

John 15

- As we enter chapter 15, Jesus continues to prepare His disciples for His departure while they recline at the table in the Upper Room
 - Last week He explained how the disciples would find the power and knowledge to continue His work
 - The Lord said He would grant them the Holy Spirit
 - By the Spirit, they will have the necessary spiritual insight to make sense of Christ's words
 - The Spirit would bring to mind the words of Christ so they could relearn it and preserve it in scripture
 - Similarly, today, the Spirit continues that work by impress the truth of scripture upon our hearts
 - As we've seen from the start, the disciples are struggling with the notion of Jesus leaving
 - They can't yet understand why He is leaving or where He is planning to go
 - Consequently, though they are hearing His instructions, they probably aren't listening very well
- Adding to their confusion, Jesus is explaining these things in haste
 - He knows the time for Him to be handed over to the Romans by Judas is fast approaching
 - There are a lot of things He wants to say before He leaves
 - In fact, this discourse continues for another three chapters into the end of chapter 17
 - But Jesus is running out of time
 - In fact, at the very end of chapter 14, Jesus remarked that the ruler of the world was coming soon
 - Therefore, He said in v.31 that they needed to move out of the upper room quickly

- Naturally assume that the remainder of this discourse took place in some other location like the Kidron Valley
- However, we shouldn't make that assumption
- In fact, after the discourse ends chapter 17, we read this at the beginning of chapter 18

John 18:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, in which He entered with His disciples.

- It would seem Jesus' statement at the end of chapter 14 was merely a preparatory comment indicating they would be leaving very soon
- But before they actually Jesus continued to speak for a time longer
- Like a guest who remarks at some point that it was time to leave a dinner party but then stays a while longer to finish a conversation
- Therefore, as we enter chapter 15, I believe we're still in the Upper Room
- Finally, we need to remember the theme Jesus was emphasizing in chapter 14
 - He was preparing His disciples to function in His absence by relying on His power, His authority, His word and His name
 - They were His representatives
 - They were commissioned to serve His interests
 - He wasn't handing them a franchise or an independent operation under the name Jesus, Inc.
 - Jesus wanted them to realize He would be a hands-on manager of His Church even in His physical absence
 - He told the disciples He would exert His leadership and direction through the Spirit living in each of them
 - Therefore, they must love Him by following His instructions, which He called His commandments

- In fact, Jesus challenged the disciples by saying if they failed to obey His instructions, they do not love Him
 - Only by keeping His commandments could one demonstrate their love Jesus
 - For the one who does so, Jesus promised that He and the Father would disclose themselves to him
 - Meaning the Father and Son would reveal Themselves in greater ways to the believer, leaving that person stronger spiritually
- So keeping that context in mind, we move into chapter 15...but first, let's jump past chapter 15 for a brief moment
 - We've taken careful note of the context leading into chapter 15, and now we need to observe the context that immediately follows
 - In the first verses of chapter 16, Jesus summarizes His teaching from chapter 15 this way

John 16:1 "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling.

John 16:2 "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.

John 16:3 "These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me.

John 16:4 "But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.

- Now we will examine these verse in greater detail when we get to chapter 16, of course
- So for now, notice the main point Jesus is making
- He says He spoke the things of chapter 15 to keep these disciples from stumbling, that is to avoid sinning
- Clearly, the topic of chapter 15 is being a better disciple, a stronger follower of Jesus
- Notice in vs.2-4, Jesus begins to describe the persecution that will come to the Church in the time after Jesus departs
 - Jesus tells the disciples of this coming persecution so they may face it properly

- Men who are facing severe persecution can respond in foolish ways, including compromising their beliefs
- So Jesus says His teaching in chapter 15 was intended to prepare the disciples to withstand the coming trials without stumbling
- Why did we look at the context of chapter 16?
 - Because we will need the context of chapters 14 and 16 to guide our understanding of Jesus' teaching in chapter 15
 - Did you notice that the context of Jesus' words in 14 and 16 are exactly the same?
 - In both case, Jesus is speaking to His disciples about how to perform well in their duties as church leaders during Jesus' absence
 - The themes are to serve well by relying on Him
 - He's speaking concerning things that only apply to His disciples, to believers
 - And His concern is for their stumbling, that is not serving Him well in the face of persecution
 - I'm emphasizing these details because there is considerable controversy among scholars and students concerning the meaning of Jesus' teaching in chapter 15
 - Personally, I find the controversy entirely unnecessary
 - Because as usual, the context settles the dispute easily
 - We'll explore this controversy in steps as we move through the text
 - But of course our first priority is to understand what Jesus says and why He says it
 - First, Jesus will teach that a disciple must abide or remain in Christ in order to serve Him well
 - Secondly, Jesus explains that the family of God must love one another since we will be universally rejected and hated by the world

