

The Gospel of John
Week Twenty-Three
John 14:25-15:27

Day One

²⁵ "All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. ²⁸ "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

vs. 25&26 – Jesus was speaking to the men face-to-face, but He assured them they would still hear from Him after He was gone through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's role would be to remind them of what Jesus had said, and teach them the meaning. The Spirit would remind them of *everything* Jesus said. **Was that an exaggeration, or was the Spirit capable of remembering all things that Jesus said and administering them to all of God's people at all times?** There is only one "Spirit" who could do that, and that Spirit would have to be God Himself! No one else would have that kind of power and capability.

So you and I are not alone. We have the Spirit's presence to lead, guide and shepherd us. **Are you taking full advantage of this powerful relationship? Are you drawing on all that the Spirit has to offer?**

v. 27 – Read this verse again and again. Jesus gives peace, His peace. Even though He was talking about departure, He commanded His men not to be afraid or to be troubled. **Are you afraid? Are you troubled?** If you are, then you are being disobedient. Jesus would not command you to do something you cannot do or that He or the Spirit will not help you do. **What are you facing that could give you every reason in the natural to be afraid or troubled?** You have the promise of God's help, if you choose not to let those things overwhelm you.

Paul revisited this issue when he wrote the Philippians:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

v. 28 – Jesus preferred the Father over Himself, the true sign of humility. Plus He indicated that what He was about to do was for the benefit of those He was leaving, so much so that if they knew, they would not be sad but rejoice in His upcoming actions. Yet Jesus once again promised that He would return to them. They must have been totally confused, yet Jesus had tried to prepare them for some time that He was going away,

even to be killed. They could not hear because they had no point of reference from which to understand Jesus' comments. At that time, they could not understand His death, resurrection and relationship with the Father. Eventually they would, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

v. 29 – Jesus was telling them all this for one reason and that was to build their faith. When it would happen as He predicted it would, then their faith in Him and the Father would increase and strengthen. **What are you doing to increase and strengthen the faith of others? Your own faith? Is it stronger now than it has been in the past?**

Day Two

³⁰ I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, ³¹ but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. "Come now; let us leave. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² 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. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will 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.

vs. 30&31 – While the prince of the world, Satan, would carry out Jesus' execution, Jesus was clear that His death was not some plot of the evil one. His death was the will of the Father. What's more, the Father did not impose this death on Jesus. He was a willing partner in this act because of His love for the Father.

Why do you think John spent so much time recording these last words of Jesus? For the same reason that Jesus was sharing them with His disciples then: so we can believe that He is the Son of God. Everything John wrote was consistent with his stated purpose for writing. **Are you consistent in purpose for your activities as well?**

15:1 – Now begins a well-known passage about pruning vines and bearing fruit. Jesus started off by stating that He is the true vine, while the Father is the gardener. This is called a metaphor, for Jesus is speaking figuratively about Himself and the Father. **What is a vine like?** A vine is hearty, it can grow to be very long and tends to go places where other plants cannot go as it wraps itself around other plants or grows through small holes in walls. Israel was also referred to as the vine in the Old Testament and now the new people of God will be connected to the true Vine, Jesus. When you are connected to the vine, you become part of the vine, too. If you are not connected, then you are only good for firewood!

The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, how is the wood of a vine better than that of a branch on any of the trees in the forest? Is wood ever taken from it to make anything useful? Do they make pegs from it to hang things on? And after it is thrown on the fire as fuel and the fire burns both ends and chars the middle, is it then useful for

anything? If it was not useful for anything when it was whole, how much less can it be made into something useful when the fire has burned it and it is charred?

"Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: As I have given the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest as fuel for the fire, so will I treat the people living in Jerusalem. I will set my face against them. Although they have come out of the fire, the fire will yet consume them. And when I set my face against them, you will know that I am the Lord. I will make the land desolate because they have been unfaithful, declares the Sovereign Lord" (Ezekiel 15:1-8).

v. 2 – The Father cuts every branch on the vine, either to make it more fruitful by pruning or to make room for fruit by cutting off dead wood. So either way you get cut! When you are pruned, however, it is not because you have not been successful. You have been so successful that the Father cuts you back so that new, stronger growth in the vine can take place. **Are you being pruned?** Don't bemoan the fact if you are, but rather rejoice!

v. 3 – Jesus had already said that the disciples were clean, so they were not dead wood. Any pruning that took place would be for their own good and for the Father's glory. **What makes us capable of bearing fruit?** It is trusting in Jesus and accepting His word. **What qualifies us to be pruned?** It is trusting in Jesus and accepting His word.

v. 4 – Often the emphasis of this verse is on the negative: "Don't abide in Jesus and you will bear no fruit." Yet the opposite is also true: "Abide in Jesus and bear much fruit." **Where is your emphasis: on the positive or negative of this verse? And what is your definition of fruit in your life? As you define fruit, are you bearing it? How do you know? In other words, how do you measure the fruit?**

Day Three

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

v. 5 – Too often we have put the emphasis on the negative in this metaphor: any branch *not* in the vine will not bear fruit. And it is true: Anyone not in Jesus will not bear fruit. Look at what else this verse says, however: If you *are* in Jesus, then you can expect to bear *much* fruit. Much fruit! **Are you bearing much fruit?** If not, then you must not be abiding in Jesus, for those who are in Him do produce lots of fruit. Or you are looking at the negative side of this promise and not the positive one.

What is this fruit? Is it only souls saved? That can be part of the fruit, but I define fruit as an attitude, behavior, or action in response to a directive of the Lord. Your level of

fruitfulness is in God's hands – some will bear more than others. Yet you can be faithful to prepare yourself to bear fruit, just like an athlete preparing for competition.

vs. 6&7 – Anyone not in Jesus or not remaining in Jesus cannot bear fruit. They are useless for God's purposes, and are about as useful as firewood. **What are you doing to be fruitful?** The first thing to do is to insure that you abide in Jesus. The best way that can happen is by allowing Jesus' words to live and work in you.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:12-13).

If God's Word is at work in you, then there is also the promise that your prayers will be answered! **What are you asking God to do? Is it related to the fruit that you are assigned to bear? Do you expect your prayers to be answered or are you simply going through the motions, so to speak, when you pray?**

v. 8 – If it is to God's glory to bear much fruit, then it must be to God's un-glory not to bear much fruit. **So are you glorifying God?** You can do so by bearing fruit and not by singing songs or attending a church service. There is nothing wrong with those activities, but in this context the way to glorify God is to bear fruit and have your prayers answered that are related to your fruit-bearing activities.

Later in John 17:4, Jesus will tell us how He glorified the Father. Let me give you a sneak preview:

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do (John 17:4).

Day Four

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

v. 9 – Jesus loved and loves the disciples just as the Father loves Him. That is powerful love! When Paul wrote about love to the Corinthians, he was really writing about the kind of love that God extends toward us. Here are some of the traits of that love:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

v. 10 – Jesus gave the disciples the means by which they could abide in that love of God: by obeying His commands. That is how Jesus remained in the Father’s love, by obeying His commands. This union between Jesus and His disciples, while spiritual in nature, is practically upheld through obedience. **Isn’t that simple?** When people say, “It doesn’t matter what I do, for God still loves me.” While true, their disobedience undermines that love, not from God’s end but from theirs.

The gospels are filled with Christ’s commands and the Acts of the Apostles contains the stories of how the disciples who heard these words from Jesus went out and applied them. **What did they do?** They pursued strong fellowship with one another, they were generous and they went to the ends of the earth to proclaim God’s love in Christ. That should give you an idea of what God expects from you if you want to maintain the bonds of love with Him through obedience.

v. 11 – When you obey and your relationship with the Lord is strong, there is an important byproduct of that process: Joy. Yet it isn’t just any joy, it is God’s joy. This joy is spiritual, supernatural and transcends any natural explanation or source. It is the joy of the Lord and He gives it to those who keep His commands. **Do you lack joy recently?** Then you may want to check your obedience and see if that is the means by which you can find it again.

