After The Lord's Supper

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[0:00] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, John's Gospel, chapter 15.

John chapter 15, and if we read again in verse 1, where Jesus says, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.
Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.
I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. The Table Talk of Martin Luther is a 16th century book that was published in 1560.
16th century, 16th century, and it's a book comprising of a collection of quotes and anecdotes from the discussions and even the debates around the dinner table in the home of the German reformer.
[1:10] And I suppose it's interesting to have a glimpse into the life of Luther's marriage and also Luther's ministry, although I wouldn't thank you for it at all. But, you know, we might be tempted to think that the great Martin Luther would only ever talk about church around the dinner table, or he might only ever talk about theology around the dinner table.

But nothing could actually be further from the truth, because some of Luther's statements, they're actually really funny. And other statements are really, we'll say, they're colorful and probably shouldn't be repeated in public.
In fact, I recently read an article, and you can look it up yourself, it's called The Colorful Sayings of Colorful Luther. The Colorful Sayings of Colorful Luther.
That's very interesting. And yet when Luther and his wife Catherine, or Katie as he liked to call her, when they would have some of the students from the University of Wittenberg over for dinner, Luther's students, they would not only spend most of the day writing down everything Luther said on their desk in university.
But when it came to sitting around the dinner table with Luther, they were still sitting there writing down everything that Luther was saying. And it became a book called The Table Talk of Martin Luther.
[2:29] This evening, as you know, we're listening in to not The Table Talk of Martin Luther, but The Table Talk of Jesus Christ. Because like Luther, who had students who wrote down and recorded what he said around the dinner table, Jesus also had, you could say, students who wrote down and recorded what he said around the dinner table.

Because the disciples, or particularly John, he wrote down and recorded what Jesus said around the Lord's table. And as you know, over this communion season, we've been following this upper room discussion from what John wrote down in his gospel.
But this evening, we're listening in to The Talk after the Lord's Supper. We're listening in to The Talk after Jesus and his disciples had left the Lord's Table.
And I want us to think about this table talk after the Lord's Supper under two headings. Very simply, branches and bearing fruit.
Branches and bearing fruit. So first of all, branches. Look at verses 1 and 2 again. Jesus says, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.
[3:43] Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Now, as you know, last night at our preparatory service, we said that John 13 is, it introduces this transition, this turning point in John's gospel.

It introduces also a section of scripture from chapters 13 to 17 known as the upper room discourse. It commences with the Passover. In chapter 13, it concludes with the high priestly prayer in John 17.

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But over this communion season, last night and also today, we've been considering this upper room discussion. We've looked at these chapters, chapters 13, 14, and now chapter 15 in John's gospel. And we've listened in to the table talk around the Lord's table. And as we've seen and as we've heard, there was a lot of table talk going on around the Lord's table.
There was table talk before the Lord's supper, table talk during the Lord's supper, and also as we see this evening, table talk after the Lord's supper. In John 13, which we saw last night, there was table talk before the supper.
[4:56] Because John 13, it was a preparatory service for the disciples. It was a preparatory service where they learned about sanctification, service, and separation.

And it all came through the teaching of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. And even though Jesus had washed their feet, as we saw last night, the disciples were worried. They were still worried about sitting at the Lord's table because they thought, as many of us often think, that we're not good enough or we're not worthy enough or we don't know enough to sit at the Lord's table.
And yet Jesus assures us, as he assured his disciples, that washed and worried disciples are welcome. They're welcome to sit at the Lord's table.
And so in John 13, there was table talk before the Lord's supper. Then this morning, as we sat together around the Lord's table, we considered the well-known chapter of John 14.
We listened in to the table talk during the Lord's supper. And what we heard was that Jesus was speaking. We not only sat with Jesus, but Jesus spoke to us.
[6:03] And he spoke to us, not to our head, but to our heart. He said to us, let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. But as we saw, Jesus was not only speaking to us, he was also showing us.

He's showing us that he's preparing a place for us in heaven. And he's also preparing us for that place. He was showing us that he's the way, the truth, and the life. That no one can go to the Father except through him.
He was showing us himself, even in his own supper, through the elements of bread and wine. And he was showing us, amazingly, he was showing us his own Father. The Father's love for us in providing this wonderful supper.
Because as Jesus said in John 14, whoever has seen me has seen the Father. But then toward the end of the Lord's supper, Jesus once again spoke to our heart.
He said, let not your heart be troubled, neither let them be afraid. And with that, Jesus was showing us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who will tell us and teach us all things because he promises us peace.
[7:11] He promises us shalom, peace with God and the peace of God. And so having listened in to the table talk before the supper and table talk during the Lord's supper, we're now listening in to the table talk after the Lord's supper.