- Jesus begins the chapter with the final of His “I AM” statements and a beautiful figure of speech

[John 15:1](#) “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

[John 15:2](#) “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

[John 15:3](#) “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

[John 15:4](#) “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

[John 15:5](#) “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

- First, we notice that Jesus is teaching using a figure of speech: a grapevine and the vinedresser who cares for it
 - The grapevine is one of three plants commonly used in scripture to symbolize Israel, the other two being fig and olive trees
 - Since Jesus and all the disciples are Jewish, the use of a grapevine is an appropriate metaphor
- But in this case, the lesson Jesus is teaching goes well beyond Israel proper
 - Therefore, we can’t say Jesus chose the metaphor of a grapevine to teach something about Israel
 - As we will see in the chapter, Jesus chose to use a grapevine for the peculiar ways vinedressers cultivate grapevines
 - So understanding how grapevines were dressed will be very important to understanding the lessons Jesus is teaching
- Jesus begins by identifying the Father as the vinedresser, while identifying Himself as the vine
 - To apply the metaphor, Jesus’ is saying that the body of Christ is the vine plant, while the Father is the one managing the growth and the production of that plant
 - Later in v.5 Jesus says His disciples are the branches
 - Notice Jesus doesn’t distinguish between the different types of branches in the metaphor

- This is the first of several details in the chapter we need to notice in interpreting Jesus' figure of speech properly
 - All branches are representative of all disciples of Christ
 - So therefore the different types of branches describe different types of disciples
- Moving to v.2 Jesus says that every branch in Christ that does not bear fruit, He takes away
 - The first thing to notice in this verse is Jesus' use of the phrase "in Me"
 - Given the figure of speech Jesus has chosen (i.e., a plant), the phrase "in Me" fits the context of the metaphor
 - Branches can said to be in the vine because they come forth from and receive their nourishment through the vine
 - Moving to a spiritual application, what does the phrase "in Me" say about the disciples?
 - In scripture the phrase "in Christ" has one consistent meaning that never varies
 - It always refers to someone who has been born again, as Paul says:

Rom. 8:1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are **in Christ** Jesus.

- Once again, we find a second detail to confirm that all the branches of the vine represent Christ's disciples
 - Even a disciple that does not fruit can still be "in Christ"
- What does it mean to bear or not bear fruit?
 - Bearing fruit is also a common figure of speech in scripture
 - It consistently refers to the by-product of a disciple's faithful and obedient reliance on the Spirit
 - When you walk in the Spirit, you bear fruit
 - When you walk in your flesh, you don't bear fruit
 - It's important to note that the word bear in Greek doesn't mean to show or to display; it simply means to produce

- Just as a branch of a grapevine produces fruit, so may a disciple produce spiritual fruit
- This distinction is important because the term “bearing fruit” in scripture doesn’t necessarily require an outward display or change
- The essence of bearing fruit living in obedience to Christ, which in most cases will be manifested in some way
- But visibility isn’t the goal... pleasing the Lord is the Goal
- Consider Paul’s teaching on bearing fruit, beginning in Romans 7

[Rom. 7:4](#) Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

[Rom. 7:5](#) For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

- Paul says we have been joined to Christ by His Spirit so that we might bear fruit
 - But notice Paul says we are to bear fruit for God
 - Also notice Paul doesn’t say that we will bear fruit
 - He says only that we might bear fruit
 - In other words, some believers will bear fruit while others will not
- Also Paul says this:

[Col. 1:9](#) For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

[Col. 1:10](#) so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

- Here we see the full process represented
 - First in v.9 Paul says his readers may be filled with the knowledge of His will, that is to know Christ’s commandments

