**“Abide”**

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Psalm 150

Acts 8:26-40

1 John 4:1-11 (12-21)

John 15:1-8

Easter 5

There’s a bit of text **beyond** what was given us on our insert. The 1st John reading **extends to the verses that follows it**, and I read that remainder now: “No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God **abides in us** and **His love is perfected in us**. By this we **know** **that we abide in Him and He in us**, because **He has given us of His Spirit**. And **we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.** **Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him, and he in God**. So we have c**ome to know and to believe the love that God has for us**. **God is love**, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. But this is **love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as He is so also are we in this world**. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. **We love because He first loved us**. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for **he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen**. And **this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother**.”

Christ **is** risen! He is **risen, indeed!** Alleluia! Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Bridge

The back-end of this Epistle text demands **fruit born of an abiding in God** just as it does as Jesus described, **Him being the “Vine, we branches off that Vine”**. There is no way to **serve God who we can’t see (which is what our desire is as we are His)** than **to serve our neighbors who we see every day** and **can be useful to for God** (who wants our neighbors to be divinely served … and **provides us to do that**).

The word “**abide**” identifies the **fuel for our usefulness** (or the **bearing of fruit that’s heavenly**). “**Abide**” is a word used **7** times within the Gospel reading of John chapter 15, verses 1 through 8 and then another **6** times in that extension of John’s first Epistle. **13 times** God’s Word tells us to **abide in the Lord** and have **Him in us** … **“remaining” tight in other words**. **“Abide”, “abide”, “abide”, “abide”, “abide”! In other words, be connected to God in Christ and “remain” that way and it will, then, yield** every **outgrowth of what He calls the “fruit”, or “love” as He defines it (“love perfected” and “of Him”, “of heaven” / “divine”)**.

Text

The goal of these readings is clear: **that (we ingrafted branches of Christ Jesus the “Vine”) “abide” (or remain that way)**. “Already you **ARE CLEAN because of the Word that I have spoken to you**” Jesus told those He’s addressing in this exhortation that’s about “**continuance**” **in that**. This “**cleanliness**” is a **connection** **Promised** (and we hear those Promises all through Scripture. “He that believes and is baptized **shall be saved**”, “you are saved **by grace through faith**”, “don’t you know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death, buried therefore with Him by baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk and bear fruit to the glory of the Father in newness of life**. United with Him in a death like His, **we shall certainly BE united with Him in a resurrection like His, our old self crucified with Him, set free from sin, dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus”**). **“Abide” in that connectedness is, then, all that’s ours to do. The rest is God’s to keep making of us**.

Again, strong and descriptive **analogy** it seems to be (and do look at it that way, of course), but it’s **LITERAL first** (“**united**” / “**connected**” / “**grafted in**”, Scripture always makes note that His own people are not to be separated from Him ever … even connected in flesh). And **having that baptismal and faith-received connection made upon us by God**, **“remaining”, or making our home (and aboding) in that connection, is what glorifies the Father by the “fruit” that connection yields. So stay connected, and concern yourself with nothing much else … the rest is “fruit” that the Father’s tending makes happen through the connection**.

The only 2 **problems** (or “**maladies**”) here is, either first, that **He’s not addressing someone in particular with this because no connection has been allowed to be made there**, or **a person that’s been so connected has allowed that to become broken as in a branch cut off from its nourishment, removed itself from the context of what it had been made to be (a “fruitful branch” with the life of the “Vine” and roots flowering at the tips)**.

Stopping there, who do you know **not connected**, or **being separate from that connection by absence of some other distraction or just not knowing how important the connectedness is?** **My confessions** usually have to do with **my disconnections**, and why I’m too willing to let Satan and the world **pull me away from my connection to God in Christ**.

The **means** to be, always, a living and connected branch **bearing fruit** is the **life-source of the “Vine” and roots**. It’s timely that the Life-source so focused upon in the Easter Season falls in the springtime (Christ and His Easter victory). No doubt you’ve watched your trees leaf in the lush color of a deep green. We have fruit trees budding now with blueberries and apples and peaches noticeable at the tips of the branches. **That happens** **(we all know)** because of the nourishing connection they have through the “vine” (or trunk) to the roots firmly implanted within soil. The **same applies** to the **usefulness** and **fruitfulness** of one **blossoming continuously connected to the Lord as our “Vine” / we His “branch”**. As a matter of fact, you should know that **it only works in the life of foliage because of HOW IT WORKS WITH GOD AND A BAPTIZED BELIEVER**. The **prototype** is **God’s intent to make people who’d stay His own (made in His image)**. The **antitype** is how **nature successfully works**.

Application

That each of us “bear much fruit” so “glorifying the Father” is the **FLOWER** that this world can **see** and **stop to smell and enjoy**. “Apart from Jesus,” He says, “one can do nothing”, so every ounce of **Good** and **enjoyment** and **pleasure** and **freshness** is **JUST** and **ONLY** in the world through Him and of us by our connection to Him. …..

Last week I told you that we’d be starting a study on this **“FLOWERING”** without using **that word for it** last week … but it **IS** **“FLOWERING”**. This weekend that study begins to delve into “**FLAVOR**” and that “**FLAVOR**” the “**FRUIT**” that **God daily provides to this world through people connected to Him**. The general title of of that discussion that what will take us through the summer is “God at Work” because **that what this all is: God at Work in the world**. A **book**, though, is readily available to give you that in overview and it’s called (you can guess) “God at Work”. But, ultimately, it’s the **“FLOWERING” of the world that He does … and He does it through the** **“FLOWERING” of neighborhoods particularly** in Spring Hill and beyond, in the counties surrounding us, in middle Tennessee, in the whole state and nation and in our families. It’s **God at Work now**, since **Christ** **is risen!** He is **risen, indeed! Alleluia!** The life-source raised from the dead **walks this earth today still** **… and He’s available for further recognition**. **“Abide in Him”!** **“Abide in Him”!** **“Abide in Him”!** … In +Jesus’ name. Amen.