

**I am the Vine, You are the Branches (John 15:1-11)**  
**That You May Believe: The Gospel of John**  
**Southern Hills Baptist Church**  
**September 3, 2017**

**WELCOME**

Why hello everybody! I'm glad to be here with you this morning. I'm really excited to get into our passage in John 15, so if you have your Bible with you go ahead and turn in that direction.

**INTRODUCTION**

What makes me so excited about our passage today is that the truths that Jesus lays before **us define us at a foundational level**. Jesus speaks to our identity in some **incredibly and eternally significant ways**. This is important. **Who you believe yourself to be will determine how you approach life and where you invest your life**.

**Who Do You Think You Are?**

With that in mind, let me ask you, Who do you think you are? What defines you? Why are you here?

These are all questions we need to have answered in life.

**Fundamentally and Forever Changed**

Now, I am not sure all Christians understand this, but these questions are answered for you when you place your faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Scriptures teach us that **your identity is fundamentally and forever changed when you place your faith in Jesus**

**2 Corinthians 5:17**

[17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

You are a new creation! The old has passed away and the new has come! **The event that causes this seismic shift in your identity is what is known as "Union with Christ."** It is this reality that Jesus unpacks for us in our passage in John 15:1-11.

**Understanding Ourselves**

As we come to learn more our union with Jesus we will understand **ourselves**, our **life**, our **purpose**, our **meaning** all in new and liberating ways. When we live out of our identity with Jesus **we open ourselves up to greater depths of joy and satisfaction as we start to live out our created purpose**.

**Transition**

So again, I am thrilled to be here in John 15 this morning. Now to get ready for our passage, let me remind you of where we are in Jesus' life.

**CONTEXT**

Over the past few weeks, since the start of John 13, we have been with Jesus and His Disciples in the upper room. It is the night of Jesus' betrayal. Within the next 24 hours Jesus would be betrayed, placed on a false trial, unjustly convicted of crimes He didn't commit, brutally beaten, and then murdered.

## **Pouring Into and Preparing the Disciples**

Jesus knows what is on the horizon. He knows what awaits Him so in His final moments He has peeled away from the crowds and gathered in private with His Disciples so that He can pour into them, invest in them, prepare them for the dark days that are to come, days that will floor the Disciples and turn their worlds upside down.

## **Chapter 13-14 Recap**

He has worked to prepare them by showing them what true love looks like, radical service. He begins to foreshadow the lengths that His love and grace will take Him as He washes the feet of His followers. He calls them to love one another and others with the same love that He demonstrates here in these moments and the days to come. He then begins to share hope-infused promises that are meant to comfort their worried hearts, truths that will buoy them when all else seems lost.

## **Walking to the Garden**

Jesus concludes His hope-giving promise of the Holy Spirit by calling the Disciples to arise and go with Him from the room they are in as they will make their way to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus will spend time in prayer leading up to His betrayal.

## **Reality and Implications of Union with Christ**

While they are making their way to the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus continues to unpack important truths that the Disciples will need in the wake of His death and in the ministry that was being prepared for them. In John 15:1-11 Jesus begins to explain the reality and implications of the union shared between Himself and those who believe in Him.

## **Teach You Who You Are**

I want to encourage you to pay close attention to the truth that Jesus imparts **as it was meant to teach you who you really are. The world tries to define you from all sorts of angles, however, you have but one Creator and His Words on who you are, on your identity, are definitive and life-giving.** Drink in these sweet truths from your Savior and savor them, live upon them.

## **OUR TEXT - HEAR THE WORD OF GOD**

### **John 15:1-11**

[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. [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.

### **Isaiah 40:8**

[8] The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

## OPENING PRAYER

Let's pause and ask God to work through His Word in our hearts and lives this morning...