But this table talk, as you can probably guess, wasn't actually at a table. Because at the end of John 14, when Jesus gave the promise of peace, he said to his disciples, go in peace.
And then the last verse, right over the last few words in John 14, Jesus says, rise, let us go from here. Arise, let us go hence.
Therefore, Jesus and his disciples, they're no longer at the Lord's table. They've left the Lord's table. They've left, it seems, they've left the upper room where they ate the last supper together and where Jesus instituted the Lord's supper for the first time.
And now Jesus and his disciples, they're making their way through the city of Jerusalem towards the Mount of Olives. Matthew tells us in his gospel, remember Matthew tells us what Jesus did, that after they had sang a hymn, after they sang Psalm 118, they went out to the Mount of Olives.
[8:31] Now the Mount of Olives, or Mount Olivet, it's located across the Kidron Valley, on the east side of the city of Jerusalem. And for the most part, the Mount of Olives has been described as a necropolis.

A necropolis, there's a necropolis in Glasgow, but there's also one in Israel. It's a cemetery, it's a burial ground. And the amazing thing is there's 150,000 graves on the Mount of Olives.
But at the foot of the Mount of Olives is a garden, the Garden of Gethsemane, which wasn't a vineyard full of vine trees, but a garden full of olive trees.
And that's a key point, because many people think that Jesus' image and illustration of being the true vine, it came from the visual aid of a vine tree in the Garden of Gethsemane.

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But the Garden of Gethsemane was an olive garden full of olive trees. In fact, the name Gethsemane means olive press.
[9:38] The name Gethsemane means olive press, which should make us question, where did Jesus get the visual aid of the vine tree?

Where did Jesus get the visual aid of the vine tree? The clue to our answer is actually found later on in chapter 18. So, chapter 18, verse 1, we're told that Jesus went out with his disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.
Which means that at this point, a few chapters earlier, Jesus and his disciples, they have not yet crossed the Kidron Valley. They're not there yet, because they reached there in chapter 18. And they've not entered the Garden of Gethsemane.
They do that in chapter 18. Therefore, this conversation in John 15, this talk after leaving the Lord's table, it took place as Jesus and his disciples were walking from the upper room towards the Garden of Gethsemane.
So, they're somewhere between the upper room and the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus speaks in John 15. In fact, I believe that this talk after leaving the Lord's table, it took place as Jesus and his disciples walked past the entrance to the temple.
[10:55] And I say that because the entrance of the temple, which led into the holy place, it had four golden pillars. There were four golden pillars to the entrance of the temple.

And those four golden pillars were beautifully decorated with golden vine trees. And there's a video in this week's notices.
That's why I put it in there, so you can see what the temple actually looked like and what the entrance of the temple looked like. The four golden pillars and the golden vine trees that circled around the pillars.
But the reason for the golden pillars of the temple being decorated with these golden vine trees, it was both figurative and financial. So, there's two reasons why they were wrapping around the pillars.
It was figurative because God regarded his people, as we saw in Psalm 80, God regarded his people as a vine tree. A vine tree that was uprooted from Egypt at the Exodus and then planted in the promised land of Israel.
[12:01] That's what we were singing about. A vine from Egypt brought thou hast into thy beloved land. But on this vine tree, on the pillars of the temple, it was not only figurative, it was also financial because the fact that they're gold teaches us and shows us, showed the people of Israel that the land of Israel was prosperous.

It was a promised land, but it was a prosperous land. It was a fertile land. That's why there are so many vineyards in Israel, even today. And because it all contributed to, and still contributes, to the large income towards the economy of Israel.
They're a very prosperous nation because of the fertile land. And so when Jesus started talking after leaving the Lord's table, he uses this vivid image, this vivid illustration of the golden vine tree that went around the pillars of the temple that led into the holy place and also into the holy of holies at the temple.
And he uses this image and illustration of the golden vine tree to declare to his disciples there in verse one, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser.
Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.
[13:29] Now, as you know, Jesus' statement is the last, boys and girls, of seven I am sayings. So there's seven I am sayings. This is the seventh I am saying in John's gospel.

