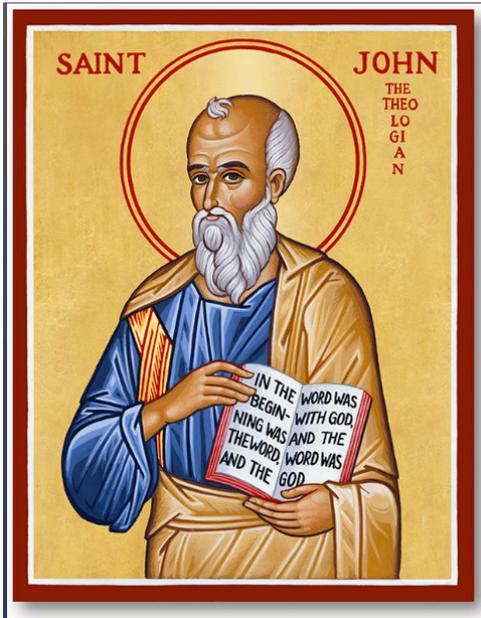


John 15 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)



Jesus the True Vine

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. 2 He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes[a] to make it bear more fruit. 3 You have already been cleansed[b] by the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become[c] my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. 11 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you servants[d] any longer, because the servant[e] does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17 I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

The World’s Hatred

18 “If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If you belonged to the world,[f] the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, ‘Servants[g] are not greater than their master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. 21 But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 Whoever hates me hates my Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. 25 It was to fulfill the word that is written in their law, ‘They hated me without a cause.’

26 “When the Advocate[h] comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. 27 You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

Footnotes:

John 15:2 The same Greek root refers to pruning and cleansing

John 15:3 The same Greek root refers to pruning and cleansing

John 15:8 Or be

John 15:15 Gk slaves

John 15:15 Gk slave

John 15:19 Gk were of the world

John 15:20 Gk Slaves

John 15:26 Or Helper

Overview

Compared to Synoptic Gospels

Pericope	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus the True Vine				15:1-8
“Abide in My Love”				15:9-17
The World's Hatred				15:18-26

Themes

- Replacement
 - 15:1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.”
- Rejection
 - 15:18 “If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you”
 - 15:20 “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you;”
 - 15:21 “But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 Whoever hates me hates my Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. 25 It was to fulfill the word that is written in their law, ‘They hated me without a cause.’”
- Incarnation
- Discipleship
 - 15:4 “Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.’
 - 15:8 “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become[c] my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. 11 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.”
 - 15:12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 I do not call you servants[d] any longer, because the servant[e] does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. 16 You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. 17 I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.
 - 15:26 “When the Advocate[h] comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. 27 You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

Key Stories and Teachings

Overall

Jesus the True Vine 15:1-8

15:1-17 The vine and the branches. Alongside the shepherd comparison of Chapter 10 this is the other significant Johannine instance of parabolic/allegorical language. In the OT Israel is frequently pictured as God's choice vine or vineyard, nurtured by God only to yield bitter fruit. Previously Jesus has been replacing the Jewish festivals and institutions, now he portrays himself as the vine of the new Israel.

15:1-10 Jesus is the true vine – Israel is no longer the vine and God the vine keeper. Abiding in Jesus leads to two positive consequences:

- The efficacy of prayer
- The glorification of the Father

15:7 “Abide in me and I in you.” All forms of Christian worship, all forms of Christian disciple, have this as their object. All truth and depth of devotion, all effectiveness in service spring from this. It is not a theme for words but for deeper appreciations of silence.

15:7-17 Abiding in Jesus is discussed in relation to two themes, bearing fruit (15:7-8 and abiding in his love by keeping his commandments (15:9-15) These are summed up in 15:16-17.

“Abide in My Love” 15:9-17

15:13 “Lay down one's life” is an expression found only in the Gospel and Letters of John in the NT. (10:11, 15, 17¹; 13:37-38²; 1 Jn 3:16³)

Overall: The truth of all existence lies in its intimate relationship with the father through the son. Everything that is has existence only insofar as it is in love with its creator. Yet the creation has another aspect in which it stands in opposition to its creator and its own true life; it is this that John often calls the “cosmos.”

15:11-17 Links love with obedience. Jesus and God loves each other, and Jesus loves us. We are to love Jesus and each other. The reciprocal love of the disciples is a result of the love of Jesus for the disciples and God.

