

The Life of a Branch

My Philodendron

- Today Jn 15, famous v/b. So I brought v/b. Philodendron? Main vine, branches, leaves. Easy houseplant. All kinds of plants with 3 parts (vine, branch, leaves/fruit): grapes, pumpkins, tomatoes. Same true for all these plants: vine grows/uses branches to produce fruit; for fruit, branch must have strong connection to nutrition source, vine; if disconnected, branch dies, no fruit. Everything said, could have heard from employee at garden center. Reason brought: imagery Jesus uses in Jn 15 to describe life of Christian/branch.



Remaining in the Vine

- **Vs. 5a.** Christians, branches. How become branch? How life as branch start? Vines like this grow branches; send nutrition out, cause branches to grow! Life of branch has source in vine. Same us: Jesus grows Christians; sends nutrition/grace out, through HS, and causes grow. We become branch, Christian, who trusts in Jesus as Savior, vine, source of grace. Connection to vine called faith; baptismal (whichever first). That baptismal faith is what connects branches to vine. You are branches, baptized believers connected to vine; his grace flows through you. Don't ever take for granted; that's gift of God! That's how life of branch is started.
- Big emphasis here, not let this happen. **Vs. 5.** Life of this branch started strong, but now dead. May not look; just pulled. Slowly wither, die (8th grade room). Why strong emphasis on "remain." **Vs. 4.** Remain: don't get disconnected, but stick with for long haul. Problem: for so many, this! So many are baptized, brought up in Church, maybe Christian school, know/believe Gospel; but this happens! Think of someone? Or damaged/broken, barely hanging on to vine? Outside, may look same, like this leaf; hardly tell difference. But this is dead or dying branch, because separation from Jesus is death of branch. Warning for us all! **Vs. 6.**
- So what really means for us: nothing more imp in lives than faith in JC Savior. That's what he's saying! **Vs. 4a.** Begging: remain in one who gave life, rose dead to make you his branch. Guarantee, devil will try to snip you off! Wants this to happen! Jesus says, "**Remain in me,**" for long haul, rest of life, through every hardship/joy you go through; "remain" to end.
- How? Remember: life of branch remains same way starts – through nutrition of vine. Same HS who baptized you into faith, still uses MofG (G in W&S) to sustain your faith: preaching & study of Word of God, daily rebirth in baptismal grace, regular attendance at Lord's Supper, coming to church where all this grace is found in one place. This is how we remain in vine. That's why coming to church such big deal; why we reach out to people who haven't, encourage to return, remain; why horrified that half Luth confirmands drop faith by 20. (Confirmation next Sunday; keep in mind!) We need nutrition of Gospel that comes from vine. God wants us to have; HS loves to give! But **vs. 6.** That's death; but life of branch is vine, Christ, who says **vs. 4a.** Jesus isn't going to cut you off; just don't cut yourself off; and do whatever you can to help those who seem to be cutting themselves off.

Producing Fruit for the Vine

- When look at this plant, see beautiful leaves. Others fruit, like tomatoes, grapes. Second major emphasis, besides remaining, is producing fruit. Listen: **vs. 4b, 5b, 8.** Way we glorify God, show discipleship – by producing fruit: doing the things God loves. Think: why people plant flowers/fruit trees, have houseplants? Because love leaves/fruit those plants produce! Gardeners appreciate that. The Lord loves fruit you produce. **Vs. 8a.** Bearing fruit means doing things God loves. Think fruit of Spirit – school theme (Gal 5). Think John Baptist, "**Produce fruit in keeping with repentance**" (Mt

3:8). Think Jesus, 2 greatest coms: love God, neighbor (Mt 22:37-40) - fruit. Think parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ ‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’” (Lk 13:6-9). Throughout ministry Jesus emphasized producing fruit, doing things God loves. Even warns against not producing fruit, because dead plant worthless. Maybe you have dead plants to dig up; we have few Sarah wants out. Dead plant is worthless; God knows; wants fruit.

- In fact, wants fruit so bad, prunes branches. Vs. 1-2. Heavenly gardener so interested in fruit from his branches that he’ll snip off any buds that threaten fruit-production. Practically, translates into: sometimes God takes away from us, or doesn’t let us have, things that get in way of our Christianity. Usually things we like; hurts when takes away. Don’t understand why has to do so much pruning. Vs. 2b. Keep that in mind what something bad happens to you, when God takes away from you. He may just be pruning, to help you bear fruit, because God loves your fruit.
- All kinds of fruit you can produce. Some branches bear grapes, tomatoes, pumpkins, green leaves, maple sap, flower petals, apples, oranges. Different branches produce different fruit. You’re all different branches. Some Council, ushers, greeters, offering counters, SS teachers, visit shut-ins, mentor, counsel people, donate meals, actually tell people about your faith, come to church even when really hard to do. Whatever you do, if take sermon and put into practice, live authentic Christianity by putting faith into action, way Jesus wants, by doing things God loves: then keep producing fruit and look for ways to increase production. As Lutherans, don’t need to remind you that your fruit won’t earn God’s favor; your good works can’t save. But when Jesus vine urges branches like us to bear fruit, we bear fruit; what we do. What Jesus is saying here. Vs. 8a.

The Life of a Branch: Remaining & Fruit-Bearing

- Philodendron, 3 parts: vine, branches, leaves/fruit. Today: vs. 5. Life of Christian/branch depends on staying connected to vine; separated, dies. And life of branch is one of bearing fruit to gardener’s glory. So when we stay connected to Jesus and his Word, and when we bear fruit, by doing things God loves, we’re following words of Savior in Jn 15. That’s the life of a branch.
- But never forget who gave you that life. Jesus grew you out of himself. It was his Gospel that nourished you, caused you to grow, and keeps you growing. Thank God for your baptismal faith in Jesus, that connects you to Savior, like branch connected to vine.

John 15:1-8

¹ “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He 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. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain 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.

⁵ “I 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. ⁶ 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. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

*If you remain in me
and I in you
you will bear much fruit*