

Sermon 16 September 2017 Remain in me

Reference John 15 v 1 – 17

This is a fairly long passage of scripture to unravel and discuss in the message this morning but I hope that many of you might see it as a starting point for your personal Bible studies this week as you think of some of the issues that arise here to broaden your understanding and grow your faith.

As such sermon giving is not about telling you stuff you already know but about making you want to look at the Word more yourself to find out truth for yourself. Remember the Bereans who rate a special mention in Acts because they searched the scriptures daily to see if what the Apostles said was true. **Acts 17 v 11**

We have the benefit of the Bible in our hands which is the direct and inspired word of God. Nothing can contradict this. It is the truth of God. We have to be careful how we handle it and discuss it. We need to do so with hearts that are seeking God and not our own agendas.

We need to seek to interpret our world with reference to Scripture, and not to interpret Scripture with reference to the World.

This is a subtle difference but one which can lead us into error if we are not careful. We cannot easily discount any of scripture. The apostle Paul tells us that

“All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” 2 Timothy 3 v 16

“... so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” v 17

So, as we approach this passage I pray that the eyes of hearts be opened to see the truth that God wants to share with us today. Some of which may challenge us or make us question what we think.

I stand here having spent time thinking about this passage and seeking God to know what he wants to share. This is not an intellectual exercise. What I am doing today is reading this passage with you and highlighting a few truths which God has revealed to me so that you, like me, can be challenged in our walk of faith, every day.

So, having read the passage as a whole Let's get down to it!

Remaining/Abiding

The first thing I want to talk about is about “Remaining” or as some versions render it “Abiding”. I will talk about it as remaining but please interpret that as meaning abiding.

Several times in this passage Jesus talks about Remaining scan down in particular **V4 & V9**

We will look at the consequences of remaining later but first of all let us consider what does remaining mean?

It is clear from this passage that this is a word spoken to those who already have a relationship with Jesus. This is a word spoken to disciples about their continuing relationship with Jesus. We have a relationship with Jesus when we become aware of our sin. When we understand that sin is punishable by death. That there is no one living who is righteous enough to get into heaven. We are all, to begin with, on the road to hell, not one of us are righteous. But God, because of his love for us and His rich mercy, even when we were dead in our sins made us alive with Christ for ever and gave us an eternal home, if we believe in Jesus and accept his sacrifice in our place and God's mercy in our lives.

Read Ephesians 2 v 1 – 10

If this is the first time you have heard of this I would love to pray with you afterwards. Just come and ask me to pray for you at the end of the service or ask someone you know who is a committed Christian to pray with you.

This is a great starting point when we think about remaining, If you wonder what you are remaining for or in I suggest you go back to Ephesians 2 and remind yourselves of what God has done for you. This is a useful passage to remember when doubts come in as they will and this passage can build our faith.

So, back to John 15. this passage is addressed to those who already have a relationship with Jesus, in this case the disciples, so that at once tells us that what is included is important for our own faith walk. Walking with Jesus is an ongoing everyday event. We never arrive at a destination here on earth, only when we finally leave this earth to go to be with Jesus forever can we say we have arrived. But the daily walk with Jesus is very important otherwise he would not have spent so much time in the gospels talking about how we should live out our faith. Particularly at this time as he is preparing to leave the disciples for the cross.

That means it is important for us to understand. Many people have tried to explain this over the years I have been a Christian and I think it is something we work out in our relationship with God.

I think the key that we often miss in this passage is that this is a **relationship Jesus is talking about**. It is not a rule for us to follow or work we have to do but it is a relationship with him that takes top priority in our lives. That's more important than what we do for him (although both are important of course).

We have just talked about how the relationship starts but the relationship continues. It is not a one-off event. We often can give testimony of how we became a Christian but we need to practice those ongoing testimonies which tell of our daily walk with God. How God is with us and how he answers our prayers. This is not to make others feel bad because that is not their experience but to encourage them that this is what can happen in their life too.

It can be difficult building a relationship with God when we cannot see Him in front of us, but we have the benefit of the Holy Spirit in our lives to enable that relationship to grow **IF** we give it space.

There is an amazing thing that happens when we accept Jesus as our Saviour. The **Holy** Spirit comes to live inside us. It literally means that part of the Godhead, God the Holy Spirit lives inside us.

Look at **v4 Remain in me AS I ALSO REMAIN IN YOU**

This passage in John 15 comes in the middle of teachings about the coming Holy Spirit and what was about to happen to Jesus.

In **John 14 v 16 – 17** we read:

“...But you know Him for He lives with you and will be in you.”

Thus, when Jesus tells us to remain in Him...AS I ALSO REMAIN IN YOU. He is saying that although **we have to make a conscious decision to remain in Him**, remain mindful of Him, He is already living within us and remaining with us.

That makes it and altogether more possible experience. None of us can achieve this by ourselves or in our own strength... but we don't have to.

“Just as a tree needs sap to produce fruit, so we can experience the daily inner empowering of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life, and walk with God” Lucas (12 Sep)

In **Galatians 4 v 6** it says

“Because you are His sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries out, ‘Abba, Father.’”

Therefore, when we read this chapter and its talk of Remaining/Abiding we should be struck by the fact that this is not necessarily a difficult or impossible thing we have to negotiate or manage but we just have to remain mindful of God who lives within us. Our responsibility is to REMAIN in Christ as He Remains in us.