- Secondly, with this knowledge they may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, that is to keep His commandments
- Finally, by keeping His commandments His disciples will bear or produce fruit in good works
- Notice this a process that only a believer can participate in, and yet the process isn't assured
- Paul's tone in Col1:9-10 clearly implies that a believer might not move through all three steps of this process
 - Which is why Paul is praying for this outcome in Colossae
 - It was an open question whether they would do so
- And so it is for all believers
 - Just as Jesus describes in the parable of the four soils in Luke 8, not all believers will bear fruit
 - Some are choked off by the pleasures and cares and pleasures of this life
 - Leading them to fail in their intended mission, which is to bear fruit
 - There very fact that Jesus speaks in v.2 both of branches (i.e., disciples) who bear fruit and of branches that do not bear fruit shows us that both possibilities can exist within the body
- Returning to chapter 15, Jesus explains what happens to the believer who fails to produce fruit
 - Jesus says that branch will be taken away
 - The Greek word for taken away is *airo*
 - My English Bible translated this as "taken away," but the Greek word has another, equally valid meaning
 - Instead of taken away, *airo* can be translated lifted up
 - This is where a knowledge of how vinedressers do their work is important to arriving at the correct understanding
 - On a grapevine, you can find three types of branches generally speaking

- First, there are the new branches that are too immature to produce fruit yet
- Secondly, you have mature branches that bear fruit consistently
- Thirdly, you may have fully-developed branches that fail to produce fruit reliably
- To maximize fruit on the vine, the vinedresser responds to each type of branch in different ways
 - In the case of the young, immature branches, in the springtime a vinedresser will lift them up, securing them to a trellis or other mature branches to give them support
 - His goal is to keep these immature branches from dropping and dragging on the ground, becoming diseased and distressed
 - In time, these immature branches grow to support themselves
 - Ultimately, the vinedresser hopes these branches may become fruit-bearing
- These are the branches Jesus is speaking about at the beginning of v.2
 - Every branch that does not produce fruit, the Father will lift up
 - No fruit plant produces fruit instantly
 - It takes time for every plant to grow strong enough to produce a crop
 - Anyone familiar with how grapevines were cultivated would have recognized Jesus' use of the term *airo* to mean the springtime practice of tying up young branches
 - And so it is with every believer
 - The Father ensures that immature believers are given an opportunity to mature through the Spirit and the Word
 - Young believers are lifted up and supported by the more mature members around us
 - And in time, babes in Christ may become stronger and may be expected to bear fruit
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- It's natural for Jesus to reference this type of branch first, since He was speaking to a group of relatively immature and fragile disciples
 - They needed encouragement and patience as Jesus waited for them to respond
 - He's supporting them even now
 - And in the days following His resurrection, He appears to them and teaches them all the more for the same reason
 - But in time He expects His loving care to be repaid with fruit
- Moving farther into v.2, Jesus mentions a second group of branches, those that do produce fruit
 - These will be pruned by the vinedresser so they will bear more fruit, Jesus says
 - Toward the end of the growing season, the vinedresser prunes branches that proved to bear fruit reliably
 - The pruning made those branches grow out even stronger in the next season
 - And as the branch becomes stronger, it has the potential to hold even more fruit
 - In this way, the pruning maximized the fruit the vine produced
 - In the same way, the Father takes note who among His disciples are reliably producing fruit
 - That reliable production is rewarded with pruning
 - Pruning is a metaphor in scripture for testing, trials, circumstances and challenges of one kind or another that strengthen us
 - We're not just talking about bad experiences like persecution, though certainly that is an example of pruning
 - We're talking about any opportunities the Lord may use to draw us out of our comfort zone so we might be strengthened spiritually
 - Like accepting new responsibilities to serve the Lord in the church or participating in a Bible study or a mission trip