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand (Psalm 16:11).

Notice from Psalm 16:11 that the joy we are referring to isn’t just something that is purely emotional. It is something supernatural that God gives!

v. 12 – Jesus further explained that one of His commands was to love one another. I love my brothers and sisters in Christ not because they are perfect or worthy of my love. I love them because Jesus loves me. I love them because I am commanded to do so and that love does and should not depend on how I feel, how they respond to me or what they do (or don’t do) for or to me. My love is a choice, pure and simple. The rest of the New Testament scriptures go on to explain even more fully how I am to love my family in Christ. Yet it is all summed up in what Jesus said: Love them as I have loved you. Thank you, Lord.

v. 13 – While I can do all kinds of nice things, love isn’t fully the love that Jesus referenced until I lay down my life for others. I am back on church staff at this point in my life because I believe Jesus directed me to do so. I am laying down my life for the sake of my family, the body of Christ. This isn’t talking about dying; it’s referring to serving, but a service based on commitment and not on convenience.

Day Five

¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for

everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other. ¹⁸ If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

v. 14 – The relationship with Jesus isn't one of servant and master, but one of friendship. It is easier to stay in a servant relationship where you say, "Lord, I will do whatever You want me to do." That is a good thing. Yet God wants your relationship to grow and develop to the place where you perform His commands not because you are ordered to do so, but because you choose to do so, before you are ever commanded to do this or that. Many are comfortable with being God's servant; they are less comfortable with being God's friend. **Are you a friend of Jesus?**

v. 15 – If Jesus no longer thought of the disciples as servants but friends, then the disciples should see themselves as friends as well. The same is true for you. There may be a time of training and discipling when you are a servant and God directs you very specifically. Yet the goal isn't for that to be perpetuated, but that you graduate to become a friend at some point in time. Jesus wants to share the Father's business with you – the ways and things of God – and once He does and you prove your faithfulness, you can be a friend and not a slave. **Does this make sense? Do you want to be a friend of God?**

Friends are not ordered to do this and that. They do things out of love, not compulsion. They also do things from the heart. **Are you a friend of God or a servant of God?** Yes, you are both, but the ultimate goal is for you be a friend in your service to Him.

v. 16 – Jesus stated that He chose you and me to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. There are some who see this as a statement that the Lord made only to those present at the Last Supper and that they in turn went and bore fruit all over the world. I would think that this address was given to those men on behalf of all disciples everywhere for all time. That is why the Spirit had John record this: not as a historical report but as a mandate for the future. .

If that is true, then it leads to a few questions you must ask yourself:

- 1. What is my fruit? What has God appointed me to produce?**
- 2. Where should I go? What is the sphere or world in which God wants me to bear fruit?**
- 3. Are my prayers being answered where my fruit is concerned?**
- 4. Is my work and fruit glorifying the Father?**

v. 17 – Jesus kept returning to the main point of His message: Love one another. Yet this command was not new at all, for Jesus referred to it when asked what the greatest commandment was:

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:38-40).

Do you love your brothers and sisters? How can you tell that you do?

v. 18 – Jesus warned that the world, those not part of God's family, would not love the disciples. They hated Jesus and would hate His followers. **Does this hatred surprise you?** It should not, for the hatred, while directed at you, is really hatred toward God! It is hard to imagine that anyone would hate our God, but they do and they take their hatred out on His saints.