Dear Heavenly Father,

You have made us, you have redeemed us, we are yours. You made us for your glory, you redeemed us for your name's sake, we are yours. The world encourages us to find our identity in a great number of things, the roles and responsibilities we hold, the achievements we accomplished, in good deeds we have done, even in our failures. We don't belong to the world, we don't want its definitions upon us. Tell us who we are this morning from your Word. Cause our hearts to rejoice as we see that our identity isn't first and foremost about what we have done or what others think about us, but rather what Jesus has done and who we are in Him. May these truths breathe fresh life into us and cause us to celebrate Jesus all the more. He is good. You are worthy of our worship and we gladly offer it to you this morning Father.

We pray this in Jesus' name,  
Amen

## Thesis Statement

Now as we recalled earlier, Jesus and the Disciples have left the upper room and are walking to the Garden of Gethsemane. As they walk Jesus starts to unfold a word picture. **The central statement of Jesus' word picture is found in verse 5, "I am the vine and you are the branches..."**

## 7<sup>th</sup> and Final "I Am" Statement

Just a quick note, for those keeping score, this is the 7<sup>th</sup> and final "I Am" statement of Jesus in the Gospel of John. All of these statements are powerful self-revelations of the person of Jesus.

## Grape Vines All Over

The text doesn't tell us this, but culturally we know that it was common for those who owned homes to have a small garden and it was very common to have grape vines growing in those gardens. What I envision is Jesus and the Disciples walking past a grape vine and Jesus pausing, pointing to the grape vine and using this simple, common image to unfold deep and significant truth.

## Formula: I am This, You are That

Now, notice the formula of the thesis statement of our passage, "I am the vine and you are the branches." Jesus is saying, "I am this, you are that." This is very clearly a statement about identity. Jesus is going to reveal truth about who He is and He is going to reveal truth about who we are. In fact, our identity is attached to who Jesus is. Even more than that, our identity is defined by the fact that we are united to Jesus, just like a branch is united or in union with a vine.

So as we look at John 15:1-11...

- We are going to see 5 implications of our Union with Christ
- or
- We will see 5 realities concerning our identity in Christ.

## UNION AND IDENTITY IN CHRIST

### 1 AS BRANCHES WE FIND LIFE IN THE VINE

The first and most foundational truth that Jesus communicates with this powerful picture of us being branches in His vine is that as branches we find life in the vine. This truth is implicit in the word picture, but we see it most clearly in verses 5 and 6...

### **John 15:5-6**

[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.

### **Living and Dead Branches**

The characteristic of a **living branch is that it produces fruit**. Dead branches on the other hand are unable to produce fruit and even more than that, they wither up. There is no life coursing through them so they dry up and fall apart.

### **Jesus, The Life-Giver**

Jesus says in these verses that those who abide in Him will produce fruit, meaning they have life. Those who don't abide in Him will wither up, meaning they don't have life. **Jesus is the Life-Giver**. This is very consistent with what Jesus has been teaching us throughout the book of John...

### **John 4:14**

[14] but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

### **John 6:35**

[35] Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

### **John 10:7-11**

[7] So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. [8] All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. [9] I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. [10] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. [11] I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

This truth has been central to the message of Jesus all along. **True life, spiritual life, eternal life can only be found in Him. Just as a branch cannot hope to find life detached from the vine, we cannot hope to find spiritual life apart from Jesus.**

### **Utterly Dependent**

This is what Jesus is communicating when He says, "Apart from me you can do nothing." We are utterly dependent upon Jesus. We need Him every moment of every day.

### **Application – Identity in Christ**

So what does this mean for you? We have talked about how Jesus is telling us who we are, He is defining us and revealing to us who we were made to be in Him. What do we learn about ourselves here as we consider what it means to be "In Christ?" What is the implication of finding life in Jesus?

### **Rest in Jesus**

Jesus gives us what we can't earn or hold on to on our own. All other major world religions teach that you have to be good enough to earn reward beyond this life. Jesus knows that we can't do that. He knows that we have tried and failed, thus He gives us eternal life in Himself. He can do what we can't so He has us abide in Him that we may share in His eternal life. **Brothers and sisters, we can rest in Jesus, we don't have to strive after that which we will never attain, we have it in Christ.**

### **Transition**

Not only can we rest from our striving, but we can also find satisfaction in a big purpose.

