



THE JOURNEY CHURCH

SERMON GUIDE 3.20.2022

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST

Walking with God

SCRIPTURE:

John 15:1-5

RECAP:

We are studying together the subjection of Communion with Christ. We are looking in this series at how communion with God, relationship with Him, is not a part of the Christian life, it is the centerpiece of it. It is the hub everything else revolves around. The problem for many professing Christians in the church today is we've settled for less than the supreme joy relationship with God offers us. We settle for right beliefs or right behaviors. BELIEVE & BEHAVE is what many today in the world, and even the church, think Christianity is all about. Our prayer is: Lord, help me to be closer to you than I've ever been before. We're tired of settling. Give us more.

Now, to be clear, there is no communion with God unless we have been reconciled to God through faith in Jesus. It is only as we acknowledge we are sinners separated from God that we can be reconciled to God to enjoy fellowship with Him. That comes through faith in Jesus. As **Amos 3:3** says, "**Can two walk together unless they be agreed?**" We cannot walk with God unless we are agreed with one another, and that only comes through faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus.

But once reconciled, we need the Lord to sanctify our hearts to want Him as we should. We need Him to form and shape our spiritual taste buds so that we desire the good things, and not junk. One of the ways you can get healthier physically as an adult is to stop eating like a toddler. Right?! If your diet consists of chicken tenders, pizza rolls, potato chips, and ice-cream, you're probably going to struggle with being physically in good shape. You need to mature in your diet out of the things kids prefer to eat. In the same way, we need our spiritual taste buds shaped and matured to desire the good

things, and that for the Christian is closeness with the Lord. We want our spiritual desires to yearn for more of Him.

David from the Old Testament is a great example of this heart desire.

Psalm 63:1 -- *O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

Earnestly I seek you, my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you. Hear the desperation. Notice the longing. He says something similar in another place.

Psalm 42:1-2 -- *As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?*

How does a deer pant for water? There is heaving. There is desperation. David says, "O God, that's how badly I thirst for you! I want to be in your presence!" These things marked the heart of the person known for having a heart after God's own heart. Notice how in both passages he cries out "O God." This is a heart cry. This is an expression of the heart of true desire and want. We use the expression "O" almost unconsciously when we are emphatically communicating something. "O please don't leave, we can work it out" a spouse may desperately say to the threats of divorce. "O you've got to come with us" a friend may say to another about the Friday night plans.

These things should mark our hearts and lives. A desire, a hunger, a longing, a yearning, a panting, a thirsting for more of God is what we want our hearts to cry for. When you hear those words and examine your own heart, do you find that kind of desire there? Do you discern that kind of longing present in your own heart? If yes, praise God, and ask Him to pour on steam. If no, let the absence of it today cause you to cry out, "God, give me a desire for more of you!"

As God births this desire in us, and we see it growing, how do we satisfy it? How do we cultivate and pursue a relationship with God? That leads us to our main text today.

Scripture: **John 15:1-5 (ESV)**

Jesus is teaching in this passage. He is hours away from going to the cross to bear the weight of sin. And as the cross looms, he shares some of his most important teaching on the essence of the Christian life. He is going to use an agricultural example to demonstrate a very real spiritual experience between himself and his people (communion).

V 1 — Jesus begins by saying that he is the “true” vine. There are many vines competing for your attention and affection. There are many vines seeking to be your source of life, joy, peace, and hope. But Jesus says HE is the TRUE vine. He is the one you are in most need of.

VS 2-3 — Every branch that does not bear fruit is thrown away, the rest are tended to and cared for, even pruned so they will bear more fruit. In these verses he is speaking to those individuals who claim to be attached to the vine, but demonstrate they are not connected to it because they do not bear fruit. He is speaking towards those who will attach themselves to Christianity through different means (perhaps like we spoke of last week with beliefs and behaviors), but are not clean. This idea of “clean” comes from his previous teaching in John 13 where Jesus demonstrated through foot washing the entire atonement. There he also said he had made his disciples clean, but not everyone of them were clean - a clear reference to Judas. Judas was around, but he wasn't a branch that was truly grafted into the vine abiding fruit. Again, this cleansing and being made clean would be declared now, but would be fulfilled at the cross where Jesus bore the sins of His people.

V 4 — He does not say to devote yourself to doing religious things or be a Johnny Do-Gooder. Jesus commands us to ABIDE. To abide is a verb. It is active. It is an action on our part. It means to actively stay or remain. When you put your faith in Jesus, you are considered “in Christ.” From there you pursue an ongoing relationship with him, obey His commands, and turn away from a lifestyle of habitual sin. “In Christ” means to be justified and forgiven and brought into union with God. But to stay and remain--to abide--is develop this now existent relationship that being “in Christ” gives us. Unless we abide in Christ we cannot bear fruit.

V 5 — Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. Branches are completely dependent upon the vine for its life. It needs and understands it needs all of its resources and strength from the vine. Only then, as it abides there, can it bear fruit. What kind of fruit: peace, patience, kindness, love, gentleness, self-control, etc. Our lives will be marked with godliness and holiness, Christlikeness, as we abide. We will be filled with joy (we'll return to that later in the series).