Jesus has declared throughout John's gospel that he is the bread of life, the light of the world, the door, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life. We saw this morning, he's the way, the truth and the life.
And now Jesus declares, the seventh I am saying, I am the true vine. In other words, Jesus is saying that following him, it isn't figurative grace or even financial growth.
It's all about spiritual grace and spiritual growth because Jesus is the true vine. He's the true Israel. He's the true, following him is part of the true people of God.
And as Jesus emphasizes and explains there, if you follow it down into verse five, he says, I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.

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[14:36] For apart from me, you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers. And the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned.

Jesus emphasizes and explains to us that there are branches that abide in the vine and bear fruit. And there are branches that do not abide in the vine and are burned.
And you know, the language Jesus uses here is quite solemn. He's just left the Lord's table and yet he's quite solemn in what he's speaking about because Jesus is asking, asking the disciples the question.
He's asking us the question, what do you do with a dead branch? What do you do with a dead branch? And Jesus is quite clear. They're gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.
What do you do with a dead branch? You burn it. And in Jerusalem, the place where dead branches were taken was a dumping ground just outside the city walls called, boys and girls, Gehenna.
[15:40] It was called Gehenna. Gehenna was this fire that was continually burning day and night. It's where you brought all the rubbish of the city. And Jesus often used the word Gehenna to describe the continual burning in hell.

Which is why Jesus asks the question, what do you do with a dead branch that refuses to abide in the true vine? And he's asking his own disciples, what do you do with it?
And Jesus is quite clear. You burn it in hell. But as you know, Jesus, he never spoke about hell in order to scare us or to manipulate us. That's not what Jesus is in the business of doing.
No. Jesus lovingly speaks about hell in order to warn us. And you know, my unconverted friend, whether here or at home this evening, the reason Jesus warns you about hell is because he loves you and he doesn't want you to go there.
That's why he calls you. That's why he commands you. That's why he compels you to come and abide in him. That's what Jesus is teaching us. Because it's when you abide in Jesus Christ that through vine you bear fruit.
[17:01] And that's what we all need to do. We need to bear fruit. That's what I want us to think about secondly. So bearing fruit. Branches and bearing fruit.

Bearing fruit. Jesus says, verse one, I am the true vine. My father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit he prunes that it may bear more fruit.
Now many of you will be aware maybe you're not aware at all that John 15 is actually my favourite chapter in the Bible. Psalm 51 is my favourite Psalm but John 15 is my favourite chapter.
Because before I was plucked as a branch from the burning I was like my unconverted friend. I was also an unconverted friend. And when I was an unconverted friend I had all these questions.
Maybe you have the same questions. What's the point of life? Why are we here? What's it all about? What does it mean to follow Jesus? How do I become a Christian?
[18:10] And it was all these questions that caused me to open my Bible at random. And it really was at random. I didn't know where to begin with the Bible. But I opened the Bible at random in the hope that I would find answers to all of these questions that I had.

And I did. I found it here in John 15. Because when I read this chapter for the very first time on the 3rd of January 2006 when I read this for the first time I understood what Jesus was saying.
That he is as he says himself verse 1 he is a true vine. And I knew from my upbringing I must trust in him. But I also understood that as a branch I wasn't bearing fruit.
I was a withering a withered branch. And as Jesus says there what he is going to do with a withered branch he is going to gather me up and throw me into the fires of hell and I will be burned.
And as a sinner I knew that that is what I deserved. I am sure we all know that that is what we deserve. But what struck me what always stayed with me in this chapter wasn't the fear of being burned in hell like a branch.
[19:18] what really stuck with me and stayed with me is the love of Jesus for a branch like me. What stuck with me and stayed with me is the love of Jesus for a branch like me.

Because as Jesus goes on to say in verse 13 my favorite verse in the Bible if you want to know he says greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.
You know despite my sin and all my shortcomings despite my flaws and my many many failures despite my love of self and my lack of love for the Savior as a branch that deserved to be burned the true vine looked upon me in love.

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Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. And you know on reading this chapter I knew that I was a branch that deserved to be burned but I desired to bear fruit.
I knew what I deserved and I'm sure my unconverted friend you know what you deserve but surely our desire should be to bear fruit. Which raised the question in my mind maybe it raises the question in your mind how do I bear fruit?
[20:37] How do I bear fruit? Jesus says verse 4 abide in me and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine neither can you unless you abide in me I am the vine you are the branches whoever abides in me and I in him he it is that bears much fruit for apart from me without me you can do nothing.