## **2. AS BRANCHES WE FIND PURPOSE IN THE VINE**

I've heard it said before that **the two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you found out why. In Jesus our lives have purpose and meaning, but not just any purpose or meaning we find purpose and meaning that is of eternal significance.** We find the purpose and meaning that we were created for. Our meaning and purpose is linked to the grand meta-narrative of the created order.

So what is that purpose exactly? We can see this in verses 2, 4-5, 8...

### **John 15:2, 4-5, 8**

[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.

[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.

[8] By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

What purpose does Jesus give to those who abide in Him? We see two, one that is overarching and all encompassing and other that is more tactical, yet still so important.

### **1 - Made to Glorify God**

The first, big purpose for your life is that you were made to glorify God. **You were made in order to display the goodness, beauty, and truth of God to the world around you.** This is what we see in verse 8. All that we do should be for the Father's glory.

Listen to how Paul says this...

### **1 Corinthians 10:31**

[31] So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

### **Even the Small Acts**

**All of our lives, even the minutia, the small details, the basic necessities of living, like eating and drinking, it should all be done for the glory of God. And what a joy it is to know that even our smallest acts in life are to be plugged into a cosmically big purpose like making known the glory and majesty of our Creator, Savior.** This gives significance to all that you do. There are **no small acts or unimportant choices in the life of the believer.**

### **Want Your Life to Matter?**

How cool is that? You want your life to matter, right? It does, it is plugged into the ultimate goal in all the universe. Amazing. Wonderful.

## 2 – Bear Fruit

In addition to displaying the glory of God, our abiding in Jesus provides yet another purpose for our lives. As we see all throughout our passage as branches from the vine we are to bear fruit. This is a word picture that is used all throughout the Scriptures.

### What Does “Bearing Fruit” Mean?

Now, what does it mean to bear fruit? Bearing fruit speaks to **producing the kind of lives that are consistent with our identity**. For example, apple trees bear apples because they are apple trees. Orange trees produce oranges because they are orange trees. Christians produce God-glorifying, good works of obedience because we abide in Jesus and are indwelt by the Spirit. Here is how Paul speaks to this in Galatians 5...

#### Galatians 5:22-24

[22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. [24] And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

The fruit of the Spirit, the overflow of the Spirit is good works. **It is loving others, showing kindness, being faithful, showing self-control**. All of this is the net result of abiding in Christ.

### Assurance of Salvation

This is your purpose. Not only is it your purpose, but according to Jesus in verses 2-5 it is also your assurance of salvation. **Just as an apple tree can be assured that it is an apple tree by seeing the apples that hang from its branches, you can be assured your faith is genuine, that you truly abide in Christ, that you are truly a child of God when you see good works produced in your life.**

### Application: Identity in Christ

#### Your Life = Platform for God’s Glory

In Christ, your life has meaning and purpose. Your purpose is to bring God glory through the fruit you bear, through the good works you produce. **Your life is to tell a story for God’s glory of God’s grace and love. God has given you many platforms to do this.** Your **marriage** is a stage for this. Your role as **father** or **mother** is a canvas for this reality to be painted. Your **position as employee** is a space in which to display this. Your role as **neighbor** should be leveraged to display God. God has already given you all kinds of situations and contexts to go live out your purpose, so do so for the glory of our Father.

#### How Might You Glorify God the Most?

This truth should be central to your identity. You should filter life through the question of how you might glorify God the most. You should look at life from the angle of **how you might most greatly display the beauty of Jesus**. Something we always need to remember as Believers is **that our lives are about something bigger than us**. Every situation, every decision in your life should be seen as an opportunity to be who you were created to be and magnify the One who loves you more deeply and fully than you will ever understand.

### Transition

Jesus gives our lives purpose and thankfully we see that the Father is actively involved in our lives to equip us for this calling.