¹ John 10:11-17 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) 11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.

² John 13:37-38 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) ³⁷ Peter said to him, “Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” ³⁸ Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.

³ 1 John 3:16 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) 16 We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.

The World's Hatred 15:18-26

15:18-16:4 The word the world has different meanings in John:

- 1:10 Created by God's Word
- 3:16-17, 17:18 Is the object of God's love
- 15:18 It is hostile to God's revelation – it has responded with hatred to Jesus and it will for his followers.

15:18-16:4 The world's hatred; witness by the Paraclete. Jesus stress of the necessity of love between his followers is related to his perception of how the world hates him and those he has chosen out of the world.

If in 3:16 God so loved the world – that world is now coterminous with those who have rejected the Son whom God sent to save it.

When Jesus restores the relationship of love between God and his disciples, he does not take them physically out of the cosmos. They live now in and from God's love, and therefore in opposition to the predominant state of their world.

15:18-26 The Johannine community had passed through some very bitter times and probably expected more to come. It appears that there were bitter conflicts with the Jewish community in which they lived – it likely resulted in their expulsion from the synagogues and possibly the deaths of some Christians.

The Jewish nation between the two great Jewish wars was in a state of radical reconstruction, forced on it by the loss of the old political and religious center and by an uncertain prospect of survival.

In John the cosmos is primarily the world of the Jewish authorities. Yet he does not name the opposition as "the Jews" here. For John the ethnic or religious identity of the persecutors of his day was theologically irrelevant. Under other circumstances the persecutors could have been the Romans, or the Greeks or Scythians.

What characterizes the persecutors theologically is that they are "the cosmos", the creation rejecting its creator. In particular the cosmos uses religion to justify its acts of hatred and cruelty.

Now the alienation of the cosmos from God is more and more a matter of full choice, and the disciples must expect to be persecuted energetically and with purpose.

The cosmos is not one neatly defined group of people. It was easy for John to look at his own small community and see a little of the evil that characterizes the cosmos in it.

John never lets the reader forget that Judas was a trusted disciple, treasurer and friend of Jesus before he betrayed him.

Any group that can persecute and kill people and think it is doing God's will is a manifestation of the cosmos. The distinction is not between two human religious communities, but between two ways of being, one admitting the reality of God's primacy and living out the father's love, the other asserting its own primacy and hating those who question it.

Why does Jesus not take "his own" with him and leave the cosmos to its own devices? Because the cosmos is salvageable.

The cosmos is not a thing. It is a disposition. The creation is good in being (which is a gift from God), and evil only in turning its back on God. The disciples must now stay in the presence of the cosmos in order to testify to it about the truth. This is the central thread of the second discourse.

Reflections

1. Love and obedience
2. Abide in me and I in you.
3. Are you part of the world?

Bibliography

- Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament
- The Harper Collins Study Bible
- L. William Countryman, The Mystical Way in the Fourth Gospel
- Josh Moody, John 13-20 For You
- The Oxford Bible Commentary
- William Temple, Readings in St. John's Gospel
- Tom Wright, John for Everyone Notes

Detail

Raymond E. Brown Notes⁴

15:1-17 The vine and the branches. Alongside the shepherd comparison of Chapter 10 this is the other significant Johannine instance of parabolic/allegorical language. In the OT Israel is frequently pictured as God's choice vine or vineyard, nurtured by God only to yield bitter fruit. Previously Jesus has been replacing the Jewish festivals and institutions, now he portrays himself as the vine of the new Israel.

Jesus is the vine, and God is the vine dresser, and Christians are the branches of the vine that bear the fruit.

Some compare the language to Paul's body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-31⁵); but while Paul's imagery is invoked to regulate the relation of Christians to each other, John's imagery is concerned only with their indwelling with Jesus Christ. John reinforces the message by restating the new commandment in 15:7-17 esp 12.

15:18-16:4 The world's hatred; witness by the Paraclete. Jesus stress of the necessity of love between his followers is related to his perception of how the world hates him and those he has chosen out of the world.

If in 3:16 God so loved the world – that world is now coterminous with those who have rejected the Son whom God sent to save it.

15:22 The fact that Jesus has come and spoken makes this rejection sinful.