Mindfulness is a popular term we hear bandied around which is often used in mental health or counselling scenarios. But as Christians we have the opportunity to practice true mindfulness... practicing the presence of Jesus. Seeing God at work in our lives, Hearing His voice as He prompts us and being aware of others around us.

In Matthew 7 v 7 Jesus says **“... Seek and you will find..”**

STOP NOW. Just in the quiet I want you to ask the Holy Spirit to help you continue to build your relationship with God. There has to be some commitment from you. Note it will not just come to you. You have to invite Jesus to come and take control. That can be a scary thing if you like to be in control of what is happening. Believe me when God is in control anything can happen!

The other week in the prayer service we were talking about blessing and how that is an important part of our prayer life, Consider this:- we should look at each other when we bless one another, then the Holy Spirit within us can show us them as real people and they can see God within us. The Spirit witnesses within us and them and the blessing is passed on. We can know when we meet someone and look at them that they are Christian, that is the Holy Spirit in us recognising the Holy Spirit in them. How much better to bless with eyes wide open. Just like we do when we give the grace at the end of the service. AS we look at each other we are passing the blessing on.

So then from this passage I note three main outworking of this remaining/ abiding

1. Keep His Commands

This is about righteousness and obedience. We talk about some lovely things when we talk about the Christian life but we can overlook the need for discipline in our lives. Obedience can become a dirty word in some circles, but it is a fact of the Christian walk. We are called to obedience, this is not always a popular stance or an easy stance but it is a godly stance.

2. Bear much Fruit

This speaks of fruitfulness and I interpret this for me to the fruits of the Spirit outlined in **Galatians 5 v 22 – 23**.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, Goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. Against such there is no law”

This is about our character and our relationships with others on the vine (or off it). Apart from Jesus we cannot bear fruit. This is made clear in the passage (**v 5**)

3. Love each other

The other thing to mention here is that of the corporate nature of the abiding/remaining. The metaphor Jesus uses in this part of the teaching talks of a vine, where all the parts are joined together. We are linked by the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Jesus. It is not a mistake that Jesus was talking to a group of disciples and that He talks a lot about us worshipping and meeting together through the New Testament. For example in **Matthew 18 v 20** Jesus says

“For where two or three gather in my name there I am with them”

Being together we have the presence of God this encourages us and helps us to stay true to the gospel. We cannot live out the Christian life in isolation. We should be excited to spend time with each other at church or other opportunities as we encourage each other along the way and see God at work. Later in the chapter Jesus talks about loving each other so much that we would lay down our lives for each other. Not necessarily dying for each other, but preferring each other. We should be thinking of the other person, helping them to go first, not being so full of our own importance that we miss seeing someone in need or hurt.

This is the command Jesus gives us to Love each other (v17).

All of these are only achievable if we remain in Him.

As a result of this out working in our daily lives there are some things we can expect in our lives:

1. Jesus remains in us by His Holy Spirit

He enables us to keep his commands, be fruitful and to love one another. His love remains in us and this love is the love the father has for the Son **John 14 v 20 – 21**

“On that day, you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

The more we are aware of God in us and that we have a relationship with Him the more we are aware of what God has done for us and is doing for us.

This doesn't mean that life is easy because God lives in us but we can face things because He is in us and with us. Sometimes we can face intense persecution for our faith or our belief. Sometimes that can come from places we don't expect. Sometimes difficulties are a way our faith is tested or sometimes God just wants our attention.

Losing my career through sickness was way of God getting my attention

2. Our joy is complete

Our joy is complete because we know that Jesus remains with us and in us and we remain in His love. That is where true joy comes from. Don't mix it up with happiness, an altogether different emotion. Our joy is complete because we know Jesus. It means we can have peace whatever our circumstances and the joy of knowing that we are secure in the love of Christ. Word for today passage

3. We are His friends not servants in other places referred to as sons

We have a different relationship with God that that of a servant. Slaves and servants just do as they are told and don't know the 'big picture'. God has told us what the big picture is, he has shared his plans with us, we are friends and family now.

We still serve God but as family not as slaves.

4. We can ask for anything in His name and He will do it. There is a caveat/proviso If you remain in me and my words remain in you

We often struggle with the first part of the passage, we can say that God doesn't answer our prayers. But what is important here is how we come to the point of prayer. It is from this position of remaining/abiding, being obedient, full of the fruit of the Spirit and loving one another that we bring our requests to God. That means we are far more likely to pray in line with His will & thus we will see answers to our prayers.

The key point is that we come in prayer as children of God filled with his Spirit being obedient to His Word (The Bible), being recognisable by our fruit and the manner in which we love one another.

Summing up:

Remaining in Christ is our goal, but we have the Holy Spirit to help us as we remain in Him and He remains in us.

He is in us as we bless one another, we are part of a Holy Spirit transaction.

Remaining in Christ has some outworking we should see in our lives:

Keeping his commands

Bearing much Fruit

Loving one another

And the result is:

Jesus remains in us

Our joy is complete

We are not servants but friends/sons

We can ask for anything in His name

Just having scratched the surface of this passage of Scripture I hope I have stirred within you the desire to come into the presence of God to really seek His presence in our lives and to live with Him in our lives every day.

Music team up to sing:
To be in your presence.