### 3. AS BRANCHES WE ARE REFINED BY THE VINEDRESSER

As branches we are refined by the Vinedresser. The eternal God of the universe **plays an active role in our lives**. We see this in verses 2 and 6...

#### **John 15:2, 6**

[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.

[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.

Jesus speaks of two ways that God the Father, the Vinedresser, plays an active role in the life of His Creation.

#### **Vinedresser as Judge**

The first is an act of judgment towards those who do not believe upon Jesus. Jesus tells us that God throws out the branches that are fruitless and those branches are cast into a fire and burned. This of course refers to the eternal judgment that awaits those who have rejected Jesus.

#### **Romans 2:5-8**

[5] But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. [6] He will render to each one according to his works: [7] to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; [8] but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

#### **Awful and Righteous**

The judgment of God is an awful thing, yet it is righteous. He is a righteous judge and He will judge those who have not repented of their sin and turned to Jesus in faith. Apart from Jesus we choose to bear the penalty of our sins on our own. This is a foolish mistake of the highest magnitude. **Our sin is real. The offense to God is real. He will justly punish all sin. It will not work out in your favor.** Thus, the call is to repent and turn from your sin that you might not be cut off from Christ and thrown into the fire, what the Scriptures refer to as Hell.

#### **Tripped Up on Eternal Security**

Some come to this passage in John 15 and get tripped up by the fact that every branch in Jesus that doesn't bear fruit will be cut off from him. They take this to mean that we can lose our salvation if the good works in our lives start to dry up.

#### **Addressing Eternal Security Briefly**

I am not going to dive deep into this as we have considered it before and there is still much else we need to talk about. What I will say is that Jesus promises to never cast out those who come to Him in genuine faith. Read John 6:37-40.

Additionally, it is important to remember that metaphors about God and His work all break down at some point. At one point in this metaphor God the Father is the vinedresser and at another Jesus speaks of abiding in Him like a vine. God or His work can't be contained by our human metaphors. I think Jesus was merely communicating that God will exercise judgment on those who don't abide in Him.

Additionally, don't forget the context of this passage. Judas had just left to betray Jesus. He was 1 of the 12 Disciples. It appeared that he abided in Jesus, but he didn't. His faith was a false, self-serving faith. John speaks to this kind of faith in 1 John 2:19 by saying...

### **1 John 2:19**

[19] They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

They went out from us because they were not of us. Their faith wasn't real and it was revealed as such by the way they abandoned Jesus. The same was true of Judas. They never abided in Jesus, but it sure looked like it from the outside. We cannot read the hearts of others though.

### **Summary – God is Judge**

So with that caveat aside, the big message that Jesus is sharing is that God the Father plays an active role in the life of His creation and one of the ways He does that is through righteous judgment.

### **Vinedresser as Refiner**

That is not the only way however. God also lovingly refines those that do abide in Jesus. Jesus says in verse 2 that the Vinedresser **prunes true believers to help them produce more fruit.**

### **Intimately Involved**

I love what this means. We are called to bear fruit to go and live lives that magnify our Creator and what we see here is that **God doesn't merely place a call upon then walk away, no, He calls us to something then stays intimately involved in your life to help bring it about. He goes to work refining you, growing you, sanctifying you, that you might bear more fruit.**

### **Pruning**

The process of pruning helps us understand how God works to refine us. As you know, the process of pruning is the process of **cutting away dead branches that are crowding or competing with the healthy branches.** Thus, Jesus is saying that God will involve Himself in your life in such a way that He will **help you let go of anything in your life that is spiritually unhealthy.** He is going to help you let go of the idols your heart holds on to.

God will use a variety of tools to bring this to pass.

- Perhaps it will be a **helpful realization** in your **devotional time.**
- Maybe it will be the **encouragement of another** brother or sister in Christ.
- It could come in the form of **answered prayer** as God helps change your desires.
- God may use the **example of someone** in your life to equip you.

### **Pruned Through Trials**

Then again, it could be a trial or a time of suffering that God uses to refine you. Often these are the most effective times of refinement. Our attention is most acutely focused in these moments. Our desire to search for answers and truth is heightened. Our willingness to make changes is greater. God will use the pain in your life to refine you.

