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心灵相簿

The President's Gallery

再思十字架

[约翰福音15:1-17]

Making Sense Of The Cross

[John 15:1-17]

约翰福音15:1-8

我就是真葡萄树，我父是栽培的人。凡属我不结果子的枝子，他就剪掉；凡结果子的，他就修剪干净，使枝子结果子更多。现在你们因我讲给你们听的道已经洁净了。你们要**常在我里面**，我也**常在你们里面**。枝子若不常在我里面，自己就不能结果子；你们若不**常在我里面**，也是这样。我就是葡萄树，你们是枝子。**常在我里面的**，我也常在他里面，这人就多结果子，因为离了我，你们就不能做什么。人若不**常在我里面**，就像枝子被丢在外面，枯干了，人捡起来，扔进火里烧了。你们若常在我里面，我的话也常在你们里面，凡你们想要的，祈求，就给你们成全。你们多结果子，我父就此得荣耀，你们也就是我的门徒了。

约15:1-17谈到住在基督和祂的爱里面。这段经文对我属灵生命非常重要，它帮助我了解上帝于十字架的大爱，让我明白在属灵道路上如何更好的做上帝所喜悦的儿女。

第1至第7节中，有一句重复的话，就是耶稣告诉门徒的，要“**常在我里面**”。耶稣用当时常见的葡萄树比喻门徒跟祂的关系，就像葡萄树和枝子一样。天父是栽培的人，祂会做修剪的工作。树跟枝子是不能分隔的；枝子不能独立存在，它需要依赖树所提供的营养，才能发芽，开花结果。

最近因疫情关系，长时间被关在家中，我也开始种些花。若我希望植物开花，就不能让它有太多的枝子或叶子。它需要被修剪才会开花。葡萄园里不接果子、不开花、枯干的枝子，都会被修剪掉。若我们不结果子，也将被修剪。这是一个提醒，让我们在上帝的里面谨慎我们的生命，当连接于葡萄树，使我们的生命可以结出许多果子。

著名的复兴家以及南非基督教牧师慕安德烈 (Andrew Murray) 在其著作《住在基督里》对约翰福音15章做了详细的解释。他说枝子跟葡萄树的结合是生命的联系；枝子的生命流着葡萄树的生命。这结合并不是机械性的联系，用螺丝凑合在一起；而是一种能使枝子结果的生命性结合。

透过葡萄树与枝子，我们看到与耶稣结合是领受祂丰盛的生命，以致我们的生命能结出许多果子。耶稣基督在十字架上的成就使我们罪蒙赦免，也使我们连接于这真葡萄树，我们的生命才能领受上帝所赐的丰盛、祂的大爱与恩典。

葡萄树与枝子也告诉我们结合的完全性。没有葡萄树，枝子就不能做什么。主说：离了我，你们就不能做什么。只有借着主耶稣的大能，祂的宏恩，我们才能享受上帝赐予我们的赦罪恩典。葡萄树也需要枝子，没有枝子它就不

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Photo taken by President at Bishan PCN, Singapore, February 2021.

能结果子。枝子替葡萄树结果子，把这份恩典临到别人的身上。

上帝愿意把自己与我们绑在一起，就如今天耶稣的大使命一样，耶稣愿意进入我们的生命，成为“约”的桥梁。祂要让我们生命成为别人的祝福，成为福音的管道，去结许多果子，让天父上帝能够得荣耀。身为门徒的你我就是成为耶稣的使命者。

葡萄树所有的都属于枝子。上帝愿意把祂一切，祂能够施予的，都毫无保留地给了我们。上帝爱世人，甚至将祂的独生子赐予，也施予世人。那么枝子所有的是否也都属于葡萄树？今天我们从上帝领受了一切福气，是否忘了所拥有的一切都属于天父？

当我在读慕安德烈著作时，我有很大的解脱。还记得那时候我一直努力，希望作一位主所喜悦的门徒，但总觉得做得不够，又遇到许多试探。在挣扎时，读到这一段经文，我开始明白，其实不是靠着自己的能力，乃是愿意在上帝里，确保自己与这葡萄树结合。如想在上帝面前成为完全顺服的人，就得保守自己常在基督的恩典里。透过祷告、灵修、敬拜，祂的生命就必然在我的生命带来改变，产生丰盛的生命。

耶稣说：“我爱你们，正如父爱我一样…你们若常遵守我的命令，就会常在我的爱里，正如我遵守了我父的命令，常在祂的爱里。”遵守这命令使到我们能上帝的爱里。它并不是一件苦差，乃是透过顺服的心，使我们常常在上帝的爱里，心中是喜乐和满足的。葡萄树与枝子让我们更加明白在这个结合里，就是在上帝的爱里。所以耶稣说：你们要彼此相爱，像我爱你们一样，这是我的命令。

在圣周，我们要纪念耶稣为我们受难。每一次当我看电影“The Passion of Christ”时，尤其来到耶稣被鞭打的那一幕，我心中非常的痛，甚至看不下去。耶稣的受难不是为了博取我们的同情，而是表达祂对我们的爱，并且告诉我们这份爱胜过死亡。

今天我们怎么确保自己向上帝的恩典敞开，常在上帝真葡萄树上，遵从主耶稣的教导呢？“门徒”源自于拉丁文，意思是“一个愿意完全委身来学习师傅思维、技艺和精神的学生”。忠心的门徒生活不只是建立在悔改、赦免以及和好的基础上，更是建立在属灵操练上。历代的基督徒就是通过这操练向上帝的恩典敞开，跟随主基督的教导。所以我们需要把属灵操练放在基督徒的生活中，在主面前有纪律，使到生命能常连接在这真葡萄树上面，让上帝的生命通畅无阻地流到我们的生命里。

