

TALK 2 – 11th February 2018

3 LEGGED RACE / SPORTS DAY

When preparing for this morning, it made me think of Sports Day as a child at Primary school. We always had the Flat Race where we ran our own race for ourselves, everyone was out to win, everyman for themselves (I never did, I was rubbish!) Then we would have the 3 legged race, you had to be joined to each other, in order to move forward you had to stay connected to each other, the moment you took your eye off the ball and tried to do your own thing in your own strength, you failed! I suppose that's a bit like what Jesus is teaching us in today's passage.

FACTS ABOUT VINES

Grapes are the most grown fruit in the world, no other plant is as fruitful as a vine!

New plants are pruned for 3-5 years to train them before they are allowed to produce a crop. In the same way we require time to learn and grow and become rooted in our faith.
(George Whitfield Story)

- Vines are high maintenance, they will only live and thrive if handled with great care and constant pruning. Pruning is absolutely essential for the vine, dead wood needs removing as it can harbour disease and cause decay. Pruning of the live wood improves the vine's potential for bearing fruit. Untrimmed vines develop unproductive growth and long rambling branches that produce few grapes because strength is given to the growing wood. Fruit contains the seed for future fruit.... Let's stop and think about that for a moment: Fruit contains the seed for future fruit, WOW what a privilege, therefore if we do what Jesus commands us to do – Abide in Him, love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind and love our neighbour as ourselves and use what we learn as we grow and bear fruit to bless others, then we are helping to plant those seeds that help others to remain in the vine and bear fruit... WOW, what a responsibility but what a privilege and honour to be called to do so!
- For their size vines are extremely productive, yielding as much as 80lbs of grapes in a single season and good roots can continue to produce grapes for 100 years...

(2)

So even after we've helped pass on these seeds and we see that fruit grow in others, our job is not done, we've to continue to remain in Him and bear fruit, no matter our age or our experience, the command is to abide in Him. The NIV that Sam read this morning

says we are to Remain in Him. This helps us to understand that this command is not fulfilled in a single act but rather it's an ongoing life commitment of being united with Christ.

So how do we “abide in Him” or remain firmly in the vine? Well we need to work at it, spend time with God, prioritise our time, organise our prayer life.

In verse 15 Jesus calls us His friends! We are all blessed with friends throughout our lives and we understand that we can't have friendships with no effort at all, we need to build those relationships & deepen them, that only happens when we invest time in each other, as we do this, the relationship grows, we experience things together, talk and share more openly, this leads to talking and sharing more openly, we then love, support encourage and trust each other. Therefore if we are to have the honour of Jesus calling us His friends then we must invest, really invest in that relationship.

Personal Story

Work – big ideas!

Privilege of - House Group,

Eldership

Training and Conferences

Path of Renewal

Café Church

Life & Work of our Church

I could have said NO to all of these opportunities, too busy, too scared, not clever enough... but I didn't as I felt it would be disobedient, especially as God has had such a big part in our family life, through good and bad times, through big decisions. I felt I couldn't just pick and choose when I wanted to listen and respond.

If I had said NO to these opportunities that terrified me I would not be equipped for the job I'm doing now.

Does that mean I'm sorted now.....absolutely NOT!

(3)

Am I overwhelmed at the busyness of life and way out of my comfort zone every single day.... Absolutely YES!

Am I now

managing my quiet time and getting my priorities right at the start of each working day...Absolutely NOT!

But am I committed to

keep trying.....Absolutely YES!

STORY – SMALL MEN’S MINISTRY

Small steps together with God and each other will produce great fruit

Large lonely steps too far without staying connected will fail

(Café Church Story)

We have the opportunity, look around our church family, we are so blessed to have so many involved in the life and work of our church, so many of us have a heart to serve and that’s such a blessing and absolutely vital for our church and community. However if I were to ask what the biggest issues were for everyone, I’m absolutely sure that TIME would be at the top of the list.

Well we have an opportunity right now:

Tomorrow – Monday 12th February we have 2 taster information sessions on the next step of our Path of Renewal journey. One from 2-3pm and another in the evening 7-8pm. Please give this careful thought, remember we all agreed to go on this journey together for the benefit of the future of church here in this community. Please don’t read this and think – I don’t have the time, it’s just another thing to fit in – The commitment is only to meet once a month, we can all manage that. I cannot express enough, just heo valuable learning together has been for me. What an encouragement it is to be connected to God and one another as we Grow With God, this really IS for everyone, and THIS IS YOU’RE PERSONAL INVITATION, please accept the invitation and please encourage anyone else you can think of to come along, there is no requirement to be a member of MPN, the invite is open! Path of Renewal is not exclusive, the invitation is for us all to Grow With God and stay connected to each other as we Remain in the Vine!

We all need that safe place to explore and learn, to question without judgement, a non-threatening, learning environment, we all need it and God wants to create that space for us. We need to accept the invitation though, only we can do that! He’s not going to force us! Jesus doesn’t tie us to the vine so there’s no escape, he invites us to remain in Him, it’s our choice!

(4)

JOHN 15

Is a continuation of Jesus’ upper room message as to why our hearts should not be troubled from Chapter 14. Why should we be free from anxiety, because He is the vine and we are the branches, He will take care of us. We learn in this passage that God the Father is the owner of the vineyard as well as the gardener of the crop, vineyards require constant, attentive care. The father tends his grapes, waters and protects them and cultivates a harvest to produce a maximum yield. We can absolutely trust the gardener to watch and nurture us, His eye is on every branch.

We live in the world and we are human, therefore we will always have negative elements in our lives, we all go through times when things are really hard, we may not face persecution in the way some of our brothers and sisters in other places do, but we still have huge challenges to face at different times in our lives and it would be easy to think -I can't do this – it's too hard – I'm exhausted – I can't bear fruit anymore, I'm barely keeping my head above water – we all get these times!

PERSONAL STORY – PURSE/ CAR/ WORKLOAD /NO TIME OR ENERGY LEFT

Sometimes we allow small problems to get in the way of our relationships with other believers, sometimes we get hurt by the words or actions of each other, we think, I'll just distance myself from them and then I won't get hurt! That's a real challenge because Jesus commands that we love them! He says Christians will get plenty opposition from the world therefore we need love and support from each other, take every opportunity to strengthen these relationships.

Dinner for 6/ Growing With God/ Different Opportunities – Take them!

We can't bear fruit if we're disconnected from the God and from each other, nor can we bear fruit if we just come and visit the vine when we have the time or when we feel like it, it has to be a lifelong commitment, some of you may already be totally one with the vine but if like me, you need to make that commitment to spend more time on your relationship with God and become firmly rooted in the vine and in the tender loving care of our heavenly gardener, then can I please encourage you to actively make that commitment. Imagine what our church and community could look like in the future if each and everyone of us was firmly rooted in the vine, bearing fruit and spreading the seeds for future fruit wherever we go.

(5)

In our society today there are people who would say that God doesn't have a plan, but here's the reality check... He always has a plan and we are all called to play a major part in that big master plan.

It tells us in Matthew that when Jesus was asked he said "The greatest commandment is this, Love the lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and the second is this "love your neighbour as yourself"

Wow, what an impact for God's Kingdom if everyone obeyed these laws, let's do our part. LOVE is what unites us to Christ, as branches are united to the vine. Two results stem from our relationship to the true vine, obedience and joy. Obedience marks the cause of our fruitfulness, Joy is the result.

Joy results when we realise the life of Christ in us is producing fruit.

That joy is infectious!

Let's Pray: