiah 12:10-13; Ezekiel 15:1-7. How is God's relationship with Israel described in these prophets' words? How do these prophets proclaim both Law and Gospel using the language of the vineyard? What kind of vine was Israel in the Old Testament?

In contrast to Old Testament Israel, why is Jesus' title "true vine" all the more fitting?

In what ways is Jesus the true vine? See Isaiah 11:1-10; Jeremiah 23:1-6; Matthew 21:33-46; John 12:23-24

**v. 2: "Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more"**

fruit.”

Why do gardeners prune their plants? What comparison is Jesus making with this analogy? See Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:3-6; Revelation 3:19. How is pruning an act of love by our heavenly Father, the vinedresser? What fruit is Jesus speaking of? See Ephesians 2:8-10. How does this fruit of faith grow and thrive?

**v. 3-4: “Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.”**

How does Jesus’ word cleanse us? John 17; 1 Peter 3:18-22.

In a garden, plants need water, food, sunlight, and care. By analogy, how does Jesus provide these spiritual needs for us, his branches? How do Jesus’ words illustrate the relationship he desires for his disciples and us?

What are common ways people today mistake as evidence for Jesus abiding with them? Where does Jesus promise to always abide with us? See Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 2:42.

**v. 5: “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.”**

How does Jesus make us his branches? Romans 11:13-24. How is Jesus’ cross our vine? Why are we unable to do anything apart from Jesus? How is this “I AM saying” fulfilled in Jesus’ dying and rising for us?

**v. 6: “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.”**

What does life apart from Christ the Vine mean for the branches? What does life joined to Christ the Vine mean? See Revelation 22:1-5.

**v. 8-10: “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. 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.”**

Does God love us because we keep his commandments or do we strive to keep his commandments because he loves us? What’s the difference between these two statements? Why is this difference

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The I AM Sayings of Jesus  
John 15:1-17

important? What does John say about God’s love and keeping commandments? 1 John 4:7-21.

**v. 11: “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”**

What does it mean to have joy in Jesus? See Galatians 5:13-25. How is this joy different than happiness?

**v. 12-13: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”**

How has Christ loved us? See John 3:16-21; Ephesians 5:25-27.

See Romans 5:1-11. What makes Jesus’ love all the more extraordinary?

**v. 15: “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.”**

What does it mean that Jesus calls his disciples friends and no longer servants? Why is this comforting for us as well?

**v. 16-17: “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 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.”**

The Scriptures teach us that we are justified by grace in Jesus Christ. Here, how does Jesus teach us that we are also sanctified by grace in him? What does it mean to ask the Father for anything in the name of Jesus? How does Jesus’ sacrificial love for us abide in our love for others?

**Closing: The Tree of Life (LSB 561)**



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