

“The Vine and the Branches”

October 4, 2026

John 15:1-8

I. Introduction

Jesus had been celebrating Passover with His disciples, but John 14 ended with the words, **“Come now; let us leave,”** so Jesus and His 11 remaining disciples finally left the upper room. The disciples probably assumed that they were going to the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane. And they would have been right, [John 18:1](#) says, **“When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove, and he and his disciples went into it.”** But on the way there, they may have passed the Temple where Jesus may have stopped to teach and to pray. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote that, at the entrance to the Temple itself, steps led to a linen curtain covered with purple, scarlet, and blue flowers. Above the curtain and below the roof line, Herod had placed a gigantic grapevine of pure gold. Perhaps this led to Jesus’ analogy of “The Vine and The Branches.” Or, if they didn’t go that way, then on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane, they might have passed through grape vineyards, and this led to the teaching about “The Vine and The Branches.”

The vine and the vineyard were old and sacred images of the nation of Israel. For example, [Psalm 80:8-9](#) says, **“You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land.”** But in spite of God’s extensive work for them, Israel proved to be a fruitless, worthless vine and God was forced to act. [Turn to Isaiah 5:1-7.](#) God had chosen Israel to be His vineyard, but they produced bad grapes and were rejected by God.

With vines and branches and fruit in mind, Jesus gave His 7th and last **“I AM”** statement as He said, **“I am the true vine.”** Using the key figures of that night’s events, Jesus then went on to give His familiar analogy of “The Vine and the Branches”—He is the vine, the Father is the gardener or vinedresser, the fruit-bearing branches represented the eleven and all other true disciples and the branches that didn’t bear fruit pictured Judas and all other false disciples like him.

II. The Vineyard

A. Jesus is the Vine. Back in [John 1:9](#) Jesus is called **”The true light that gives light to the world.”** Now, speaking just hours before His death, Jesus identified Himself by saying: **“I am the true vine.”** As the **“true vine,”** Jesus is the only source of spiritual life, growth, and productivity. It’s a person’s identification with Jesus not with a religion or a ceremony or an organization that is important. It is faith and trust in Jesus Christ that determines where one will spend eternity, i.e., heaven or hell, and what kind of fruit he bears. As Jesus said in [John 8:24](#), **“If you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”** Jesus is the only source of spiritual life. He is the one and only Vine; the only Way to heaven.

B. God the Father is the Gardener. Jesus then said, **“My Father is the gardener.”** The Gardener is the one in charge of caring for the vines. The Father is the One who cared for the true Vine when He was on the earth; who as [Isaiah 53:2](#) says, **“Grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground.”** And the Gardener, God the Father, takes care of the branches as well.

Besides planting, fertilizing, and watering the vine, the gardener has two primary responsibilities in caring for the vine and the branches. First, he removes branches that do not bear fruit. Second, he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so that they can bear more and better fruit. In a spiritual sense, this is just what the Father does. He deals with the two types of branches beginning with fruitful branches.

C. Two Types of Branches

1. Fruitful Branches Fruitful branches represent genuine—real—Christians. Jesus wasn’t talking about how to be saved, but He was emphasizing that the nature of the true Christian is to bear fruit. [Ephesians 2:10](#) says, **“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”** [James 2:26](#) says, **“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”** Turn to [Matthew 7:15-20](#). **“By their fruit you will recognize them.”**

The Bible doesn’t define fruit only by the results that are reached. The Bible also defines fruit in terms of spiritual qualities; [Gal. 5:22-23](#) says, **“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”** These are the Christian traits or fruit that

mark those in whom Christ lives. Christians bear fruit when they win others to Christ—in [Rom. 1:13](#) Paul wrote, **“I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.”** Christians bear fruit in a variety of ways. [Heb. 13:15](#) says, **“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise-- the fruit of lips that confess his name.”** In [Romans 15:27-28](#), Paul wrote that Christian giving is to be fruit from a dedicated life.

Some of these fruits can be counterfeited by the flesh, by the unsaved, but the deception will eventually be detected. Just like healthy fruit, real spiritual fruit has in it the seeds for more fruit. Man-made results are dead and cannot reproduce themselves, but Spirit-produced fruit will go on reproducing from one life to another. As one walks with the Holy Spirit, there will be fruit--more fruit--much fruit.

In nature, branches do not eat their fruit; others do. Similarly, Christians are not producing fruit to please themselves, but to serve others and glorify God. Jesus said in [John 15:8](#), **“This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”** Real Christians are the kind of people who “feed” others by their words and their deeds. As [Proverbs 10:21](#) says, **“The lips of the righteous nourish many.”**

Jesus said that the job of the Heavenly Gardener is to prune every branch **“so that it will be even more fruitful.”** The pruning represents God’s loving discipline—[Hebrews 12:10](#) says that **“God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness.”** Spiritual pruning is the necessary process by which the Father removes everything that limits a Christian’s fruitfulness. God cuts out sins and other distractions that sap spiritual strength. The pruning knife He uses is His Word, the Bible. [Hebrews 4:12](#) says, **“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.”** God’s Word prunes the sin out of our lives and redirects the interest of our hearts. Sometimes it just takes His Word to convict and cleanse us; sometimes He must chasten or discipline us. As Jesus talked to the eleven, He was able to say in [verse 3](#), **“You are already clean (i.e. pruned) because of the word I have spoken to you.”**

A vinedresser—a gardener—removes unnecessary shoots from branches in several ways. Sometimes the tip is simply pinched off. Other times a knife must be used to make a clean cut, neatly removing the useless growth. Sometimes even the grape clusters have to be thinned out while they are still flowering so that the healthiest fruit can grow even larger and more abundant. This is what the all-knowing Father does for us. Sometimes the pruning process is painful. But the Gardener knows what He is doing—He is omniscient. He only wants us to bear much fruit. And He prunes us only because He loves us—turn to Hebrews 12:5-7.

