

John 13-17: Living Life with an Invisible Savior

February 5th, 2023

John 15:1-11 The Foundation of Christian Living (part 1)

Our Joy-FULL Relationship with Jesus

I. Recap

During Jesus' last night with His disciples, Judas departs from their midst on a mission to betray his Master. With only the faithful disciples remaining, Jesus gives final instructions for continuing His ministry without Him. They must obey His commandments and ask in His name and in return, Jesus will send the Holy Spirit, and the triune God will abide in the heart of the believer. This will allow the disciples to perform even greater works than Jesus, witnessing an abundance of converts through the spreading of the gospel. Knowing that the ruler of the world was coming, using the betrayer as his tool, Jesus commands the disciples to get up from dinner and to follow him to the place where he will be betrayed.

II. Introduction

Marie Kondo is a Japanese organizing consultant and is well known for her books such as "Spark Joy," "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up," and for her popular Netflix show called "Tidying Up with Marie Kondo" where she inspires home makeovers and helps people "clear out the clutter -- choose joy." The essence of her philosophy, which is based on Shintoism, is that you can find peace and joy by getting rid of stuff rather than accumulating it. She challenges her followers to ask the question "does it spark joy?" and if it doesn't, to get rid of it.¹

1. What draws people to Marie Kondo's minimalistic life-style and principles?
2. Why might people actually find happiness when they take her advice?²
3. What problems are there with Marie Kondo's approach to life?

Marie Kondo's popularity is explained by the innate desire in every human being to be happy and their search for the secrets to unlocking happiness. God himself is happy and as His image bearers we desire and experience happiness too.³ But the problem is that sin distorts our view of what makes us happy and we end up looking for it in all the wrong places. In John 15:1-11 Jesus teaches that our relationship with Him is the foundation of fruitful Christian living and our joy. He explains what the disciples must do in order to bear fruit in ministry: they must habitually and continually abide in the vine. Through this vital connection, both Jesus and the Father will ensure that their work will be accomplished.

¹ Megan Hill, "Minimalism Is Not the Gospel," The Gospel Coalition, March 15, 2017
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/minimalism-is-not-the-gospel/> Accessed Feb. 2, 2023.

² Luke 12:15

³ Matt. 25:23; 1 Tim. 1:11; cf. John 15:11

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III. The Abiding Foundation of Christian Living

The last verse of chapter 14 tells us that Jesus got up from the table and departed with the disciples. Chapter 15 takes place as the disciples are walking through the moonlit streets of Jerusalem, crossing the Kidron Valley to the east on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. It is during this time that Jesus shifts gears from consolation to instruction and uses a common everyday object to teach an exceptional lesson.

a. Text

“1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 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. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4 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. 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. 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.”

4. In John 15, Jesus uses an extended metaphor to teach and illustrate a point. What object does Jesus use in his illustration and what four characters are represented in the imagery? (v. 1-2)
5. What do the two types of branches represent? (v. 2)
6. In verse 3 Jesus restates the reality that the disciples are already saved – with the exception of Judas - which he first said in John 13:10 while washing their feet. How does this statement help clarify the identity of the two branches?

“That would seem to settle the question with respect to the identity of the two groups. Group a. (branches that bear fruit and are cleansed) represents all those who do not only come into close contact with Christ and the Gospel but also (by God’s sovereign grace and through faith) accept it. Group b. (branches that do not bear fruit and are taken away and burned) represents all the others who have come into close contact with Christ and the Gospel.”⁴

7. How would this metaphor be helpful to the disciples in light of Judas’ betrayal?
8. How is this metaphor instructive for us when we know someone who professed faith and seemed to be changed, perhaps even grew up in church, but later in life “falls away”?

⁴ Hendriksen, 295.

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- You can be exposed to the truth and not be saved by the truth (Heb. 3:7-9, 12-13)
- You can appreciate the truth but not apply the truth (Heb. 6:1-2; James 1:22)
- You can receive blessings from the truth without receiving the truth itself (Heb. 6:4-8)
- Association with Christ is not the same as relationship with Christ (John 13:10)
- Identification by others as a disciple is not the same as being known by Jesus (Matt. 7:21-23; 1 John 2:19)

“In no sense whatever do such passages as 15:2 and 15:6 suggest that there is a falling away from grace, as if those who were once actually saved finally perish. This [metaphor] plainly teaches that the ranches which are taken away and burned represent people who never once bore fruit, not even when they were ‘in’ Christ. Hence, they never were true believers; and for them the in-the-vine relationship, though close, was merely outward.”⁵

9. According to verse 4, what is the main point Jesus is teaching with this illustration?

10. Is the command to “abide” in verse 4 imply that you can lose your salvation? Why or why not?

“If obedience is the condition of continuously remaining in Jesus’ love, it is no less important to remember that in 14:15, 21 our love for Jesus is the wellspring of our obedience to him, as our obedience is the demonstration of the reality of that love.”⁶

11. What two actions does the Father perform on the branches? (v. 2, 6)

12. What is the significance of the vine and branch illustration as it relates to believers?

13. What does it mean when God prunes believers? What does he take away?

14. How does God prune believers?⁷

⁵ Hendriksen, 296.