So Jesus is clear abide in me and I in you abide in me and I in you abide in me and I in you and if you read through this section of Jesus' talk after the Lord's table you can see that he repeats this word abide not once not twice not three times but eleven times eleven times abide abide abide abide abide what does abide mean?
another question for tonight what does abide mean? when I was an unconverted friend I asked the same question so I looked it up in the dictionary as you do the dictionary definition of the word abide means remain faithful to remain faithful to and back then as an unconverted friend I read this passage again replacing the word abide with the phrase remain faithful to and what I discovered was that Jesus was repeatedly saying to every unconverted friend including you and me back then remain faithful to me and I will remain faithful to you remain faithful to me and I will remain faithful to you in other words don't put anyone or anything else before me seek me first remain faithful to me and I will remain faithful to you abide in me and I in you abide in me and I in you and you know it's such a beautiful statement isn't it?
because Jesus promises us that there's life and there's growth when we're abiding in the vine there's vitality in the vine outside the vine Jesus explains there's decay you wither there's death and there's ultimately destruction but in the vine abiding in the vine remaining in the vine there's life and growth there's vitality in the vine now as many of you probably know already I'm not much of a gardener I don't have green fingers like many of you do I can mow the lawn and it's a pretty big lawn around that manse but when it comes to plants and flowers I'm useless they always die or the wind gets them and just burns them completely and you just have to pluck them up and throw them away but because John 15 is my favourite chapter in the Bible I've always found the engrafting process of a vine tree fascinating where the branch of one vine tree can be cut and then engrafted into another vine tree apparently it's a very difficult thing to do you need a lot of skill in doing it because the vine tree which is receiving the graft it has to be cut in a certain way it has to be pierced right through its very thin trunk and then some of that life-giving sap from the vine it has to be drained and you have to catch it and so that the engrafted branch can then be firmly pushed through the thin trunk and pierced it pierces the trunk all the way through and then you actually have to tie a knot on the branch on the other side then the trunk of the vine is sealed you take the sap that had seeped out and you you seal it round the branch and apparently within a couple of weeks the trunk of the vine tree will have closed all around the engrafted branch filling it with that life-giving sap enabling it to grow and ultimately bear fruit and of course it's a wonderful picture isn't it a wonderful portrait of our boys and girls our union with Christ we're cut as a branch from the vine tree of Adam where in Adam there is nothing but decay there's nothing but death and there's nothing but destruction but then we're cut from the vine tree of Adam and we're engrafted into the true vine
Jesus Christ but we're not only to abide in the vine because the vine dresser he's the one we're able to abide in the vine because the vine dresser has pierced the true vine the father as you know he pierced the son he pierced the son he wounded the son on the cross the son was pierced for our transgressions in order to engraft us into the true vine the son was pierced for our transgressions in order for us to be engrafted into the true vine and on the cross the life-giving blood of the true vine flowed so that all that we would all experience and enjoy vitality from the vine we'd enjoy nourishment and nutrition from the vine there would be life and light from the vine and you know the amazing thing about Jesus as the true vine is that when we're engrafted into the true vine we grow in grace we're blessed by bearing fruit and it's all because we're in union with Christ when we're engrafted into the true vine

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[26:15] Jesus Christ we grow in grace and we're blessed by bearing fruit because we're in union with Christ because it's through our union with Christ and Paul talks about it all the time in his letters our union with Christ where we experience and we enjoy all the blessings and all the benefits of our salvation it's through our union with Christ that we receive and we recognize every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ because our union with Christ means that every spiritual blessing and every benefit of salvation it flows out to all the branches every branch that is abiding in the vine receives every spiritual blessing and every benefit of salvation whether that is repentance and faith pardon justification adoption sanctification perseverance and glorification it all flows out to the branches that are abiding in the vine those who are in union with Christ in Christ abiding in the vine which is why

Jesus says to us abide in me and I in you there's union he's speaking about union we receive every spiritual blessing from the vine the true vine and it flows to all the branches but you know Jesus he's up front with us from the start isn't he right from the word go even in verse 2 because as he says at the beginning of the chapter he says abiding in the vine is sometimes painful abiding in the vine is sometimes painful pruning is a painful process I don't know if any of you have a vine tree I was given a vine tree once and I'm not going to tell you what happened to it it's well just think if I can only mow the lawn that's enough for that story pruning is a painful process but pruning only happens when you have faith and you have fruit pruning only happens when you have faith and you have fruit look at verse 1 again