15:26-27 The Paraclete will come and continue to witness on behalf of Jesus, and those who have been with Jesus from the beginning will be expelled from synagogues and even put to death for such witness.

⁴ Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament

⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 (NRSV) One Body with Many Members

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; 24 whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, 25 that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

This part of the discourse resembles part of the speech by Jesus at the Last Supper. (Mark 13:9-13⁶; Matt 10:17-22⁷)

The Harper Collins Notes⁸

15:1-6 On the OT the grapevine is a metaphor for Israel. God is the vine grower who tends it carefully but burns and destroys it if it is not faithful.

15:7-17 Abiding in Jesus is discussed in relation to two themes, bearing fruit (15:7-8 and abiding in his love by keeping his commandments (15:9-15) These are summed up in 15:16-17.

15:13 “Lay down one’s life” is an expression found only in the Gospel and Letters of John in the NT. (10:11, 15, 17⁹; 13:37-38¹⁰; 1 Jn 3:16¹¹)

15:18-16:4a This section on persecution is closely connected to the conflict between the synagogue authorities and the Christian community for which John has written.

⁶ Mark 13:9-13 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) 9 “As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them. 10 And the good news[a] must first be proclaimed to all nations. 11 When they bring you to trial and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say; but say whatever is given you at that time, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. 12 Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; 13 and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Footnotes: Mark 13:10 Gk gospel

⁷ Matthew 10:17-22 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) 17 Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; 18 and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. 19 When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; 20 for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21 Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; 22 and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

⁸ The Harper Collins Study Bible

⁹ John 10:11-17 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) 11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.

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L. William Countryman Notes¹²

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When Jesus restores the relationship of love between God and his disciples, he does not take them physically out of the cosmos. They live now in and from God’s love, and therefore in opposition to the predominant state of their world.

Why does Jesus not take “his own” with him and leave the cosmos to its own devices? Because the cosmos is salvageable.

The cosmos is not a thing. It is a disposition. The creation is good in being (which is a gift from God), and evil only in turning its back on God. The disciples must now stay in the presence of the cosmos in order to testify to it about the truth. This is the central thread of the second discourse.

15:1-17 The image of the vine is the central image of the disciples dependence on Jesus; apart from him they are dead; in him they live and produce fruit.

Judas is a prime example of what happens to one who fails. He is motivated by love but by greed (12:4-6¹³) and ended in betrayal and death.

15:11 The point of the metaphor is to produce fruit not fear.

The mere existence of a community bound to one another and to the father through love of the son is an affront to the cosmos; for the cosmos represents the opposite mode of life, that of hatred and alienation.

15:18-26 The Johannine community had passed through some very bitter times and probably expected more to come. It appears that there were bitter conflicts with the Jewish community in which they lived – it likely resulted in their expulsion from the synagogues and possibly the deaths of some Christians.

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¹² L. William Countryman, *The Mystical Way in the Fourth Gospel*

¹³ John 12:4-6 (NRSV) 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 5 “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii[a] and the money given to the poor?” 6 (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)

John never lets the reader forget that Judas was a trusted disciple, treasurer and friend of Jesus before he betrayed him.

Any group that can persecute and kill people and think it is doing God's will is a manifestation of the cosmos. The distinction is not between two human religious communities, but between two ways of being, one admitting the reality of God's primacy and living out the father's love, the other asserting its own primacy and hating those who question it.

Josh Moody Notes¹⁴

15:1 In the OT it is common to think of God's people as "the vine" – but Jesus changes this – the Father is the vine keeper, Jesus is the true vine, and the followers are the branches. The father as the vine keeper takes care of the vine and prunes it and nurtures it.

15:2 Start here then if you wish to be fruitful. Remember who is the vine and the vine keeper. It is not you. And remember who causes growth. It is not you. Paradoxically, all spiritual fruitfulness begins with a sense that the core productivity we desire is outside of our control. Jesus is the true vine, the Father is the vine keeper.

As the branches we will experience being pruned to bear fruit. Circumstances, difficulties, trials, opposition, suffering – all will be used to bring about a greater Christ-likeness. Note that God's agenda in our lives is not for our comfort but for our fruitfulness.

15:4 Indwelling – the key to fruitfulness is abiding in Christ.

15:6 We must heed the warning and guard our relationship with God.

15:7 The more we get to know Christ, the more we want what Christ wants, and therefore, when we pray for what we want, we are now also, increasingly praying for what Christ wants for us.