Day Six

¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. ²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin.

v. 19 – The explanation of why the world hates Jesus' followers is simple. They are not part of the world system, so the world system has no use for them. Jesus chose His friends and servants to come out of the world system. That condemns those left in the world by their inaction toward God and they hate those who have left the comforts of their little world. **Is some part of the world hating you right now for your relationship with Jesus, because of the obedience you manifest to Him and His commands?** That is not a bad thing, although it can be a painful thing. Yet Jesus promised to be with you if you remain with Him, not being influenced by the world.

v. 20 – Jesus had told them already that the disciples would be persecuted because the Master (Jesus) had been persecuted. The servant is not greater than the Master in this case. **So are you surprised when you are persecuted?** I know I still am. I lose sight easily of the fact that I am in the world but not of it.

Yet I must also keep sight of the fact that if people obey God, and you represent God, that they will also obey and receive from you. So it isn't all a bad thing, for some will accept you and some will not. **Can you live with that?**

v. 21 – Those who have a problem with you really have a problem with God Himself. They will not accept you because they do not accept Jesus. It is important to understand, however, that not everything that someone calls persecution is that at all. Sometimes it is bad judgment or obnoxious behavior by a believer:

If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler (1 Peter 4:14-15).

I have known some who were rude and irresponsible and considered the treatment they received in return as persecution. It was not, in my opinion.

v. 22 – Jesus came and His opponents beheld His word and saw His behavior. They refused to believe and thus were (and are) without excuse. They persecuted Him when they should have worshipped Him. Since they did not receive Him, they would not receive His emissaries, and ultimately would not receive the Father. This is so ironic, for these Jews had devoted their lives to God, yet it was a god after their own imagination and inclination. It was not the God of Israel whom they served and studied.

Those who persecuted Jesus were His peers. They saw Him, touched Him, heard Him and watched Him perform miracles. Yet they could not accept His mission or His person and thus they missed the day of their visitation from God.

Day Seven

²³ He who hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.' ²⁶ "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

v. 23 – It is impossible for anyone to say that they love God yet refuse to accept His Son, for the Son and the Father are one. Jesus was clear: Anyone who hates Him also hates the Father, no matter how they deny it. **Do you see the seriousness of what Jesus said?** He was declaring Himself to be the way to the Father, and anyone who could not accept that had a problem with God, for God sent Jesus to complete His mission.

v. 24 – The crowds saw and heard yet did not accept and believe. Therefore they were not without sin, for they had seen firsthand the glory of God. Because their hearts were not right, however, they could not see the glory of God that was right in front of their eyes. The people saw the miracles and hated Jesus, which was the same as hating God. The Jews could not accept what Jesus was saying, for they maintained that they loved God the Father and, in their mind, that was the reason they did not accept Jesus. They concluded He was not from God because of their flawed viewpoint.

v. 25 – Jesus pointed to a verse in Psalm 69 that is a graphic portrayal of His standing among His peers when He spoke these words:

Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me. I am forced to restore what I did not steal (Psalm 69:4).

So if Jesus was perfect and they hated Jesus without reason, you can be sure that the world will hate you for being His disciple and being less than perfect. **Are you being persecuted now? Are you rejoicing that you are considered worthy to suffer for His name?**

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:11-12).

v. 26 – The Spirit would come from the Father, sent by the Son, to remind the disciples of all that Jesus said and did. You don't have to worry about maintaining your life in Christ. All you have to do is remain in Him and the Spirit will do the rest. Jesus did not leave us alone to make it on our own. He sent His Spirit, who was also God, for only God Himself could remember and remind humanity of what Jesus said and did. **I can see the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit here, can you?**

v. 27 – Yet as the Spirit testified to the disciples about Jesus, they were required to give their own testimony about Jesus, since they had seen Him in action. This reminds me of what was written in Revelation:

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their **testimony**; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Revelation 12:11).

When is the last time you gave a testimony about who Jesus is and what He has done for you? Can you give one today? To whom can you give it? How else can you broadcast that testimony. Via the Internet, in a letter, in a small group, at work or in your family?