

Pastors Network

Church of the
Lutheran
Brethren

5th Sunday of Easter (Series B)

May 6th, 2012

Gospel: John 15:1-8

Epistle: 1 John 3:18-24

Lesson: Acts 8:26-40

Psalm: Psalm 22:24-30

CLB Commentary on the Gospel Text

by Rev. Gary Witkop

This text calls us to be connected to Jesus and to remain or abide in Him. By inference it also calls us to be connected to other Christians as they are other branches connected to the same vine that we are all called to remain in.

The reasons for being connected to Jesus are many with one here shown to be that we can then bear fruit. It must be noted that the fruit we are called, and enabled to bear is not our own fruit, it is His fruit. Also the fruit we bear is not a work we do as it is something that comes naturally as we are connected to and fed by the vine. Our calling is to remain or abide in Jesus and as we do that we will bear His fruit.

There is the flip side of this text too that says that if we are not properly connected to the vine and bearing fruit that we will be cut off and thrown into a heap and burned. This is what vine keepers do every year; they cut off unproductive branches and pile them to be burned so that the vine as a whole can bear more and better fruit.

No one likes the idea of being cut off but this is a real possibility according to this text. And while God does not desire to cut anyone off, he withholds that prerogative for himself in case it is needed. The goal of having this prerogative is that God can encourage us to remain strongly connected to Him and to encourage us to be about His work of bearing His fruit. If we remain connected and allow God to work through us, we will not need to worry about ever being cut off.

The other part of being pruned is that each one of us branches are pruned in the areas of our lives that we are not giving to the Lord so that we can bear more and better fruit for Him. We need to allow the Lord Jesus, the vine and owner of the vineyard, God the Father (vs. 1), to do whatever pruning he needs to do. It is for His good and ours. Pruned branches bear more and better fruit that those left to go wherever they want. A good vine keeper knows exactly where to prune his vines to get the most and best fruit. Where do (I) we need pruning?

Jesus brings prayer into the whole aspect of His being the vine and us being the branches. That shows that our prayers need to come from hearts that are closely connected to Him.

Another part of this is that of discipleship. True discipleship involves discipline and discipline in the Christian's life comes as Jesus prunes us. We need to allow Jesus to show us the areas of our lives that He wants pruned out of our lives. When we do this we bear fruit and show ourselves to be His disciples, when we refuse to allow Jesus to prune us we continue in our sin and we fail to show to the watching world around us the true glory of God.

The law comes through the possibility of being pruned; the gospel comes by remaining in Christ our vine. We all need both.

This text is a refutation of eternal security, but at the same time a comfort and promise to those who remain connected to the vine.