**While this process is often not fun, it is defining and we come out the other end stronger in our faith, wiser, and more equipped to respond to the situation. While I wouldn't want to repeat any of these moments in my life I would never trade them away either.**

## **Application: Identity in Christ**

### **Everything as Tailor-Made from God for Growth**

So what does this mean for us? How does this shape our identity? Knowing that, as we abide in Jesus, God the Father is actively involved in our lives, working to shape us into the image of Jesus that we may bear more fruit, knowing **this should color the way we view every event and circumstance in our lives. We should look at everything, the good and the bad, as tailor-made, hand-crafted tools of God meant to grow us.** So...

- When we get an unexpected bonus at work, we should ask how this gift can be a part of our growth into Christlikeness that we may bear more fruit. How can we bear fruit with this blessing?
- When we lose our job or get a bad diagnosis from the doctor we should ask how we can learn to trust God more and bring Him glory in our response.

### **Purpose in Pain**

The truth of God's refining work in our lives give purpose to our pain in ways that the world never can. **Apart from God life is nothing more than a result of time plus chance, which means your suffering is nothing more than random happenstance. In Christ, we find meaning, purpose, and strength in our suffering.**

Brothers and Sisters, let's strive to live out of this sweet identity.

## **4. AS BRANCHES WE FIND STRENGTH IN THE VINE**

Jesus continues to unfold what it means for us to abide in Him and live in union with Him when He shares that as branches we find strength in Him as the vine. We see this in verses 4-7...

### **John 15:4-7**

[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. [7] If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

While God the Father is working to refine us in a variety of ways Jesus is working to strengthen us to continue to grow through the pruning work of God. We see this in a couple of ways.

### **1 – General Promise of Strength**

The first is a general promise for strength. This promise is implicit when Jesus tells us that we, branches, cannot bear fruit by ourselves, and that those who abide in Jesus will bear much fruit, meaning that **it is through the power and strength that He supplies as the vine that we can bear fruit. Ultimately the fruit that we bear is not our fruit, but Jesus'**. The fruit will be produced in our lives, but only through the strength of the one that we abide in.

### **Abounding Grace**

Here is how Paul speaks to this sweet truth...

## 2 Corinthians 9:8

[8] And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

It is the grace of God or in 2 Corinthians 12:9, the grace of Jesus, that **abounds towards us to stand us up and make us sufficient for every good work**. This is an amazing promise and the reason it is true is because we abide in Jesus. **Just as branches live because they receive strength and nutrients from the vine we are strengthened for every good work because of the grace that flows from our Savior to us.**

## 2 - Answered Prayer

Another promise of strength that Jesus gives to those who abide in Him is the promise of answered prayer. We see this in verse 7. Jesus promises to answer our prayers so long as we abide in Him and His Words abide in us, meaning that He will answer prayers that are prayed according to His will and are consistent with His Word.

## Word of Jesus - Bear Fruit

One thing we know that is consistent with the will of Jesus is the purpose He has set forth for those who are His, namely glorifying the Father and bearing fruit. **Thus we should go to Jesus daily, asking Him for opportunities to glorify Him to display His worth and value to the world around us.** We should ask Him daily for the strength and opportunities to bear fruit and do good works. Do you want to see some prayers answered in a hurry? Ask God for the chance to serve someone else, for the chance to give generously, ask God to help you display the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5 we just read about.

## Application: Identity in Christ

### Overwhelmed with our Call

Let's pause for a moment and consider how these truths relate to our identity. Through our union with Jesus, as we abide in Jesus, we are promised the strength we need to live for Him. This should change the way we look at the commands of the Scripture.

- It can be easy to feel overwhelmed by the calling that is before us.
- When walking through dark seasons of life it is easy to feel as if we are just not strong enough to follow Jesus.
- It can be easy to look at the call of the Scripture and think, "Yeah, right."