- Volunteering for the church nursery
- Praying aloud for someone in a group setting
- Making a sacrificial financial commitment
- Taking a public stand for our faith
- Sharing the Gospel with a stranger
- Experiences like these can be sources of pruning that we will strengthen us to bear more fruit for Him in the future
 - Notice who receives this treatment...believers who already produce fruit
 - While we might have assumed that the Father would have directed His pruning at the unproductive Christian, the truth is the opposite
 - The disciples with the greatest potential and a good track record of obedience get the most attention
 - We should look at our pruning experiences as a vote of confidence from the Father
 - It's blessing even if it feels like a blessing in disguise
- Already by v.2, we can see clearly Jesus distinguishing between disciples based on the degree of fruit they produce
 - But unfortunately, some have overlooked these details and come away with the wrong conclusion
 - They conclude that Jesus is contrasting believers from unbelievers
 - If you produce fruit, you're a believer
 - If you fail to produce fruit, you're not
 - Jesus knew that some would read His words and arrive at this view, so He spoke the words of v.3 to make clear His point
 - In v.3 Jesus says that the disciples He's speaking about were already "clean" because of the words Jesus spoke to them
 - Being clean means to be spiritually clean, to be saved

- Jesus has broken out of His figure of speech to make this statement
- Which tells us how much Jesus wanted to settle this concern
- Simply put, His subject matter in chapter 15 doesn't concern unbelievers whatsoever
- His conversation is directed and is speaking about believers only
- Then in v.4 Jesus then gives His disciples the exhortation this chapter is so renown for...the exhortation to abide
 - Jesus says abide in Me
 - As I've said in past weeks, to abide means to remain or stay or endure
 - In chapter 6, Jesus used this word in reference to the eternal security of a believer
 - He taught that once we are joined to Christ by faith, we abide in Him forever
 - Now in this chapter Jesus uses the word abide in a different way, to describe another aspect of our relationship with Christ
 - While in chapter 6 the context was obtaining eternal life and the answer was abide in Christ
 - And in that context, remaining in Christ refers to our eternal union with Christ by faith
 - In chapter 15, the context is bearing fruit, and the answer is abide in Christ
 - In this context, bearing fruit is conditional depending on whether we abide or not
 - Since the outcome is in question in chapter 15, we clearly know Jesus isn't talking about salvation
 - This change in context from chapter 6 to chapter 15 tells us that Jesus has shifted his use of the word as well
 - For abide is a very general and common word in Greek
 - John alone uses it over 45 times in the New Testament

- In the context of chapter 15, Jesus uses it to mean remaining in His will by obeying His commands
- In V.5 Jesus begins to explain the road to successfully abiding in Jesus
 - First, Jesus says that we are His branches and He is our supply
 - The figure speech teaches disciples cannot expect to bear fruit apart from Christ
 - If a branch was damaged or cut, it could no longer be expected to bear fruit
 - Only by remaining connected to the vine and receiving nourishment can a branch produce fruit
 - What how do we apply the metaphor? What does abiding in Christ mean specifically?
 - It means relying on Christ for the work we accomplish
 - Receiving our nourishment, our supply from Christ as opposed to elsewhere in the world
 - He is our source of truth, our reason for hope and our focus in life
 - For example, why did you get up this morning? Was it to go to work or do housework?
 - Or was it to serve the Lord and find new ways to please Him?
 - And where do you turn for answers to life's questions? God's word or Wikipedia?
 - And when you seek to bear fruit by accomplishing something for God, do you approach the work by relying on your own power, through sheer force of ego and determination?
 - Or do you wait patiently for the doors to open?
 - Do you make 5-year plans and stubbornly pursue them to ensure that when those 5 years is over, you can claim success?
 - Or do you move gently by the Spirit, changing plans as He reveals your next step?
 - Abiding means acknowledging Jesus runs His church and allowing Him rule in your heart

- And most importantly, do you display godliness in your walk?
 - Do speak as Christ did, with grace and love, gentle and kind yet always speaking truth?
 - Do you give generously in all things, seeking nothing in return, with special concern for the weak and needy in the church?
 - Do you withhold judgment of others, submit to your elders, avoiding disputes and guarding your speech
 - Do you love others above yourself?
 - In other words, do you keep His commandments?
 - More than anything else, abiding in Christ means obeying Christ
- And what of those believers who don't abide?

