**PRIORITIES BASED ON PERSPECTIVE**

Do you ever feel joyless as far as your Christian walk?

Do you ever feel like you’re just treading water as far as your spirituality?

That your growth as a Christian has been stymied?

Do you ever look to others faith and wish that you could be as faithful?

Do you just want more courage to truly follow Christ?

Does your worship seem to be ho-hum and not inspiring?

Do you feel like you are stuck in a spiritual rut?

A lot of how we feel spiritually is based on our priorities. And we base our priorities on our perspective. It’s as simple as that!

Like this statement, “I am not getting my needs met.”

**If we realign our perspective, we will come to this realization, “We get our true needs met when we don’t seek to get our needs met!” Instead, we choose to sacrificially serve others needs, thus fulfilling the Gospel of Christ!**

Our priorities get all out of kilter when we put our preferences ahead of others and place our needs as greater than the passion we are to have for the Gospel!

Let’s all open our Bibles to John chapter 15, verses 1-11

In these few verses we discover a wealth of information of how Jesus wants us to relate to Him, His Father and others.

Another words, He is giving us a lesson on where our perspective and thus our priorities are to be based! Of where our priorities are to be firmly affixed, or as we read, grafted into. And if we continue not to apply what Jesus is teaching us in these few verses, those questions that we opened with will continue to haunt us.

Jesus knows how to teach us by using figures and examples that we can understand and relate to and can come away with the deeper concept that He is relaying.

***“I Am the True Vine”***

To get the intent of what is being taught here, all you have to do is look outside our building to the grape vines that are a big useless, unattended eyesore instead of vines producing fruit!

The imagery of the vine and branches Jesus uses in this discourse is deeply rooted in Israel’s history. Throughout the Old testament Israel is called a vine or a vineyard **–**

 **(Jeremiah 2:21a)**

**“Yet I planted you a choice vine, A completely faithful seed, How then have you turned yourself before Me into the** degenerate **shoots of a foreign vine?”**

**(READ ISAIAH 5:1-7)**

**Israel** was to be God’s vine/ vineyard and they were to be people whose lives produced a fruit of holiness and righteousness among the nations for God’s glory. The problem, however, was that Israel had produced bad fruit rather than good fruit. Their inability to produce fruit in accordance to righteousness resulted in discipline in the form of divine judgment upon His people. When Jesus enters the world, Israel is still experiencing the results of God’s wrath as they live under Roman rule. And they are about to face a total rejection by God for their unfaithfulness.

**Jesus The True (Perfect) Vine;**

Jesus comes as the fulfillment of Israel’s prophetic existence.

Everything about Israel’s existence pointed forward to the Messiah that was to come. Jesus comes to us and announces that He is the true (perfect) vine and where Israel failed to be the true vine that produces branches of Godly righteousness, He would succeed!

He would be the perfect Son who would walk in perfect righteousness before His father and because of His perfect Life salvation would accomplish for those who are unable, in and of themselves, to produce the fruit of Godly righteousness and thus in Him the righteous fruit of God will be manifested to all who would accept Jesus as the Son of God and the true vine!

**JESUS AS THE VINE**

The point of this discourse between Jesus and His disciples is to help them understand their relationship to Him as the Vine. The life and sustainer of the branches, of which we are to be.

With Jesus being the vine, we who have turned from sin and self to trust fully in Him as Savior and Lord, are the branches.

The imagery we get from this discourse is that we, the branches, are dependent solely upon the Vine for life, sustenance and provision.

As we accept this we will soon discover that our perspective changes and causes a change in our priorities!

We see Jesus brining out two characteristics of branches that we can understand and relate to.

1. **FRUIT PRODUCERS:**

This concept very clearly sets the true branches apart from the false branches. **The branch that abides in Jesus will be a fruit producing branch.** When a branch is connected to the vine there will be fruit.

Consider our grape vines outside. Right now they are dormant, but even when the growing season begins these vines will struggle to produce any fruit and the fruit they will produce will not be good for much because they have not been pruned or trimmed.

That which Israel failed to do, because of their relationship with the vine and lack of proper care over their many years demonstrates to us how their fruit was severely lacking.

**The natural result of any person who is grafted into the true vine (Jesus) through salvation is that fruit will be produced in the life of the one grafted in because of the new lifeblood flowing through the veins of the branch**!

**A False Teaching That Needs Delt With:**

We must ask ourselves is our lives producing fruit with righteousness and holiness? Is the production of good fruit a priority?

Real branches who are connected to the True Vine will be fruit producers! There is a dangerous false understanding with some that has infiltrated the church that says one can be saved by Christ but change is optional.

Let’s be straight here! This false assumption feeds the desire of some who reason that they want to escape eternity in hell but do not want to surrender their life to Christ as Lord. They want to be with the Vine but not grafted to the vine.