2. The unfruitful Branches But there are unfruitful branches. These are those who do not remain or abide in the True Vine, they are false disciples. The Gardener wastes no time dressing fruitless branches or even pruning small shoots off of them, because these branches are fit only to be taken away and burned. They only seem to be attached to the vine. From the outside, they appear to be connected. There may be even leafy growth and “false” fruits. But something is missing. Like Judas Iscariot, they are not remaining in the vine. They profess faith in Jesus Christ, but they don’t really know Him. They have never made Him their Lord and Savior. They have no fellowship with Him. Their relationship is only superficial. They neither agape love the Lord Jesus Christ nor obey Him. Since they don’t have the Holy Spirit living in them, they cannot bear spiritual fruit no matter how hard they try.

Throughout Scripture there are warnings to those who associate themselves with Jesus, but whose faith is just a façade. Jesus taught about the Wheat and the Tares in Matthew 13:25-30; the Five Foolish Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, just to name two examples. Such people appear to be in Christ but do not truly abide or remain in him. Judas was such a branch. He appeared to the other disciples as if he were truly one of them, but as Jesus said in John 13:11 Judas wasn’t clean. Or as Titus 3:5 says that he had never had “**the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.**” Judas was a fruitless branch fit only to be removed from the Vine and burned. The Gardener will remove such false branches from the vine. John wrote about such false disciples in 1 John 2:19, “**They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if**

they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.”

III. Conclusion

In so many ways, Jesus’ analogy of “The Vine and the Branches” is still appropriate today. By itself, a branch is weak and useless. A branch cannot even produce its own life let alone any fruit. A branch must draw its life from the vine. In a similar way, it is our union with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit that makes possible our life, our eternal life, and the bearing of much spiritual fruit. Without Christ’s power we cannot save ourselves or bear acceptable fruit.

It is natural for a branch to remain in the vine, but it must be encouraged in the Christian life. It is not automatic. *"Remaining in Christ"* demands worship, studying God’s Word, prayer, sacrifice, and service. Fruitfulness will be the inevitable outcome of a spiritual life abiding or remaining in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, **“Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”**

One of the most important processes in having a productive vineyard is the pruning process. The same is true for the Christian life. Because God loves us, He “prunes” us to enable us to bear more fruit for His glory. Pruning doesn’t simply mean spiritual surgery that removes what is bad. Sometimes it may mean cutting away the good and the better so that we might enjoy the best. Pruning may hurt, but through it **“you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”** We may not enjoy it, but we need it. The more we abide or remain in Christ, the more fruit we will bear; and the more fruit we bear, the more the Father has to prune us so that the quality keeps up with the quantity. Left to itself, the branch may produce many clusters, but they will be inferior in quality. God is glorified by a bigger crop that is also a better crop.

So, what kind of branch are you? Have you put your trust in Jesus Christ for your eternal life or are you still holding out hope for “some other way”—your way or a particular denomination’s way, perhaps. If Jesus Christ is your Lord as well as your Savior, are His fruits seen in your life? Are the fruit of the Spirit easily seen by others? Do you accept God’s pruning, even though it may be painful for a short time, because you trust Him and know that in the end it is the best for you?

Communion Devotion – October 2026

Mark 14:17-26

I have a question for you: When Jesus said that one of the Twelve was going to betray Him, was Judas surprised? Yes and no. No, he wasn't surprised—Judas knew what he had planned. [Mark 14:10](#) says that following Jesus' anointing at Bethany that **“Judas Iscariot one of the 12 went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them.”** On the other hand, I suspect that Judas was surprised that anyone gathered in the upper room—especially Jesus—knew what he was doing. He had tried so hard to blend in. Judas either forgot or didn't believe that Jesus was God and that God knows the heart of man.

This morning as we come to the Lord's Table, we come to celebrate the love of God for man as we are reminded of Jesus' broken body and His shed blood for each one of us. If Jesus is your Lord as well as your Savior, whether or not you are member of Tabernacle Baptist Church, you are invited to join in this celebration. This is a time set aside to say, “Thank you” to God for His love and mercy and grace. If Jesus isn't your Lord and Savior, don't waste your time—the bread and the juice will do nothing for you.

I understand that in some churches, the leadership walks up and down the aisles designating those who can take Communion and those who can't. That's not our place. But I would caution you to look at your heart, look at your mind—who really is the Lord of your life? Is there is unconfessed sin in your heart? In [Psalm 66:18](#) David wrote, **“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”** It is important to be right with God! Remember, God sees the heart of man.

During the quiet time when the bread and then the cup are being passed, thank God for His sacrifice for you. Thank Him for the opportunity to be His son or daughter with all the privileges that come with that adoption. But, also, take inventory of your life. Is the fruit of the Spirit seen in you? Does your life **SHOUT** to others that you are a Christian or do you blend in with the world? Get right with God—don't play games with Him—He can read your heart just as well as He could read Judas' heart.