

## Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, May 1st 2013

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. ... Remain in me, as I remain in you. ... I am the vine, you are the branches.” (Jesus)

What a privilege to be a branch connected to Jesus, the True Vine. What a consolation to realize that this is because of the will of the Father, the Vine Grower. That gives me confidence that I can live my life unafraid. The Father is in charge and he has me right where he wants me.

“He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit.... Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine so neither can you unless you remain in me. ... Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned.”

Sometimes we only appear to be connected to the Vine. It may take time but, eventually it becomes clear: we are shriveling spiritually because we are not plugged into Jesus. My family and I once lived in Abilene, Texas. There was an area of grass between where several highways came together. The town decided to plant a good number of trees there. The trees were young, although tall, so they tied them down appropriately. They looked great as you drove by. However, one evening someone used a saw and cut all of them through at the base. They were still standing tall and, for a time, continued to look really good. However, death eventually appeared in the leaves. The trees were not attached to their roots. They were essentially dead but it took time to realize it since they still looked so good from a car passing by. I have not forgotten the meanness of whomever it was who destroyed those trees but it has remained a lesson for me. Am I “looking good” spiritually but essentially dead because I am no longer abiding in Jesus?

“[A]nd everyone that does (bear fruit) he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you.”

I do not know which is worse: to look good and be dead because I am not remaining in the vine or to have the Vine Grower hacking away on me, cutting out parts of my life that need to be removed, and thinking all along that God must hate me because of the pain in my life. Pruning hurts. I do not want to give up good things, things I like, even if I believe that it will lead to even better things. I am an American man. Give me something to take away the pain. Now.

“Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. ... If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”

Remain in him, he says. In some ways this seems quite simple: if his words remain in us we can ask for anything and it will be done. I do not understand all of this. How could I? I am only a branch. But I will lay my head on my pillow tonight trusting that the Vine Grower wants what is best for me: to bear much fruit and become one of Jesus’ disciples. Knowing this, I can rest in peace.

George Butterfield