This may be hard to accept but Jesus clearly brings this point out in our scripture we are reading today. Jesus clearly says without apology that the difference between real branches and false branches is that real branches will produce the fruit of righteousness while false branches will not produce fruit and will consequently be removed and burned.

That is a clear statement that we should not overlook. It is that serious.

**GROOMING THE BRANCHES:**

The branches will produce fruit, and if the branches are tended to and pruned they will produce even more fruit. If you know anything about gardening, then you know that there are times when you must groom the branch of that which is harmful in order for fruit to spring forth.

The idea or concept with what Jesus is teaching is that God will continue to groom us as His branches so that we may produce more fruit!

We can come to a realization of the grooming of God as we progress in our knowledge of and application of scripture in our lives. We find ourselves in different situations and we will tend to react more in a way the Lord would have us to.

As Christians we are God’s branches and He is our Vine and throughout life He grooms us, removing from us the ungodly and harmful so that more of His character and nature can come forth in our lives!

Our perspective in life changes to fit the Vine we are grafted into and thus our outlook or priorities change to that of the Vine, Jesus!

**The Branch Abides In The Vine:**

Everything we have said up until this point hinges on this point!

***“The branch is to abide in the vine!”***

The fruit that God desires from His people cannot be produced in and of themselves. Israel’s history attests to that. The fruit that God desires from His people comes from Himself as we, the branches, simply abide in Him.

This concept of abiding in Jesus the Vine, lends itself to the idea of a continual, daily relationship with Jesus as our provider and sustainer of our nourishment.

How do we do that? By spending daily time in prayer and His word. That is the fruit that will not only sustain us but cause us to produce fruit!

Jesus says here in this passage that “apart from Him that we can do nothing.”

Therefore, abiding in Jesus the Vine is that daily personal relationship with Him that shows itself through time with Him in prayer and His word whereby we are molded, shaped and pruned for good works that Glorify God.

Jesus says that whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

We could say that what we are being told is that we must set aside our personal ego and accept the fact that we are not able to produce fruit for the Kingdom on our own. That only through our dependance on Jesus can we be acceptable fruit producers.

***This is all about the life that we have been saved to live!***

A life that is dependent on Jesus and His teachings for our spiritual food and growth.

This gives us a lot to consider:

How is our prayer life?

How is our devotional time with God’s word?

Let us ask ourselves, Is our prayer time more than just a brief blessing for our meal or a time of asking for something?

Is our Bible time more than just what we do here on Sunday morning or Wednesday evening?

***We must be so dependent on Jesus that we never find ourselves too busy for Him!***

Many times we begin well in our commitment to spending time in prayer and Bible study and then before long, because of our overcrowded lives, we find ourselves so busy that we end up thinking we are just too busy in life to spend the time with Jesus.

We may also find ourselves trying to fit in time for the Lord but we are so busy we only spend enough time to mark off our “to do List.”

We fool ourselves into a false sense of accomplishment. Its like going to a fast-food restaurant and eating junk food just to fill our stomachs not realizing that our bodies are not receiving the proper diet.

We begin to starve ourselves of the needed nourishment to sustain and grow into a branch that is capable of producing much fruit.

Let us refer back to the questions that we opened with:

1. Do you ever feel joyless?
2. Do you feel like you’re just treading water as a Christian?
3. That your growth has been stymied?
4. That you do not have the courage to follow the Words of Jesus?
5. Do you feel like your stuck in a spiritual rut that you just can’t seem to get out of?
6. Let’s add one more,

 “I’m not being fed**.” If you’re not being fed, it’s because you’re not setting at the table!** The Bible has all the sustenance that we will ever need to be a fully nourished branch good for fruit production throughout our life.

 And speaking of being fed, we should never rely solely on Sunday morning sermon time as our only source of nourishment. A sermon is just a snack. A full three course meal is found in the Bible!

I wonder how many of us are here today as branches yet feel lifeless and dried up. I know some that have, and rather than work to improve their lot just decided to leave. That is just so sad!

You hear the word preached and taught about the great joy of salvation and the fruit that flows from it and you simply “wish” that for your life.

Or maybe you look around at other Christians and see spiritual life and fruit in their lives and long for that in your life. Could it be that the sustenance for the life you long for is available to you but you have refused to partake of it?

Jesus says, ***If you abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you may, 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. 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.”***

These words from our Lord speak to our hearts aching desire for true direction, true meaning, true relevance. These words lift us out of any feeling of despair. They bring hope and joy back into our lives. With the application of these words we gain confidence in our walk.

These words cause change in our perspective of life and rearrange our priorities. And most importantly, these words from our Lord gives us the spiritual food to produce the good fruit that we are saved to do.

That is our lesson or should I say snack for this morning.

What each one one of us choose to do with it is up to us.

What we should do is make the personal discission to set at the Lord’s table and be nourished from His word so that we not only change our perspective but our priorities as well. Pray that we may become a fruit bearing branch firmly grafted to Jesus the Vine.