15:8 The central point is that we are connected to Jesus –and our fruitfulness is when we are doing Jesus' work in the world.

15:9 Abiding – love – God loves Christ, so Christ loves us. The call for us to remain is in that love.

Love is the great apologetic – we may not have all of the answers but if we have love we are acting in moral obedience to Christ and God's commandments.

15:11 The purpose of all of this is joy. Joy is the goal, if you want to experience real joy then abide in Jesus.

15:13 If you want to know what the greatest love looks like look to the cross.

15:16 You did not choose God – God chose you

15:17 Jesus wants us to have great joy in him, and great love for each other.

15:18 If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. You are not hated for yourself you are hated for your faith in Jesus Christ. You are part of the cosmic battle between God and evil, light and darkness. It is a battle against the world.

The world means everything that is rebelling against God – it is the human order of society who are in rebellion against God.

¹⁴ Josh Moody, John 13-20 For You

15:20 To follow the Master is to follow the way of love. It is also to follow the way of the one who died on the cross.

15:21 The reason people chose to oppose Jesus is because they do not know God. They do not want God. Therefore they do not want God's son. The religious establishment's opposition to Jesus takes place all around the world. Those who hear of Christ, but claim to know God, and reject Christ, do not really know God.

15:23 Jesus know attacks those who preach universalism – that everyone everywhere is saved – he says that if you oppose Jesus then you oppose God and will not be saved.

15:26-27 Testify, or to give witness in Greek is the word martyr. How can we alone be faithful in such an extreme? We cannot. But with the help of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Holy Spirit will help you give witness when you are called.

The Oxford Bible Commentary Notes¹⁵

15:1-10 Jesus is the true vine – Israel is no longer the vine and God the vine keeper. Abiding in Jesus leads to two positive consequences:

- The efficacy of prayer
- The glorification of the Father

15:11-17 Links love with obedience. Jesus and God loves each other, and Jesus loves us. We are to love Jesus and each other. The reciprocal love of the disciples is a result of the love of Jesus for the disciples and God.

15:18-16:4 The word the world has different meanings in John:

1:10 Created by God's Word

3:16-17, 17:18 Is the object of God's love

15:18 It is hostile to God's revelation – it has responded with hatred to Jesus and it will for his followers.

William Temple Notes¹⁶

15:1-10 The union of the disciples with the Lord

15:11-17 The results of the union in relation to the disciples

15:18-16:4 The results in relation to the disciples and the world

15:1-10 I am the true vine – the vine is a recognized symbol of Israel This passage calls out that as the vine Israel has failed. Jesus is replacing it. He is the new true Israel – in his own person he is the people of God.

He is also before Abraham, Prologue and 8:58, he is also one with the Father – he is able to incorporate us into himself, new branches into his vine.

It is also possible to be drawn to the Lord, be in His company, and still bear no fruit. Judas heard Jesus preaching and withdrew. He became a branch not bearing fruit. His going away into the dark is an act of defiance on Judas' part and an act of condemnation and execution on the part of God.

Even if we are bearing fruit – there is no reason for contentment – the pruning knife is nearby to clean us and make us more fruitful.

¹⁵ The Oxford Bible Commentary

¹⁶ William Temple, Readings in St. John's Gospel

15:7 "Abide in me and I in you." All forms of Christian worship, all forms of Christian disciple, have this as their object. All truth and depth of devotion, all effectiveness in service spring from this. It is not a theme for words but for deeper appreciations of silence.

15:9 The doctrine of mediation – in terms of being love based.

15:11-17 Joy is a state of the soul. It is a condition of the soul that is filled with love, as joy comes next to love in the fruitage of the Spirit.

15:18-27 The relationship of the Son to the Holy Spirit.

Tom Wright Notes¹⁷

15:1-8 Jesus is the true vine and the true Israel.

2 pts:

Is Jesus paranoid? Or was the early church under enormous pressure and oppression?

It was oppressed because Jesus was rejected and oppressed.

Who is the world?

- The Jewish religious and political world; the Greek cultural and the Roman political worlds all rejected Jesus.
- Most fundamentally it was the Jewish authorities rejected Jesus and sought to have him eliminated. He threatened their way of being and their status.

¹⁷ Tom Wright, John for Everyone