

Vineyards were as common in Jesus' day as they are on the north shore of Lac Lemane, but when Jesus says "I am the true vine", he is not simply using them as a handy visual aid. Rather he is helping us understand who he is, and what it means to be one of his followers.

1. Jesus is the true vine who will bear much fruit

Again and again in the Old Testament, God's people (Israel) were referred to as a vineyard that God had planted (Cf. Isaiah 5). However, they were a vineyard that often produced "bad fruit". This was a metaphor for their failure to live their lives in obedience to God's commands, and therefore their failure to be a blessing to the nations around them.

In John 15v1, Jesus refers to himself as the "true vine". In sharp contrast to the those who failed to produce "good fruit", Jesus lived in perfect obedience to God the Father and as a result was (and is) the means of blessing to many nations.

2. Jesus is the true vine whose branches will bear much fruit, to the glory of God the Father

Verse 5 helps us to understand that it is not only Jesus who will bear good fruit, but his followers also. Those who abide in Jesus will produce fruit to the glory of God the Father (v8).

Verse 2 shows us that God is very interested in fruitful branches (as any vinedresser would be), and Jesus says repeatedly that his followers are to be bearing fruit. This leads to an obvious question, "How does the Christian believer bear fruit?"

The answer is perhaps a surprise, because Jesus does not command his follower to be fruitful, but to abide in him.

3. Jesus produces fruit in those who abide in Him

The focus for the believer is not to be on the fruit we produce, but on the true vine: Jesus. The Christian believer is to abide in Jesus (stick close to Jesus, cling to Jesus).

When we do that we will produce much fruit.

There are two clues as to how we do that:

i) Prayerful dependancy

In v5 Jesus reminds us that just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own, neither can a christian bear fruit on their own. One way we show our dependancy is through prayer - recognising we cannot do this on our own, and asking God to help us (v7). The more Jesus' words abide in us, the more our will is conformed to his will, and the more we will pray according to God's priorities. God the Father loves to answer these prayers.

ii) Loving obedience

Jesus is very clear that one of the ways we abide in him, and abide in his love is by obeying his commands. Whilst this may not sound very relational, Jesus reminds us that this pattern of loving obedience mirrors the relationship between himself and God the Father.

Furthermore, living in obedience is not burdensome, but joyful (v11).