



2-8 May 2021 • Faith 24/7

Stay connected

John 15.1-8

Jesus describes himself as the true vine, his Father (God) as the gardener, and his disciples as the branches. He urges his followers to stay connected to him as the only way to be fruitful, and explains that we must expect and accept some 'pruning' to enable us to grow.

Now read John 15.1-8 see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

In the Old Testament, Israel was described as the vine and yet often failed in its calling, so it is significant that Jesus calls himself the true vine. He emphasises the need for the disciples to stay connected to the vine because, of course, unattached branches cannot bear fruit. He goes on to explain that any fruitfulness we experience is not an end in itself, but for the purpose of bringing glory to God.

EXPERIMENT

You will need: a glass of water, bright food colouring, a stick of celery or a white flower with a long stem. Add a few drops of food colouring to the water; stir until the colour is uniform.

Place the celery/flower in the water. Watch what happens during the day as the plant sucks up the water. How might this be a symbol of abiding in Jesus? Pray about the effect Jesus could have on you – and others – if you 'stay connected'.

What might help you to remain in the right place to grow?



Try and connect with God outdoors through creation, perhaps by doing something unusual e.g. hug a tree (if you're with other people, find the biggest tree you can and see if you can hold hands round it); lie/roll on the grass; splash in a stream; watch an insect closely; look at the stars through binoculars (DON'T LOOK AT THE SUN!). How do you feel connected to God as you do this?



Use these three simple prayers at the same time each day this week.

Morning

Lord, help me to abide in you today, especially when I am doing...

Lunchtime

Lord, help me to know whether or not I am connecting to you today.

Evening

Lord, I am sorry for any times when I drifted away from you today; especially...



Take the opportunity this bank holiday weekend to do some 'lifestyle pruning'.

For example: go through your wardrobe or cupboards to find where you have too much 'stuff'; take some to a charity shop, to be loved and used by someone else (or, if it is rubbish, to a recycling centre).

If you have a garden, do some weeding and, as you do this, ask God to show you where there is 'stuff' in your life that might be hindering your relationship with him.

Invite God to help you clear it out.

STAY CONNECTED

Is there anyone you haven't spoken or written to in a while? Make time to contact them this week. Perhaps you could send a picture of a part of God's creation that you have felt closely connected to recently, explaining what it has meant for you and inviting them to respond with their thoughts.



A date for your diary is Sunday 16th May – we will be holding our Annual Parochial Church Meeting at 11.00 a.m. after the morning service. We will be looking to recruit both a new PCC Secretary and PCC Treasurer at the meeting. Please consider prayerfully whether you might be able to take one of these roles on. Much support will be given for as long as necessary, so do not be afraid you will be left to cope with it alone. Do contact me if you would like to know more about it. Rob.

Daily Readings for week commencing 3 rd May 2021		
Monday	Deuteronomy 16: 1-20	1 Peter 1: 1-12
Tuesday	Deuteronomy 17: 8-end	1 Peter 1: 13-end
Wednesday	Deuteronomy 18: 9-end	1 Peter 2: 11-end
Thursday	Deuteronomy 19	1 Peter 2: 11-end
Friday	Deuteronomy 21: 22-22:8	1 Peter 3: 1-12
Saturday	Deuteronomy 24: 5-end	1 Peter 3: 13-end

Pray for those in need... Sally, Zena, Katie-Louise, Pam, Sue, Bryn, Evelyn, Shane, Pat, Heather, Dorothy, Mandy, Joyce, Pete, Ian, Ruby and Juliette. ***Please remember those who mourn the loss of loved ones at this time. Remember the souls of June, Bradlee and Jean.***

Today we welcome our Team Rector, Revd Peter Hart to preside and preach – welcome Peter, it is good to have you with us at last.



Collecting used stamps for RNIB

There will be a collecting box at services (or give to Penny). Please leave approx. 1 cm (half inch) of paper around the stamp edge. Thank you!

ABOUT THIS WEEK'S GOSPEL.....

Jesus' parable of the true vine draws on Isaiah's song of the vineyard (Isaiah 5.1ff), where God's planting symbolises 'the house of Israel and the people of Judah'. In John's narrative, Jesus speaks these words before his death, but like everything he says in chapters 13–17, he has an eye on his later followers. John's audience hears what Jesus says as words of the crucified and risen Christ addressing their particular situation, where hostility poisoned relationships between the local synagogue and the Jesus community (John 16.1-2; cf 9.22, 15.18ff).

'I am the true vine' has the power to reframe this adversity. The world, represented by the local synagogue, may subject them to violence, but they are still God's true planting, the object of his tender care and love. The hostility they endure can only sharpen their sense of this. The language of 'abiding' first appears in John 1.32, where it is used of the Spirit 'remaining' (the Greek word is translated as 'abide', 'remain' or 'stay') on Jesus from his baptism onwards. And then two of the Baptist's more curious disciples 'remain' with Jesus for the day (1.39). So 'abiding' speaks of grace and relationship – the flow of the 'greater love' of the new commandment (John 13.34; 15.12-13) – sustaining disciples in adversity, like fruitful branches on the vine. If the vine suffers loss because branches are pruned and then burned, this too lies within the vine-grower's remit to sustain its fruitfulness.

Like all parables, this one invites further reflection. In the face of all that threatens the vine, 'abiding in love' is whatever strengthens the flow of grace and relationships, without allowing the community to become defensive and turn in on itself. Fruitful vines benefit the world beyond the vineyard. Christ-like love can absorb and even redeem hostility.