

HARVESTING A METAPHOR

(John 15:1-11)

Like vines and branches, this biblical metaphor bears much fruit...

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

1. Who do the **two branches** represent? (no fruit vs. fruit-bearing)[†]

- **No fruit branches** profess union with Christ (outwardly), but do not possess a true relationship with Him (inwardly) nor the fruit to prove it
 - *He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit (2)*
 - *If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned (6)*
- **Fruit-bearing branches** possess union with Christ (inwardly and outwardly), maintain ongoing communion with Him, and bear the fruit to prove it
 - *Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful (2)*
 - *This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples (8)*

[†] Compare John 13:10-11; Rom 11:16-24; Lk 8:18

2. What is the **role of the Father** in tending the vineyard?

- *My Father is the **gardener**...*and his roles are different toward the two different branches
- **No fruit branches** He cuts off, judges, and destroys
 - *He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit (2)*
 - *Such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned (6)*

- **Fruit-bearing branches** He prunes with the shears of His word for greater fruitfulness
 - *Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful (2)*
 - *You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you (3)*

3. What is **fruit**?

- Fruit is what distinguishes us as disciples of Jesus
 - *This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples (8)*
- The New Testament calls several things "fruit"
 - Assurance of being loved and obedience (John 15:9-10)
 - Joy (John 15:11)
 - Bringing others to Christ (Rom 1:13)
 - Moral purity (Rom 6:22)
 - Sharing (Rom 15:28)
 - Good works (Col 1:10)
 - Praise and thanks (Heb 13:5)
 - The godly character qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23)

4. What is the role of **seasons** in fruit-bearing?

- No branch bears fruit *incessantly*. All seasons contribute to greater fruit-bearing *eventually*
- E.g. *pruning* occurs in spring—when shoots appear—before the fruit, and in fall—after fruit is harvested—before the winter, when nutrients are drawn by the vine from the soil

Without the changing seasons, vineyards would never bear fruit. Each season offers something the vine needs for continued growth. Spring brings rain and softened days to gently stimulate the growth that will come to full maturity in the vibrant warmth of summer. Autumn is the time of harvest, and winter brings a much-needed rest and restaging to the vine. Without this rest, the vine would not be strong enough to go through the cycle again to harvest....

We must learn to embrace the season we're in, to enjoy its gifts and confront its challenges, but also to let it go when the seasons change.

(Wayne Jacobsen, *In My Father's Vineyard*)