“Showing God’s Love to Others”

John 15:1-17

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Lesson text: John 15:1-17

1) “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2) Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

3) Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

4) Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5) I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6) If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7) If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8) Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

9) As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.
10) If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

11) These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

12) This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

13) Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

14) Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

15) Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

16) Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

17) These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

Introduction:

In last week’s lesson, we learned of God’s love for us that set forth the plan to redeem us and save us from our sins. In that lesson I also quoted that old great hymn titled, Love Lifted Me. So, knowing of God’s love for us and attributing His love as the reason for our salvation, my question is this, “If love lifted us, have we returned the favor?”

How have we let the love that God has shown us manifest in our lives that others might experience that goodness He has lavished on us? Have we affected others with God’s love? Do they experience the joy of God through His working in our lives?

God’s love is not stale or complacent to just save some, but He wants to affect as many as possible for His kingdom. He wants seeds of the working of our hearts to
be planted in the lives of others that they too might find joy in Him, that souls would be drawn closer to Him because His people heeded the command to “love one another.”

Love is the number one principle with God and it should be our number one principle in dealing with each other. Love is our regulator. It governs how we behave and treat one another. Our Christian life is about serving like Christ did and everything He did was under the umbrella of love. And the fulfilling of love, my friend, is the only thing we can carry into eternity with us because it never fails (see 1 Corinthians 13:8).

If our lives are to be representative of Christ than we know we have to operate in the same way He did: with love.

Lesson Summary:

There is an old expression that states, “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree,” (Source Unknown). In light of that, my question is this, “If Christ is the vine, and we are His branches, what kind of fruit does the world see in us?” What comes from us should represent the One to whom we are attached. If the Vine [Jesus] is producing the fruit of love, then the branches [us] should be too?

The husbandman [God], taking on the same wording attributed to farmers of the era, has cultivated fruit and people through the Vine [Jesus]. But, if there are branches attached to the Vine that is not working or functioning as part of the vine, and are not bearing fruit, as the farmer responsible for getting the best out of His crops He has to take those nonproductive branches and remove them from the working of the vine. He taketh away.

I am not a farmer but I learned a thing or two about dealing with my house plants. What I’ve learned is that dying or nonproductive stems or things allowed to stay attached to a plant that is trying to thrive can literally zap the rest of the plant of its nutrients. The plant is working so hard to maintain and make up for the lack of the unfruitful part that it causes the whole plant to suffer. With that, those nutrient zappers have to be removed for the health of the whole plant. We see a
similar analogy playing out here in the usage of the non-fruitful branches being removed.

At the same time, there may be branches that are bearing fruit but have harmful stuff attached to it that would stunt its growth. Carefully, the farmer removes the harmful so that the rest can flourish through purging and cleaning up the branches. He wants the best out of our lives and the best out of our lives means more of Him; be more like His Son whom they are commanded to pattern their lives after. They can’t do that with wicked and unprofitable things attached.

With careful attention paid to the removal of harmful objects and growth stunting products, the branch should be able to spring forth as never before. It should produce more fruit. Fruitfulness is a desire of God for His people: “And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper,” (Psalm 1:3). When we are fruitful, we are producing. When we are producing, we are effecting change where God has us planted in this world as branches of the True Vine.

The Word of God is one of the pruning or cleaning agents wherewith we see the need for dead stuff to be removed from our lives. When Jesus was praying for His disciples He asked the Father, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth,” (John 17:17). The psalmist once asked, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” (Psalm 119:9a). His own answer was, “By taking heed thereto according to thy word,” (Psalm 119:9b). Following God’s word will help to keep you and clean you up.

But Jesus explained their position even further regarding His people’s relationship with Himself. He said, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” If I go outside and see a twig lying on the ground, broken off of the tree above, that twig has no more ability to produce life or leaves in it. Why? Because it is detached from its source of life. Unless the branch is still attached to the tree its life giving and receiving properties no longer exist. It may still possess a leaf or two that was already there before it was severed from its source, but eventually,
they too will die off with the unproductive twig leaving it to be no more than a useless stick good for nothing but burning.

Our relationship with Christ works the same way. We cannot – not that we shouldn’t; we cannot bear fruit of our own accord. It is an impossibility. It’s not going to happen. Our spiritual life is tied up to the Vine to whom we are attached. If we are severed or allow something or someone to come in the midst of our relationship with Him, it stops the living giving flow we were once receiving from Him. Our growth is not only stunted, but it is dead altogether. We become spiritual sticks useless for nothing but the fire.

Contrary to that, if we take careful heed to mind our life in Him; to keep on abiding (remaining) in Him, and He in us, we are in a position to bring forth much fruit. As believers, we recognize that without Him, we can do absolutely nothing. He is the source of everything we are spiritually and without Him that supply is absent from our lives. Referencing to Jesus’ prayer for His disciples again, He prayed, “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me,” (John 17:22-23; emphasis mine). This abiding relationship shows strength because of the source that they are attached to. This abiding relationship produces fruit. This abiding relationship between us and the Lord shows the world the love of God.

