

Wednesday, April 29nd Bible Study Notes
Cedarville United Presbyterian Church Facebook Live
Text: John 15:1-8

Check-In

- How are you feeling today? How is your self-care?
- Margie Donlon – 24 ways to help during quarantine, we've looked at:
 - Lower expectations and practice radical self-acceptance
 - Stick to a routine – something that is predictable, unchanging, not about rigid schedule but about not getting paralyzed
 - Reach out to others
 - Stay hydrated and eat well
 - Develop a self-care tool kit
 - Limit media
 - Find lightness and humor in each day

Tonight: *Find something you can control. In moments of big uncertainty and overwhelm, control your little corner of the world. Organize your bookshelf, purge your closet, put together that furniture, group your toys. It helps to ground us when the bigger things are chaotic.*

What we can control:

- Our positive attitudes
- Turning off the news
- Finding fun things to do at home
- How I follow CDC recommendations
- My own social distancing
- Limiting social media
- My kindness and grace

What we cannot control:

- If others follow the rules of social distancing
- The actions of others
- Predicting what will happen
- Other people's motives
- The amount of toilet paper at the store
- How long this will last
- How others react

Questions As We Begin Our Study...

1. Is anything causing you anxiety right now? Which category does it fall into – something you can control or something you can't?
2. If it's something you can control – what changes can you make so your anxiety lessens?
3. If it's something you can't control – how can you give it over to God? (I don't mean that's easy to do...but can you make it the subject of your prayers?)

John 15

Sunday: Matthew 11:28-30...yoking ourselves with Jesus

- What are you yoking yourself to?
- It's easy to yoke ourselves to anger, to sadness, to indignation...don't mean we won't experience these things, but are we tying ourselves to them?

Today...abiding in the vine is the last of the "I Am" statements in John

- "I am the bread of life." (John 6:35)
- "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12)
- "I am the door of the sheep." (John 10:7,9)
- "I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25)
- "I am the good shepherd." (John 10:11, 14)
- "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6)
- "I am the true vine." (John 15:1, 5)

vv 1-2: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.

- Vineyards were important to the economy of Israel. A golden vine adorned Herod's temple. When Jesus used this image, he was using something familiar.
- The symbolism of the Vine and branches is similar to that of the Head and the body: we have a living relationship to Christ and belong to Him.
- Warren Wiersbe: *The vines I saw in the Holy Land were large and strong, and it was next to impossible for anyone to break off a mature branch without injuring the vine itself. Our union with Christ is a living union, so we may bear fruit; a loving union, so that we may enjoy Him; and a lasting union, so that we need not be afraid.*
- Dead branches / dead leaves on plants still take vital nutrients
 - How much energy do we spend being bitter? Holding grudges?
 - How much energy do we spend in distraction?
- Word that keeps coming up is posture. Our faith is a combination of learning about Jesus (Bible, prayer) and positioning ourselves to learn more. What posture are we in?

v4: Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

- Warren Wiersbe: *What does it mean to "abide"? It means to keep in fellowship with Christ so that His life can work in and through us to produce fruit. It must be cultivated in the Christian life. It is not automatic. Abiding in Christ means worship, meditating on God's Word, prayer, and service. Once you have begun to cultivate this deeper communion with Christ, you have no desire to return to the shallow life of the careless Christian.*
- How can we be connected...receiving nourishment from the right place?
 - End up looking to other things for nourishment
 - What would it be like to be so in tune with him that we have withdrawal symptoms when we step away?
- Jesus got up early and went to be alone with the Father to pray when Jesus was on earth. He craved that connection.

v5: I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing

- Warren Wiersbe: *The word results is often heard in conversations among Christian workers, but this is not actually a Bible concept. A machine can produce results, and so can a robot, but it takes something living to produce fruit. It takes time and cultivation to produce fruit; a good crop does not come overnight.*
- We don't need to compare our fruit with anyone else's – either quality or quantity. The question is, are we doing what God has called us to do?
- As we grow in holiness and obedience, we are bearing fruit (Rom. 6:22).
- "The fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22–23) is the kind of Christian character that glorifies God and makes Christ real to others.
- Our good works grow out of our abiding life (Col. 1:10).

v7: If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you

- This doesn't mean we will get everything we want – no Vending Machine God
- When we are abiding in Christ, our desires line up with God's will – we don't ask for things out of a selfish heart
- This is hard – so often when we pray, especially when we pray for others, we are praying unselfishly, intentionally, lovingly...so why aren't our prayers answered?
- We live in a fallen world – bad things happen...illnesses, tragedies, pandemics, etc.
- Sometimes the answer is no – we don't understand why, but it doesn't mean we lack faith (Sunday we will be talking about faith as small as a mustard seed and will discuss this more in depth)

Questions to Ponder:

- What "posture" are you in as you are in this marathon of a pandemic?
- Are you seeking to abide in Christ, yoking yourself to Christ, or are you trying to do things apart from God?
- Back to beginning discussion on control – what do you need to give to God this week?