John 15:6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

- I said earlier that there were three types of branches on a grapevine
 - The third type were those fully developed branches that failed to produce fruit
 - In the Fall season, the vinedresser would go through the field and cut off any branches that had not produced fruit by the end of the season
 - This is different than mere pruning, which is cutting off part of the branch and allow the rest to grow back
 - Cutting off means removing the branch altogether thus eliminating it from any possibility of bearing fruit in the future
 - A vinedresser understood that if the branch received nourishment from the vine all season without producing fruit, there was little chance it would produce fruit in the future
 - So the only proper response was to remove that branch to ensure it wouldn't consume resources in the next season
 - These cuttings were eventually gathered in the field and burned

- But now the disposition of these branches into a fire becomes a puzzling and polarizing detail in Jesus' figure of speech
- What does it mean that a disciples is "cut off" and in "fire"
- It leads some to conclude that Jesus must be speaking of unbelievers
 - They interpret fire to picture the judgment fires of Hell
 - Certainly, fire is used to picture the consuming judgment coming for unbelievers
 - On the other hand, fire is also commonly used as a picture of judgment for believers too
 - We see this in 1Cor 3 when Paul describes the Judgment Seat of Christ
 - So we can't automatically conclude that a reference to fire must mean Hell
 - Since fire can be used for both believer and unbeliever, it doesn't settle the question
 - Once again, we need to let the context of the chapter drive our interpretation
 - Once again, from everything we've seen in context, we must conclude that Jesus is talking about believers in chapter 15
 - In fact, Jesus' entire teaching in this chapter takes the form of an exhortation *to abide*
 - He warns of the possibility of doing otherwise
 - Clearly, this isn't a discussion of salvation, since we can't choose to move in and out of salvation
 - Therefore, everything points to a warning to believers and a consequence for believers
- So how do we explain the reference to burning for these unfruitful branches?
 - In short, we shouldn't make much too much of it
 - On the one hand, it makes perfect sense that Jesus included the detail of burning the branches in this figure of speech

- Because that's exactly how vinedressers disposed of unfruitful branches in the fall season...they burned the wood
- But the key to interpreting that detail is to understand why the wood was burned
 - grapevine wood has no good use
 - It's not used for building or for crafts or even to heat homes
 - It's literally useless material
 - Therefore, if a branch doesn't produce grapes, it's burned because that's what you do with trash
- So Jesus includes this detail to be true to the metaphor and to emphasize the uselessness of branches that don't bear fruit
 - Such a branch serves no purpose to the Father
 - We are useless to our Vinedresser in Heaven if we don't respond to His commandments with obedience and good works
 - How sad it is to consider that there are some within the body of Christ who serve no useful purpose for the Lord Who saved them!
- Remember James exhortation to the believer who doesn't abide

James 2:20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

- You have been granted salvation and new life in Christ so that you may abide in Christ for the purpose of glorifying the Father
- Just as a branch exists to produce fruit
- These branches will be cut off from the vine in the sense that they are removed from service to the Lord
 - Either by lack of new opportunity or the withholding of the Spirits' counsel or the denying of fellowship in the body, one way or the other the Lord cuts the disciples off
 - These are believers are still saved by grace, since the Lord remains faithful to His promises

- But He has no obligation to continue working with disciples who refuse to show love by obeying His commandments
- And as the Lord wills, such a Christian may be left to spiral downward into spiritual isolation
- This is the same situation the writer of Hebrews warns about in Heb 6

Heb. 6:4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, **Heb. 6:5** and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, **Heb. 6:6** and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. **Heb. 6:7** For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; **Heb. 6:8** but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.

- We can see the parallels easily
- A believer given all the advantages of faith, but then falls away from abiding in Christ
- That person is at risk of never coming back
 - They are ground receiving things from Heaven, but producing no fruit
 - It is worthless to God, close to being cursed
 - Like branches that serve no purpose it is burned
- Of course, we hope for better things in the body of Christ, so then Jesus moves to the opposite outcome: those who do abide

John 15:7 “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

John 15:8 “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

John 15:9 “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

John 15:10 “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.