⁶ Carson, 520.

⁷ Ps. 32:1-5; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; 12:7-10; Rom. 5:3-5; Heb. 12:4-12; James 1:2-4; 5:11

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IV. The Joy-FULL Blessings of Christian Living

a. Text

7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 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. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." (John 15:1–11 [ESV](#))

15. Jesus expounds upon the meaning of “abide” in these verses. According to verse 7 and verse 10 what does it mean “abide” in Christ?

“*Menō* ("abide") describes something that remains where it is, continues in a fixed state, or endures. In this context the word refers to maintaining an unbroken communion with Jesus Christ. The Lord's command "Abide in Me" ([v. 4](#)) is primarily a plea to false disciples of Christ to repent and express true faith in Him. It also serves to encourage genuine believers to abide in Him in the fullest, deepest, most complete sense.”⁸

16. What are some examples of believers abiding in Christ?

“True grace, we must not forget, is never idle. It never slumbers and never sleeps. It is a vain notion to suppose that we are living members of Christ, if the example of Christ is not to be seen in our characters and lives. ‘Fruit’ is the only satisfactory evidence of saving union between Christ and our souls.”⁹

17. According to verse 8 and 11, what are the results of our fruitfulness?

18. What is fruit? How do we know if we are producing it?

⁸ MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – John 12-21, 142.

⁹ J.C. Ryle, 72.

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“A popular misconception equates fruit with outward success. By that common standard, external religion, superficial righteousness, having a large church, a popular ministry, or a successful program are considered fruitful. But the Bible nowhere equates fruit with superficial, external behavior or results, which deceivers and hypocrites, as well as non-Christian cults and religions can duplicate. Instead, Scripture defines fruit in terms of spiritual qualities. "The fruit of the Spirit," Paul reminded the Galatians, "is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). Those Christlike traits mark those through whom His life flows.”¹⁰

19. What distinguishes joy from happiness? Are there any similarities? Why or why not?

“Christian joy is the glad emotion springing from the settled confidence that God is in absolute control and will bring our good in time and His glory in eternity.”¹¹

J.C. Ryle accurately pointed out, “There is a wide difference between believers and believers. In some things they are alike. All feel their sins; all trust in Christ; all repent and strive to be holy. All have grace, and faith, and new hearts. But they differ widely in the degree of their attainments. Some are far happier and holier Christians than others, and have far more influence on the world.”

Even though all Christians will persevere in Christ, there is still the call to remain and abide in Him. Since we do not perfectly abide in Christ, our joy is not always full, hence the command.

V. Conclusion

In John 15:1-11 Jesus teaches that our relationship with Him is the foundation of fruitful Christian living and our joy. No matter how small or how infrequent, a believer will always produce fruit. Those who are genuinely saved will continue to abide in Him and evidence that through fruit – through Christ-likeness or Christian living. Unfortunately, it is a sobering reality that many in the world attach themselves to the name of Christ but do not actually know Him. Just like Judas, there are many who look like branches but bear no fruit, who look like wheat but are tares, who sound like sheep but are actually goats, many who seem to spring up with joy from the ground on account of the gospel seed only to be choked out by sin, many who look like believers but do not have genuine salvation. You can identify some unbelievers by their fruit, but some will terrifyingly deceive themselves and others until the day they reach heavens gates and are shown for who they really are when Jesus judges them. But those who are “clean” on account of God’s Word, will be identifiable by the supernatural fruit of God in their lives to some degree. Despite what the world says, the key to experiencing fullness of joy, which has already been fully given, is to increase in bearing fruit by asking God to prune us from our sin through the exposure to the Word.

¹⁰ MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – John 12-21, 149.

¹¹ Rick Holland, “Recalibrating Our Source of Joy” Sermon, Mission Road Bible Church, April 1st, 2012.

<https://www.mrbckc.org/sermons/sermon/2012-04-01/recalibrating-our-source-of-joy> Accessed February 2, 2023