Application:

Okay, so Jesus tells us to abide. There is something we are expected to do. Practically speaking, abiding has to look like something, doesn't it? So what is it. Let me read a few quotes from a few some godly folks who have expressed thoughts on the subject:

John Piper - *"Hour-by-hour abiding in Jesus means hour-by-hour trusting him to meet all your needs and be all our treasure."*

J.C. Ryle - *"To abide in Christ means to keep up a habit of constant close communion with Him— to be always leaning on Him, resting on Him, pouring out our hearts to Him, and using Him as our Fountain of life and strength, as our chief Companion and best Friend. To have His words abiding in us, is to keep His sayings and precepts continually before our memories and minds, and to make them the guide of our actions and the rule of our daily conduct and behavior."*

John Owen - *"Would a soul continually eye His everlasting tenderness and compassion, His thoughts of kindness that have been from of old, His present gracious acceptance, it could not bear an hour's absence from Him; whereas now, perhaps, it cannot watch with Him one hour."*

Abiding in Christ is a daily walk of faith.

I. Life is a walk

Colossians 2:6 - *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him*

The reason faith is talked about as a walk is because walking is the sequential step-after-step movement from point A to point B. So is our walk with God. It is moment-by-moment, day-by-day, faith in God. He says that as we received Christ (which was by faith), that's how we walk in him. We walk by faith...

- ...in the gospel (sins forgiven, adopted child of God)
- ...that you are "in Christ" (justified, righteous, kept/sealed)
- ...that He is with you (Spirit indwells you, reveals Christ to you)
- ...that He wants me to walk with Him (throughout the day, we must remind ourselves that we are to walk with Him and we do so by faith in so many truths, those truths actually end up encouraging us to walk with Him the more we rest our minds and hearts on them)

George Whitefield -- *"WALKING WITH GOD consists especially in the fixed habitual bent of the will for God, in an habitual dependence upon his power and promise, in an habitual voluntary dedication of our all to his glory, in an habitual eyeing of his precept in all we do, and in an habitual complacency in his pleasure in all we suffer."*

Exodus 33:11 -- *Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.*

Genesis 5:24 -- *Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.*

So how do we abide each day? How do we walk?

II. We need focused time

Ephesians 5:15-16 - *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*

- set times of devotion (personal devotions & corporate)
- spontaneous times of fixing eyes on Jesus
- impromptu praise and prayer (Nehemiah example)
- situational dependence (course of the day events prompted prayer or Scripture reminder)

(set a time, begin getting up 15 minutes earlier everyday and purposefully pray and read Scripture this week, set an alarm on your phone to pray at some point during the day)

III. Use the means of grace God supplies

John 5 (Pool of Bethesda) from Jonathan Edwards. The pool had power to heal, not because the water itself is special, but because God supplies it with power. The same is true for those means of grace or spiritual disciplines that we engage in as believers. As we use these means of grace, we abide and walk with God.

- reading and studying Scripture (get a plan, be purposeful)
- meditating on Scripture (pick verses, write them down, put on your phone)
- prayer (get past performative prayer and get to personal prayer)
- fasting
- corporate worship and community (we'll get into this more later in the series)
- fighting sin (we'll get into this more)

What do we do with these means of grace? We use them with an aim for drawing near. We're not simply checking the box. The heart is "Oh God you are my God, earnestly I seek you."

1 Timothy 4:7 - *train yourself for godliness*

Charles Spurgeon - *"Communion with Christ is a certain cure for every ill."*

I want you to think about that statement. Communion with Christ is a certain cure for every ill. If that is true, and I believe it is, that means you should be able to replace the word "ill" with the troubles, trials, sorrows, and problems you face, and it still be true.

Communion with Christ is a certain cure for a struggling marriage.

Communion with Christ is a certain cure for grief over the death of a loved one.

Communion with Christ is a certain cure for anxiety.

Communion with Christ is a certain cure for depression.

Communion with Christ is a certain cure for fear about the future.

Communion with Christ is a certain cure for sadness over infertility.

Communion with Christ is a certain cure for hopelessness.

Communion with Christ is a certain cure for loneliness.

Communion with Christ is a certain cure for fear of death.

Communion with Christ is a certain cure for fighting temptation and sin.

Communion with Christ is a certain cure for heavy burdens and weary souls.

Friends, whatever your "ill" is today, there is a certain cure. You see, communion with Christ is what we need more than anything. This is why Jesus says that his grace is sufficient for you (2 Cor. 12:9). He's enough. That's why communion with him solves 10,000 problems. We can find rest and peace as we fellowship with God, day-by-day, moment-by-moment. If you are not experiencing this in your life, you can. Christ is offered to you today. May our hearts echo with David's:

Psalm 63:1 -- *O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*

QUESTIONS:

1. Have you been in greater communion with God this past week? Why or why not?
2. What are some things other than God do you desire? Discuss why that is? Take an inventory of things that you are snacking on that may be keeping you from feasting on God (ie. bingeing television, staying super busy, other priorities, social media, etc.).

3. What does it mean that Jesus is the vine and the Father is the vinedresser?
4. Why is pruning necessary to bear more fruit?
5. Think about the process of apples growing on an apple tree. What effort is required on the part of the apple? What effort is required on the part of the tree? What does the tree need to produce the apple? What do we need to produce fruit?
6. Discuss the fruit that Jesus is referring to (Galatians 5:12) and how that fruit is only possible by abiding in Christ.
7. What Spiritual disciplines (reading & studying Scripture, meditating on and memorizing Scripture, praying, fasting, corporate worship & community, fighting sin) are you successful in? Which ones do you struggle with?
8. Does communion with Christ mean my struggles will go away? How does communion with Christ help us in our struggles (John 16:33).