Jesus states I am the true vine my father is the vine dresser every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away gathers them burns them and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes that it may bear more fruit and so abiding in the vine can be painful because pruning is a painful process but pruning only happens when you have faith and there is fruit so if there is fruit already the Lord prunes us to produce as he says more fruit the vine dresser prunes us to produce more fruit and as you know the Lord prunes us because of our sin and he prunes us sometimes through sickness he prunes us sometimes through sorrow he prunes us sometimes through suffering he prunes us in different ways but pruning is a painful process but as Jesus emphasizes it has a purpose and that's what we often lose sight of when we are being pruned we lose sight that the painful process actually has a purpose and Jesus explains the purpose he says every branch that does bear fruit he prunes that it may bear more fruit so the pruning process is painful but it has a purpose the Lord has a purpose in it the vine dresser the father has a purpose in it because as Jesus said the purpose of the painful pruning process is to bear more fruit therefore we must abide in the vine we need to keep sticking with the vine

Jesus says abide in me and I in you remain faithful to me and I will remain faithful to you abide in me and I in you now I remember a number of years ago being told that an anagram for backsliding an anagram for backsliding is slack abiding you can work it out yourself so an anagram for backsliding is slack abiding slack abiding and that's why Jesus here after the Lord's Supper the disciples have sat at the Lord's table for the first time they've partaken of the Lord's Supper just like we have sat at the Lord's Supper partaken sat at the Lord's table partaken of the Lord's Supper and Jesus he's exhorting us he's encouraging us to keep abiding in the vine because backsliding is slack abiding backsliding is slack abiding in fact as we conclude this evening

I want us to see that Jesus gives us five lessons as we leave the Lord's table now don't panic I won't take long five lessons as we leave the Lord's table and move forward from this communion season because Jesus doesn't just say abide in me and then leave it there he doesn't just park it there abide in me and I in you and that's it but Jesus actually breaks it down for us he describes to us what it means to abide in him because when you actually read through the passage he describes the abiding he says abide in my word and my word will abide in you so read your Bible he also says ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you so abide in prayer remain faithful in prayer so abide in my word abide in prayer he goes on to say abide in my love abide in my love this is my commandment that you love one another just as

[32:20] I have loved you abide in my love and my love will abide in you he also says abide in my joy the joy of the Lord is your strength so abide in my joy that your joy may be Jesus says full there's no one who promises full joy apart from Jesus and then lastly he says abide in my commandments because this is my commandment love one another as I have loved you and then he goes on to say verse 13 my favorite verse greater love is no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends you are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you no longer do I

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call you servants for the servant does not know what his master is doing but I have called you friends for all that I have heard from my father I have made known to you you did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide so that whatever you ask the father in my name he may give it to you these things

I command you so that you will love one another and so over this communion season we've listened in to the table talk the table talk before during and after the Lord's supper and now as we leave the Lord's table as we move on from this communion season Jesus gives us five lessons on abiding in him abide in my word abide in prayer abide in my love abide in my joy abide in my commandments abide in me and I in you as he says in verse four abide in me and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine neither can you unless you abide in me so abide in him may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray our
Father in heaven we give thanks to thee for this communion season for being able to come aside and rest a while around thy word and we thank thee Lord that Jesus even encourages us to abide in his word to remain faithful to his word that is the only rule to direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever bless this communion season to us may it be a means of refreshing to our sin to reinvigorate us to keep going to keep looking to Jesus to keep walking with him and talking with him on life's narrow way bless us Lord together we pray and help us to keep abiding in him to keep looking to him and to know him and to love him as the author and the finisher of our faith cleanse us and we pray and go before us for Jesus to a conclusion this evening we're going to sing the words of
Psalm 133 in the Scottish Psalter page 424 Psalm 133 page 424 before we sing I better remember the questions I usually forget are you ready yep question one Jesus said I am the true thine which I am saying is this seventh good will I ask you what the other ones are no not tonight question two what was the name of the place dead branches were taken Gehenna well done question three what is the dictionary definition of the word abide remain faithful good and what question four what is being engrafted into the true vine a picture of union with
Christ so we are united to him and all the blessings flow to us which is what this psalm speaks of too God's blessing of life that shall never end when we're in unity not only with the vine but also with one another psalm 133 behold how good a thing it is and how becoming well together such as brethren are in unity to dwell we'll sing the whole psalm to God's praise and for priorities if we as we see everyone in my water and all pc yuki light having ou oynThurt hills descend for there the blessing God commands life that shall never end life that shall never end the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore
[39:01] Amen

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