Revisiting the other side of abiding, or the lack thereof, we see, “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” I referenced this earlier as a useless stick good for nothing but firewood. Whatever has no life in it is useless. It can’t produce. It’s dead. It has no value. Like the refuse that it is, it is tossed into the fire. “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them,” (Matthew 7:19-20). By what comes out of the branches tell whether or not they are attached to the True Vine; it manifests and shows what’s really in them.
As if calling His people to come deeper to Him, Jesus once again introduced another “If you abide in me” statement. But in this statement, He stressed the importance of not only maintaining that attached Vine/branch relationship with Him, but allowing the words of His commandments to take precedence in one’s life through the same abiding principle. The Word of God is transforming. It changes us, if heeded, from what we once were to being more like Christ. To be like Christ should be the ultimate goal of every believer. 1 John 2:6 reminds us, “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so walk, even as he walked.” There’s more to Christianity than professing one’s faith. The life of the believer should mimic the Christ in whom they believe. With His word in us and leading the way for us, we should represent Him well to the world.

With this abiding relationship also comes the promise of answered prayer. He said, “Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” Remaining attached to the Vine allows power to flow through your prayer life. Our prayers do not fall on deaf ears when God is the one to whom our causes come (compare 1 Kings 8:52; Psalm 6:9; 99:6). As long as you remain attached to the Vine, you remain attached to the source of answered prayer. 1 John 5:14-15 tells us, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” The purpose of having prayers answered is to help us to produce more fruit for His kingdom. That’s why prayer needs to be according to His will (see above reference). Israel was referred to as a vine in the Old Testament (see Psalm 80:8). Their job was to show the world what a relationship with God looked like as His representatives and to produce fruit for His kingdom. Yet, they failed miserably over and over again. Jesus, the True Vine, came to fulfill what they could not. As branches attached to Him, our purpose is to allow what the Vine produces to be manifested in us that we now might bear much fruit. When we do that it glorifies our heavenly Father. It brings honor to His holy name.
There should be good stuff produced for His kingdom because of the life we have in Him. Colossians explains it this way: “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being **fruitful** in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God,” (1:10). Bouncing off the idea of fruitful good works, Hebrews says, “Make you perfect in **every good work** to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen,” (13:21; emphasis mine). As **branches**, we should have “working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight;” we should have impactful **fruit** for His kingdom.

Someone once said, “The proof is in the pudding.” The evidence of what is coming out of a life will show more of what is inside that life. When spiritual **fruit** is coming out of a **branch** one can easily assess if they are properly attached to the **Vine**. To this one He readily says, “**So shall ye be my disciples;**” you are producing what I produce.

I referenced John 13:35 in several lessons before (see *Love One Another; Spirit-Led, Holy Living*, and more) which states, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” In this, we see **fruit** (noted above) and **love** (noted here in this verse) are both connected as proof of **discipleship**.

As such, Jesus introduces and continues to teach on this **love** producing train of thought throughout the rest of this lesson. He said, “**As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.**” As fruit bearers, branches, or disciples (however you want to call it), we should be able to share the same **love** God has shown to us to others. There should a manifestation of what flows from the **Father** to the Son and what flows from the Son to **you**. With that, Jesus says, “**Continue ye in my love,**” or “abide in my love.” Keep on producing the fruit of or manifesting that **love** in your personal lives, encounters, and relationships with others.

Another point of proof of one abiding in His love is, “**If ye keep my commandments.**” Giving Himself as a perfect example, Jesus explained, “**Even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.**” Jesus continually showed **love** toward the **Father** in His life of total obedience to His
will. He never let anything drag Him off course from where God wanted Him to be. As a matter of fact, He repeatedly let us know “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me,” (John 6:38). The Father’s will was His life mission and that life mission led Him to the cross. Showing His love for the Father and lost humanity, this too He submitted to in obedience “unto death, even the death of the cross,” (Philippians 2:8). Now, He requires nothing less than that same obedient, follow-through spirit that was in Himself to be shown in the lives of His disciples as proof of their love.

“That your joy might be full.” As we abide fully in Him, and He in us, and we, in turn, are living a life of submitting to His will, that pathway will always lead to joy. Even through the hardest times of life, because of our abiding connection to Him, we experience joy. Is every occasion joyous? No, but in the midst of any storm, our attachment to the Vine keeps whatever we face in spiritual perspective. We filter what we go through to what we have in Him. Every good time or adversity comes through the strainer of His love for us and that gives us complete joy in Him.

