

3. You are invited to join us in reading through the New Testament, Psalms & Proverbs in a year. Printed copies of the plan are available in the Narthex. Our first round of Bible Book Club meetings is this week! Tuesday at 1PM, Wednesday at 6PM and Friday at 1PM. These are all via ZOOM. If you'd like to participate in an in-person Bible Book Club, please let me know, and we'll set it up.
4. Beginning today, we will be collecting canned fruit, veggies & soups on the first Sunday of each month for the food pantry at Hammond FUMC. So, when you grocery shop, please add a little to your cart for the food insecure in our community. Thank you!
5. Scrip – We will be placing orders for scrip cards the first and third Sundays of each month, so if you ever grocery shop, buy gas, go out to eat, please buy scrip cards from our church, so we can earn a little extra.

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Olivia Rosario

Leader: We are branches, rooted in the vine of Christ.

People: We come because we seek to abide in Christ.

Leader: The branches that remain in the vine bear much fruit.

People: We come because we long to be spiritually vibrant, alive, productive.

Leader: If we abide in Christ, then Christ's words will abide in us.

People: We come because we strive to be faithful disciples.

Leader: We gather for worship now to the glory of the One God: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer.

People: May we grow wildly as God tends us lovingly.

***HYMN** No. 170 *O How I Love Jesus*

Verse 1: There is a name I love to hear,
I love to sing its worth;
It sounds like music in my ear,
The sweetest name on earth.

Chorus: O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus,
because He first loved me!

Verse 2: It tells me of a Savior's love,
Who died to set me free;
It tells me of His precious blood,
the sinner's perfect plea.

Chorus: O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus,
because He first loved me!

Verse 3: It tells of One whose loving heart
can feel my deepest woe;
Who in each sorrow bears a part
that none can bear below.

Chorus: O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus,
O how I love Jesus,
because He first loved me!

***INVOCATION (UNISON)**

**God of love,
plant us in the soil of your grace.
Nurture us with the strength of Christ,
the vine of everlasting life.
Enlighten us with the wisdom of your Spirit,
which flows through us today and all days.
Abide in us, that we may abide in you
and live in your love.
In your holy name, we pray. Amen.**

TIME WITH YOUNG DISCIPLES

***GOSPEL LESSON** *John 15:1-8*

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ² He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³ You have already been cleansed 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 my disciples.

Leader: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!

MESSAGE

Being Pruned & Bearing Fruit

In today's Gospel lesson, Jesus is using a metaphor to explain what the expectations are for his disciples. I'm sure we've all heard this passage many times throughout our lives, and the beauty of the Word of God is that it is alive and active and continues to speak to our hearts and minds no matter how often we've heard it IF we are open to learning from and growing with the help of the Holy Spirit.

To recap the story in simple terms:

1. God is the vinegrower...God is the one who tends the vine
2. Jesus is the vine...the one who is the source of nourishment for the branches
3. Jesus' disciples (us) are the branches
4. In order for the branches to bear fruit, they must remain connected to the source of life

5. Branches that bear fruit are pruned in order to bear even more fruit
6. Branches that do not bear fruit are cut off
7. As the fruit-bearing branches spend more and more time abiding/being connected to the vine (Jesus), they will bring glory to God the Father.

In verses 4-7 the word "abide" appears 8 times! The Gospel of John places great value in abiding in Christ. Jesus himself makes it clear that our relationship with Him – our abiding in Him – is the key both to our fruitfulness and to our destiny. We find our strength and purpose through our relationship with Jesus.

Let's take a moment to listen to Ramah's Story about her love relationship with Jesus.

Journeys: Ramah's Story:
<https://youtu.be/zSH6CxY0TVI>

Ramah has experienced many different types of loves in her life, as we all do, but the one love that gives her assurance and peace is the love of Jesus. She even feels secure enough to express her doubts, knowing that she is loved through it all. That's what abiding in Christ does for us.

I found a beautiful definition of "abiding places" – places where one is deeply at home. One question to ask ourselves is "Where is my abiding place? Where do I feel deeply at home?" When I was a child, one of my abiding places was up in a tree reading a book. And my favorite times spent in the tree was when my dad would join me. He would bring the book he was reading at the time, and we'd sit up in the tree on different branches, reading our books...we didn't talk, we were just together.

If I asked myself “Where is my abiding place?” today, I wouldn’t name a specific place, I would name moments in time: when I’m resting in my Savior, our family dinners, the times when we, as a church family, are pulling together for the sake of the world and the glory of God. One example of this is our zoom Evening Prayers...that is a place where I feel deeply at home...the closeness...the sharing...the checking in on each other...it’s so beautiful...ZOOM Evening Prayers is still happening...tomorrow we’ll begin our 56 week of praying together four nights a week!

