

20:20 Vision Ministries -- Devotions by Roger Browning
Week 45 (November 3-9, 2013)

Chapters 14-16 of John are my favorite because they contain the Last Will and Testament of our Lord. If you want to know what is really important to any person, just listen closely to his final words. We will have the privilege of doing that as Jesus teaches His 11 remaining disciples just prior to his death on Calvary.

Sunday -- November 3 (John 15:1-8)

Verse 1 establishes the fact that God the Father is the gardener, God the Son is the vine, and we are merely the branches (v. 5). The purpose of a branch is to bear fruit, having received loving care from the gardener and nourishment from the vine. For a Christian, bearing fruit means **growing into maturity** to become the person God wants him/her to be (see 2 Peter 1:3-11). It stands to reason that no one can bear fruit unless he/she is connected to the vine (v. 4), but the beautiful promise is that **everyone** who is a branch on His tree will bear much fruit (v. 5). This will happen because Jesus promises to give us whatever we ask as long as our only goal is to bring glory to Him and His Father (v. 7-8). Wow! This promise goes beyond my ability to understand, but I believe it and take it at face value. Someday, our works will be judged to determine whether we did them for our personal glory or for His (see 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). All of our works, no matter how wonderful they seem to men, will be burned if they are not done for His glory alone (v. 6).

Monday -- November 4 (John 15:9-17)

When I preach on this chapter, I call it "The **Remains** of Our Faith." That's because the word "**remain**" (KJV uses the word "abide") appears 11 times in the first 17 verses, one for each **remaining** disciple. A person who is truly born again will **remain** in His loving care because, once you experience His love, nothing the world has to offer will satisfy (see John 6:68-69). Three times in Chapter 14, Jesus connects love for Him with obedience from us (v. 15, 21 & 23). In today's text, He reminds us one more time that the two are closely connected (v. 10). Those who have difficulty in obeying Him indicate a lack of understanding of the fact that His every command is for **our** benefit and personal joy (v. 11). Examine the areas in your life that have not been brought under His control. Can you trust Him enough to let go and let God have control?

Tuesday -- November 5 (John 15:9-17)

Jesus commands: "Love each other as I have loved you" (v. 12). Only He can be our model of unconditional love (see also Ephesians 4:32-5:2). He set the example by willingly laying down His life for us (see John 10:17-18); therefore, we should be willing to lay down our lives for others (see 1 John 3:16). This is the greatest way we can express our love (v. 13). While we are not called to **physically** die for others (Jesus did that already), we are called to put their needs ahead of our own. Parents, you already know how that works! Ministers, husbands, wives, caregivers, etc., you should easily understand this concept as well. Jesus reminds us for the fifth time that love and obedience are inseparable (v. 14). He wants us to obey because we are personal friends with Him. We will see the advantages of this close friendship in tomorrow's devotions.

Wednesday -- November 6 (John 15:9-17)

Jesus wants us to know His Word and His plan for each of our lives (v. 15). He wants to be our closest friend. Of all the words I use to describe my relationship with Him (Savior, Master, Lord, etc.), I like **friend** best. I still have so much to learn and He still has so much to teach me, but I love the fact that He delights in sharing everything He learned from His Father. One of my favorite gospel songs says, "He Came Down to My Level When I Couldn't Get Up to His." That is what verse 16 is all about. He chose me, not because He needed my talents, but because I desperately needed Him. He didn't choose me when I had it all together, but rather while I was still deep in sin (see Romans 5:8). He chose me during times of weakness, not during times of great accomplishments. The power comes from the **chooser**, not from the "**choossee**." Rejoice today because you have been chosen to walk side by side in friendship with the One who died to give you salvation.

Thursday -- November 7 (John 15:16-17)

"I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him" (Ecclesiastes 3:14). As a result, the fruit that is produced **because** we are branches on the vine (Jesus) will last forever. In the early days of my ministry, I used emotional stories at invitation time to get a response from my listeners. Over the years, however, I have discovered that those illustrations often produce emotions that cannot possibly be sustained. Jesus wants "fruit that will last" (v. 16). Slow, steady growth will bring forth that kind of **lasting fruit** much better than an instantaneous emotion produced by a "sad dog story." Once again Jesus promises constant answers to the prayers of those who are growing and maturing in their faith enough to obey the commandments He has already given them. One final reminder is given of what He has taught in verse 12: "Love each other" (v. 17). Love and obedience and fruit bearing and friendship all result from being branches of His vine!

Friday -- November 8 (John 15:18-21)

If your goal is to be popular, Christianity is not for you. The world hated Jesus enough to crucify Him, so why should we, His followers, expect to be loved and respected by those who don't know Him? We have been chosen out of the world, so we must not live the way the citizens of this world live (v. 18-19). Look up 1 John 2:15-17 and James 4:4 for further warnings about loving the views and actions of this world. The people who do not know Jesus as their personal Savior will always persecute anyone who endeavors to live the Christian life (see 2 Timothy 3:12). We can find out what to expect in our Christian walk by studying the life and ministry of Jesus Christ (v. 20-21). Those who do not know the Father or the Son will never respect the lifestyles of those who live only for Him. Are you willing to follow Him no matter what the personal cost may be? Heaven will be worth it all!

Saturday -- November 9 (John 15:22-27)

Anyone who hates Jesus hates His Father as well. No one can reject one part of the Trinity without rejecting all three parts (v. 23). The **words** spoken by Jesus and the **miracles** done by Him should be adequate to lead us to believe in Him and in the Father, and in the Holy Spirit (v. 22-24). Jesus was rejected and hated because all Scripture from the Old Testament had to be fulfilled in His life and ministry in the New Testament (v. 25). The balance of today's text leads us into the next phase of the work of the Trinity. The invisible Holy Spirit will complete the work begun by the visible Christ by living in **us** and speaking through **us** (v. 26-27). **We** must testify to the truth—it is not optional since the Spirit is alive in us! We will see the benefits of living in the power of the Spirit in next week's devotions.