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another.” As His love sustains and holds us we are to show others the same love. Notice here, it is not an option to manifest His love to others. It is a commandment; a statute or ordinance, if you will that He is expecting to be followed through with and produced in our lives. Many, as I previously wrote about, look at a lot of other markers to determine if one is in Christ. Much of what they look for is outward symbols to verify their status as a Christian but here we see the inward working of the heart, the love that we show toward one another shows to whom we belong. Jesus calls for us to show love to other people; to live with His love manifesting in our hearts.

John wrote a lot about the command to love one another. In 1 John 3:14 he states, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” In this verse, we see one of the world’s greatest opposites: “death and life.” How we choose to love and treat others determine which course we follow. Dare I say that how we love or don’t love shows whether or not we are really children of God; whether or not
we are really attached to the True Vine? The Bible warns us, “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother,” (1 John 3:10; emphasis mine). If we are no longer walking the way of “death,” which is the way of the world, than our love should show it; it should show that we are children of God and are walking in the newness of “life.”

Previously, I shared this sampling of verses that express the love we should have for one another:

Romans 12:10 “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.”

1 John 4:12 “. . . If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.”

1 Peter 1:22 “. . . See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.”

1 John 4:11 “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

1 John 2:10 “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.”

And, there are many, many more verses that show us how important the love we have for one another is. This particular command is noted throughout the Bible and is not to be taken lightly, nor is it to be based on fickle human emotions. This is supposed to be real, genuine love that expresses what God has already done for us; that we walk the way of Jesus, manifesting the same fruit in our lives.

Jesus Christ, Himself showed the greatest proof of love when He lay down his life. His was a sacrificial love that cost Him everything. What have we laid down or sacrificed for the benefit of others? You and I may never have to be martyred or imprisoned or experience some other horrific event for others, but our lives should show others in many ways the love of Christ in us. Mother Teresa is quoted as saying, “I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there
can be no more hurt, only more love,” (Quote Source: Brainyquote.com). Love will always win out, despite the sacrifice.

Another love quote of hers I feel really applies to this lesson is this: “I am not sure exactly what heaven will be like, but I know that when we die and it comes time for God to judge us, he will not ask, 'How many good things have you done in your life?' rather he will ask, 'How much love did you put into what you did?’” (Mother Teresa/Goodreads.com).

It’s all about love and if we are considered to be friends of Christ and not servants; companions with Him in this call to manifest love to the world, we should readily fulfill all He commands, including loving to the point of sacrifice. Think of it this way, friends are privy to things servants would not be. Friends share a close, intimate relationship with one another. As such, Jesus considered these men to whom He was talking, His disciples as friends and readily shared with them all things that I have heard of my Father.

If you will allow me, another example of a revealing friendship such as this in the Bible is the one expressed between Abraham and God. The book of James tells us that Abraham was considered a “friend of God,” (James 2:23; compare also 2 Chronicles 20:7 and Isaiah 41:8). I have to surmise, this is just me thinking, when God was ready to destroy Sodom He couldn’t hide from Abraham His plan. He said, “And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do,” (Genesis 18:17). He shared with him what was getting ready to happen in that sinful city. He made it known unto him. In the same way, Jesus made known or revealed unto the disciples what the Father has said.

Jesus reminded them, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit.” Jesus is the one that initiated His personal relationship with His disciples and with us. The disciples were hand-picked from fishermen to a tax collector, and more. One was even considered in cahoots with the devil (see John 6:70), this turned out to be Judas. Jesus’ love is what initiated our relationship with Him. “We love him, because he first loved us,” (1 John 4:19). Once again, none can take credit for our relationship in Him. But, what we can do is take responsibility for how we
manifest our personal relationship with Him to others in bringing **forth fruit**, (compare Galatians 5:22-23) because we are **ordained**, or appointed for this.

We can’t do that unless we actively **go** and look for ways to produce it. One of Jesus’ famous **go** statements revolves around the Great Commission (see Matthew 28:19-20). Some of the greatest **fruit** we can produce is in seeing souls transformed through the introduction of the gospel message, the Good News (compare Romans 1:13).

**Love** is the only way that’s going to happen. **Love** of His commands. **Love** for others to be saved. So, once again, Jesus gives the command, “**That ye love one another.**” Paul taught one time, “Owe no man anything, but to **love one another,**” Romans 13:8. **Love** is a debt we can never repay as the preciousness of His ointment, His blood, flowed fiercely from Calvary’s cross into our lives undeserving. Yet, it is something we are still **commanded** to extend, without ceasing or discrimination, to those in our surroundings showing to whom we belong.

**Conclusion:**

We have a **command** to **love** people like He did. It may be difficult or seem downright impossible at times. In all things, if we take it to the Lord in prayer, He will help us to do what He **commands** us to do. We can be confident that He will answer these prayers that are according to His will; prayers that spread His **love** further for His name’s sake.