John 15:11 “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

- For those branches who do abide in Christ, anything is possible
 - When we remain in close connection to Christ and when the word of God remains in us, then we are in a position to know His will and execute it on His behalf
 - Remember earlier Jesus said that if the disciples asked for anything in His name, they would see it done
 - We explained that doing things in the name of Jesus meant acting in accordance with His will and word
 - And so here again, those who abide in Christ and in His word are naturally in a position to know His will and act according to it
 - And in that close abiding, we can ask confidently knowing that our wishes are Christ's wishes
 - This is a blanket promise to any abiding disciple that as you raise up your petitions, Jesus will respond affirmatively because your petitions are Spirit-inspired
 - Also notice that v.7 is expressed as a conditional statement
 - Jesus says "if" you are abide in Christ
 - These men are already clean Jesus says, and yet here He says that there is a possibility they won't abide
 - The evidence just continues to pile up to show us that abiding is speaking of believers remaining in close fellowship with Christ
 - Jesus adds in v.8 that the Father is glorified when we we're working this closely with the Lord
 - We can accomplish much when we walk closely with Christ
 - And producing good works to glorifying the Father is what's it's all about

[Matt. 5:14](#) "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;
[Matt. 5:15](#) nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.
[Matt. 5:16](#) "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

- In fact, the model for how closely Christ wants us to walk with Him is the closeness He had with the Father
 - In vs.9-10 Jesus says He was loved for His obedience to the Father He abided in the Father's love
 - Jesus made His goal abiding in the Father's love
 - He was satisfied by the Father's approval and needed nothing more
 - If going to a Roman cross was pleasing to the Father, then that was what Christ would do
 - This is our model for abiding in Christ
 - Are we satisfied, even driven, to please Christ?
 - Do we crave His love or the love of the world?
 - Will we make obeying Him a greater goal than pleasing ourselves?
 - If we will, then His love will abide in us
- Now do you doubt this is the best course for your life?
 - Do you have a suspicion that this is a worse outcome in your life?
 - Oh yes, we understand it's the right thing to do
 - And of course, we should obey the Lord
 - But deep down inside something starts talking to us telling us that this won't be easy or fun
 - This is going to be hard and require great sacrifice
 - And so it may, but the lie is that we can't experience joy under these circumstances
 - The enemy lies by suggesting that the course the Lord prescribes robs us of joy and is intended to burden us
 - Remember the enemy's lie to Woman?

[Gen. 3:4](#) The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!

[Gen. 3:5](#) "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

- So Jesus reminds His disciples that abiding in Christ brings great joy
 - In v.11 He says these things He's spoken so that we might know the joy Christ knows in serving the Father
 - And that our joy would be full
 - The joy we try to give ourselves is so incomplete and inadequate
 - If only we were to abide in Christ as He did the Father, we would know what full joy is like
 - It's not out of reach...it starts with keeping His commandments

[John 15:12](#) "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

[John 15:13](#) "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

[John 15:14](#) "You are My friends if you do what I command you.

[John 15:15](#) "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.

[John 15:16](#) "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

[John 15:17](#) "This I command you, that you love one another.

- Serving Christ successfully depends on abiding in Him and loving one another in the body of Christ
 - And our love for one another is modeled on the love Jesus showed the Church
 - And the model Christ left us goes far beyond simply showing courtesy and extending a helping hand
 - It includes the greatest form of love
 - There is simply nothing more that a person can do for another person beyond place his life before another's

- Of course, Jesus was preparing to make this very sacrifice
 - Knowing this, Jesus tells the disciples that He calls them His friends if they obey Him
 - Remember, we know these disciples are believers
 - But Jesus says they are only “friends” if they obey Him
- Jesus isn’t saying He only dies for those who obey Him
 - For Paul tells us that Jesus died for us while we were yet His enemies
 - Jesus is saying that His sacrifice was intended to lead to an intimate relationship
 - And they can know that intimate relationship through obedience
- In vs.15-17, Jesus sums up and repeats the core message in His discourse
 - Our relationship with God changed at the cross
 - We are no longer slaves in the sense that we serve a faceless, mysterious master who commands us without intimacy
 - That was the relationship God and men knew prior to the cross
 - Only a few men knew God to any greater degree, like Moses the friend of God
 - But now with Jesus’ death, the door would open for men to know and experience God in a unique and special way
 - We can have an intimate, personal relationship with the Creator
 - We can hear from Him, see Him work in and through us
 - We can ask things of Him and see Him respond
 - Nothing like this has been possible since the Garden
 - What a privilege to be included in this period of grace
 - So what are we making of this opportunity?