



THE WORD FOR TODAY

John 15, 1—13

“I am the vine; you are the branches”

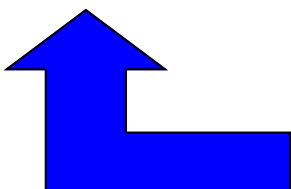


This passage covers some of Jesus’ last words to his closest disciples and friends—people who had been with him for the three years of his ministry on earth and whom he treasured. He really wanted them to have the “life in all its fullness” he had come to earth to bring. He hoped that they would carry on his work in the world.

He paints a picture of a vine—a common sight in the warm climate of the Middle East to which they would relate quite easily. Many of us will relate to it too, although some of us might find it easier to think of a fruit tree rather than a vine.

Jesus speaks to us now through these words. He speaks to us of a relationship as close as a branch is to the main stem of a plant. As we work through this season of Lent, running up to Holy Week and Good Friday, when we remember that Jesus died for us, it is a good time to think about our relationship with Jesus our Saviour.

Follow the words of this passage round the church, beginning on the north wall of this little building, the Offering House. We are using the New International Version of the Bible, which you can find on the internet under Bible Gateway, and the whole “Word for Today” is on the church website, which is www.libertonkirk.net You can also find meditations and prayers on other Bible passages there in previous “Words for Today”.



Turn the corner to find the first verses of the Bible passage on the bench

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 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. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.”

1



Most of us know that trees and vines have to be pruned if they are to grow and fruit well, but we can feel differently when it is our lives! We don't want anything removed, even though we know deep down that it will be good for us. We want to roam free.

We don't like to think that somebody knows better than us, but this is God our Father who is the gardener. Perhaps we need to find some humility before him. He made us; he gave us everything we have. Should we not put ourselves gladly into his hands to shape and guide us?

***Lord, I know just how proud I am
and how sure I am about what I want to do.
Teach me to be humble and to accept your guidance,
which is always for my good.***

(Station 2 is on the East side of the church building)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“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.”

2



There’s a great promise in these words. Stay attached to me and I will be with you always—enabling, nourishing, renewing. It seems such a good deal—and yet we find it so easy to be distracted and fall away. We have to ask ourselves why we can miss out on such a brilliant offer.

In today’s world, where there are so many uncertainties and where there is so much change all around us, we need a rock to cling to that we can trust and Jesus is that rock..

***Lord, help me to stay close to you,
to absorb your will and accept your strength,
and so be able to live a full and productive life.***

(No. 3 is further along this side of the church building)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

*“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.”*

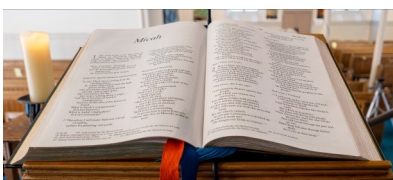
3

Why are we always so keen to show we don't need any help—we can manage! The truth is that we can only manage if Jesus is with us and in us. Jesus calls us to go against our natural instincts and place our lives in his keeping, as firmly attached as branches growing from the main branch of a tree or vine. We may not want to admit that we are all reliant on Jesus, but the truth is in that last line of the quotation above. He is the source of all we are and all we have and he is our security.



*Lord Jesus, help me to realise my need of you.
Let me welcome you into my life.
Hold me fast and empower me to live as you wish.*

(Walk along the back of the church and turn right to find No. 4 on the prayer bench)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“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.”***

4

Without Jesus we are mere shadows of the people we were made to be. Like a branch that’s become detached from its tree and receives no nourishment from it, we will dry up into nothing better than something fit for the fire. Would we want that?

Yet it’s so easy to ignore Jesus when the busyness of life crowds in—to not make time for a prayer, for a look at his word, or just a quiet moment to remember his goodness. Then what should be a daily occurrence becomes less and less frequent and before we know it Jesus has been sidelined.



***Lord, let me not drift away from you.
Draw me closer to you day by day
so that it becomes second nature to keep in touch with you.***

(No. 5 is on the West side of the church before you come to the tower)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“If you remain in me and my words remain in you,
ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.***

***This is to my Father’s glory,
that you bear much fruit,
showing yourselves to be my disciples.”***

5



How good would that be if our lives would show others that we are Christ’s followers? It’s a difficult task, some might think impossible. Yet we have everything that Jesus has taught us and shown us and we have his assurance that help will be forthcoming—we just have to ask.

If we are Christians, we are under scrutiny from a world eager to criticise but nevertheless keen to understand what we’re all about. Let’s not fail our Lord and Saviour.

***Lord, I would love to think my life could speak to others of you.
I can only do this with your help.
Let me not be slow to lean on you
and ask for your guidance.***

(Walk towards the front of the church and find No. 6 near the cairn)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 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. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

6

It’s not just nourishment and power we’re getting if we stay close to Jesus—it’s love! Love as deep as God’s love for his only Son. This was a love Jesus knew to be real and constant even as he went to his death. He knew he could trust in the rising to glory his Father had promised.

This was a love which gave Jesus joy deep within himself, even in the most difficult of circumstances on Good Friday. That’s what Jesus wants us to have too—joy in our inmost being.



*Lord, how can I thank you for your love.
Help me to follow more closely in your ways day by day
and come to know that transforming love and the joy it brings.*

(Walk to the front of the church and find No. 7 on one of the benches)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“My command is this:
Love each other as I have loved you.
Greater love has no-one than this,
that he lay down his life for his friends.”***

7

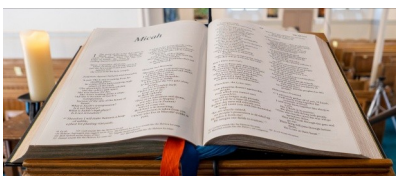


It sounds so easy, doesn't it? "Love each other as I have loved you". When he said these words, Jesus was hours away from being crucified to save us from our sins. This is a BIG love for us to emulate.

Yet how much better this world would be if people did try to love each other rather than hating, did try to love each other in spite of differences, did try to love each other despite dislike or even distaste. Jesus's command is BIGGER than all our feeble reasons for not trying. It's an aim for Lent—to follow this one command from Jesus, whose love for us extended to giving up his life.

***Loving Lord Jesus, help me to love my neighbours,
even those I cannot warm to.
Help me to be kind to all,
even those I deem undeserving.***

If anything you have read has prompted questions you would like to discuss, please contact John Young on 664 3067 or jyoung@churchofscotland.org.uk



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