### Doing Battle with our Identity

We need to do battle with those kinds of thoughts by remembering that we abide in Jesus and thus the strength that we need is available to us. Jesus promises to hear our prayers and give us what we need to be to follow Him, even when it is tough.

### Behind Every Command is a Promise

So whenever you look at the calling that is placed upon you as a Believer, whenever you open up your Bible and see the commands that God has placed before you, remember **that behind every calling is a promise from Jesus to strengthen you that you would bear fruit to the glory of God regardless of the situation or circumstance.** I find that truth of great encouragement. **Behind every commandment is a promise, a promise of grace, a promise of strength, a promise from Jesus to do in you what you cannot do yourself, a promise to bear fruit in and through you if you would abide in Him.**

Brothers and Sisters, find your strength in Jesus and when life feels daunting don't forget that you abide in Him so you are equipped to bring God glory in each and every situation you are called to.

## 5. AS BRANCHES WE FIND JOY IN THE VINE

Jesus reveals one more element of our union with Him, one more element of our identity in Him and we see it in verse 11...

### John 15:11

[11] These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Part of abiding in Jesus and Jesus abiding in us is that His joy abides in us as well! I believe that this joy is one that flows out of our identity with Jesus. Let's stop and reconsider the joy-giving reality of our union with Jesus...

### Rest-Giving Life

First, we discussed that we find life in Jesus and we are dependent upon Him. This brings great joy as we learn that life, life beyond this life, isn't something that we have to produce or maintain, but rather we find it and entrust it to the perfect wisdom of Jesus. If all of life rested upon us, if our eternal life rested upon us, we would lose it, we would screw it up in some way. That burden doesn't rest on us. Jesus holds it perfectly and we abide in Him.

### Satisfying Purpose

Secondly, our lives find purpose in Jesus. **We don't have to wander through life aimlessly. We don't have to waste our lives pursuing some empty, meaningless purpose**, instead we are given a purpose of cosmic importance that carries great meaning that our souls may find satisfaction in this life and the life to come.

### Purpose in Pain

We also learned that in Christ, God the Father is playing an active role in our lives, refining us, pruning us, molding us into the image of Jesus. This gives purpose to our pain. This makes suffering an opportunity to grow. Apart from this truth our pain is pointless. **While none of us desire to walk through hard times, if we have to we want it to mean something, right?** And the reality is that we will all be there at some time at some level. Thankfully, in Christ it means something.

### Success-Giving Strength

Finally, we saw that Jesus equips and **strengthens us to be who we have been created and called to be**. How wonderful is it to know that God is for us and **setting us up for success** as we abide in Jesus? **No one wants to find themselves in a place where defeat is inevitable, right?** We all want to be successful and when it comes to bearing fruit and glorifying God Jesus will ensure we can do just that by giving us the strength needed and answering our prayers.

### Unmovable Joy

All of this joy I have just described is a **joy that can't be taken from you**.

- Possessions can be taken from you.
- People can be taken from you.
- Jobs can be lost.

- Positions can be taken, popularity, wealth, all of this can be taken from you,

But not the joy that Jesus gives, not the life that He gives, not the purpose He gives, not the strength that He gives. **In Christ we have His joy and that is an unmovable joy!**

How good it is to be in Jesus, how sweet it is to abide in Him.

## **CONCLUSION**

Let me close this morning by asking the question I opened with... Who are you? What defines you?

### **Identity in Jesus**

Jesus answers those questions for Believers in John 15. It is Jesus who defines us. We should find our identity in Him! He is the vine and we are branches. He gives life, He gives purpose, He refines, He gives strength, He gives an unmovable joy.

### **Live Out of Your Identity in Jesus**

Brothers and Sisters, my call to you this morning is to **find and embrace your identity in Christ**. Don't just hear me this morning and know it theoretically, **go and live out if it**. May your union with Jesus, your identity in Jesus, be the lens through which you **interpret life and understand yourself to the glory of God and for the abiding joy of your soul**.

### **2 Corinthians 5:17**

[17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.