在基督的爱里，我们与上帝的关系有一份爱。在这份爱的结合中，不是靠我们的努力而能领取的。它是一份不能完全解释的奥秘，我们能做到的就是让自己成为上帝恩典的管道。在祂里面遵守命令，上帝的丰盛就会流到我们生命里，直到我们成为不一样的人。而在这爱里，我们也常常彼此守望。十字架不是让我们同情耶稣。十字架是一个爱的呼唤。十字架是上帝告诉我：我是如此的爱你们，在我的爱里，在我的真葡萄树上，我把一切的丰盛给你。要成为我的枝子，离了我，你不能做什么。十字架是上帝爱的邀请。在受难节期间，让我们学习进入基督的爱里面。

John 15:1-8

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser. 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. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **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**. 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. 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. If you **abide in me**, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

John 15:1-17 speaks of how we live in Christ and His love. This passage has been instrumental in helping me understand God's great love as revealed through the Cross, and guided me in understanding how to be a better child of God. Let us think about God's love in this article.

In verses 1 to 7, Jesus repeatedly uses the phrase “abide in me”, when speaking to His disciples. Jesus used a parable of vines, a common sight during those times. He likened the relationship between His disciples and Him to that of a vine and branch, with our Father Lord as the Planter, responsible for pruning. The vine and its branch cannot be separated; the branch cannot exist independently, it relies on the nutrients provided by the vine to germinate, flower and bear fruit.

Recently, I stayed home much more during the pandemic, and started gardening. If I desired my plants to bloom, I needed to actively prune them, and not allow too many branches or leaves to grow on them. All the dry branches in the garden that do not bloom or bear fruit will be pruned. If we do not bear fruit, will we similarly be pruned? This is a timely reminder; so let us stay vigilant and abide in Christ, live our lives closely connected to the vine, and bear fruits.

The famous revivalist and South African Christian pastor Andrew Murray gave a detailed explanation of John 15 in his book “Abide in Christ”. He said the connection between the vine and the branch is a living one. The branch draws from the life-sap of the vine. This union is not a mechanical construct that had been soldered together; but rather, a living union, that allows the branch to bear fruit.

Through the parable of the vine and branch, we can see that to abide in Christ is to receive His abundant life, so that our life can bear many fruits. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ allows us to be forgiven of our sins and connects us to the True Vine so that we may receive God's abundant blessings and His immeasurable love and grace.

The parable also teaches us the completeness of the union. Without the vine, the branch cannot do anything. The Lord says: Without me, you can do nothing. Only through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling within us, can we experience the redemptive grace of God. The vine also needs the branch, for without the branch, it cannot bear fruit. The branch bears fruit for the vine, and in so doing, passes on this grace to others.

God's willingness to bind Himself to us, is akin to Jesus' Great Commission today. Jesus is willing to enter our lives and act as a bridge for our covenant with God. Jesus wants to make our lives a blessing to others, a channel for His Gospel to be witnessed. When we bear many fruits, we glorify our Heavenly Father. As Jesus' disciples, we have a duty to carry out His Great Commission.

All that the vine possesses belongs to the branch. God is willing to give His all to us without reservation. For God so loves the world, that He bestowed His one and only Son to the world. So does all that the branch possesses also belong to the vine? Today we have received much blessings from God, yet we seem to have forgotten that everything of ours belongs to our Heavenly Father.

When I was reading Andrew Murray's book, I received great relief. I still recall that I had been working hard at that time to be a disciple that was pleasing to God, but I had felt that I was not doing enough, and was plagued with many trials. In the midst of my struggles, I came across Murray's book and finally came to realise that I should not be relying on my own might. I had to surrender to God to ensure a close union with this true vine. To fully submit to God, always keep in the grace of Christ: through prayer, spiritual discipline, and worship. Only then will Jesus' life bring about transformation in my life and lead me to a life of abundance.

Jesus said: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you... If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remained in His love." To obey God's commands is to enable us to be in God's love, and is not an onerous task. A heart of obedience makes us joyful and contented to be in God's love. The parable of the vine and branch makes us more aware of our union with God, one born out of the love from God. So Jesus said: Love one another as I have loved you. This is my command.

During the Holy Week, we remember Jesus' suffering. Every time I watch the film "The Passion of Christ", especially at the scene when Jesus was whipped savagely, I feel so much pain that I cannot bear to continue watching. The crucifixion of Jesus was not enacted to draw our sympathy. Jesus' crucifixion is an expression of His great love for us, that His love triumphs over death.

Today, how do we ensure that we are open to God's grace, and remain in the true vine of God, obeying the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ? "Disciple" is derived from a Latin word and means "a student who is willing to fully commit himself to learning the mind, skills, and spirit of the Master". The life of a faithful disciple is based not merely on a foundation of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation, but on one built on spiritual discipline. Christians throughout the ages have opened up to the grace of God, and followed the teachings of Jesus Christ. So we need to be spiritually disciplined as Christians to always remain connected to this True Vine, and to allow the life-giving goodness of God to flow uninhibited in our lives.

In abiding in Jesus' love, we draw closer in a loving relationship with God. This love is not gained through human effort. It is something so amazing yet so hard to comprehend: that all we need to do is to allow ourselves to be a channel of God's grace. By observing God's commands, we allow the abundance of God to flow into our lives and transform us. And as we love, we watch over one another. Jesus' crucifixion does not ask for our sympathy. The Cross is a call of love. The Cross is God's message to us: I love you, I love you so much, abide in my love, in my true vine, and I will give you all that I have. For without me, you are nothing. This Good Friday season, let us learn to abide in the love of Christ.