The imagery of the vine is an intimate imagery. Jesus, as the vine, gives life to the branches...the branches are intertwined...in a grape vine, one cannot tell where one branch begins and another ends.

What is one branch’s duty to another branch? Disciple to disciple – to love each other. It is the vinegrower’s (God’s) responsibility to prune the branches...our responsibility is to love each other through the pruning, which can be painful. Pruning renews the vine’s vitality. Sometimes, when God prunes us, He removes relationships or activities from our lives that inhibit growth in our relationship with Jesus...yet God works to mold us, to shape us, to shape our lives in such a way that we rise up to be the best we can be for the glory of God.

It has been suggested that as the Body of Christ we need to pay attention to the ministries of our church, and ask ourselves on a regular basis: is this ministry life giving? Does it promote growing closer to Christ? If we answer “no” to either of these questions, are we willing

to let go of that ministry, so that a more vibrant one can replace it?

Another responsibility we have as a branch (disciple) is to stay connected to the vine (Jesus). Abiding in Jesus connects us to the source of power to do the work for which we have been created. Ephesians 2:10 states, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Eph. 2:10) We are God's handiwork...we are works of art crafted by the Creator. Turn to your neighbor and say, "You are a work of art crafted by the Creator." (Online friends...look in a mirror or call someone.) It is crucial that we intentionally connect to Jesus every day, as this connection shapes the way we pray...it shapes the way we live. When we abide in Christ through meditating on God's Word and praying and practicing other Christian Spiritual Disciplines, we are inviting the Holy Spirit to continue creating us...forming us more and more in the image of Christ, so that we will bear much fruit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control." (Gal. 5:22-23a)

Fruit in Jesus' day was an important source of food, it was an important source of income. A good fruit bearing tree was a blessing to the owner. Good trees gave life. Bad trees brought impoverishment.

The purpose of fruit-bearing for us, as disciples of Jesus Christ, is to bring glory to God. The phrase "bear fruit" occurs 6 times in these 8 verses. This is a phrase that John wants to stick in our minds. Fruit bearing is not something that can happen in a forceful way...it happens organically...naturally...when we abide in Christ,

when we stay connected to the source of life and power. If people look at our lives and praise US for the glorious fruit, something is wrong...red flag, red flag...the whole purpose is to glorify God.

What about the branches that do not bear fruit? What might that look like within a Body of believers? What does it even look like for a branch not to bear fruit?

I would like to suggest that branches that do not bear fruit are people who claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ, but do not abide in Him...do not spend time growing through the Word and prayer. Branches that do not bear fruit are people who come to church week after week to complain, or be negative about something, who have lost sight of who they are in Christ. They don't serve for one reason or another. Their excuses may be valid or not. The truth is that there is no real future in focusing on the fruitless branches. And, again, our responsibility to the fruitless branches is to love them. It is God's good work to prune and cut off branches...that is not our work...our work is to simply love them.

The biggest question for today is....SO WHAT?! How is this applicable to the life we share here at Woodmar and in our community? I'm so glad you asked!

Being a disciple of Jesus isn't just a "nice thing" we do. It's a combination of abiding in Christ and faithfully living by example. The two must go hand in hand:

- It's sitting at the feet of Jesus letting him love on us and mentoring a child
- It's reading, studying & meditating on God's Word, and standing up for racial equality...like we're doing through the Literacy Project and

bringing miniUP! To Jefferson Elementary in the Fall.

- It's praying, and stepping up to lead a small group study
- It's fasting, and shopping for food for the Blessing Box and food pantry
- It's worshiping, and stepping up to serve as a greeter on Sunday mornings
- It's abiding in Christ and rolling up our sleeves to do the joyful, hard work of serving as we are called to serve. All of us...not just a few of us...all of us.

Friends, fellow disciples of Jesus, we were created to proactively produce much fruit...not to just sit on the sidelines watching life happen. Today, we will gather around the Lord's Table.....Celebrating Holy Communion together is an important part of abiding in Christ...we will remember how Jesus completely poured out his life for love...completely poured out his life so that we might be beloved children of God, who are called and sent to make a difference in the world. Thanks be to God. Amen.

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another. Therefore, let us confess our sin before God and one another.

CONFESSION AND PARDON

Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church.

We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy.

Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All pray in silence.

Leader: Hear the good news:
Christ died for us while we were yet sinners;
that proves God's love toward us.
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

People to leader:
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

ALL: Glory to God. Amen.

***THE PEACE**

***THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
Always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.
You formed us in your image and breathed into us the
breath of life, When we turned away, and our love failed,
your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from
captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God,
brought us to a land flowing with milk and honey, and set
before us the way of life.

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of
heaven we praise your name and join their unending
hymn: **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and
might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in
the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.
By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection
You gave birth to your Church,
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,
and made with us a new covenant by water and the
Spirit. By your great mercy we have been born anew to a
living hope through the resurrection of your Son from the
dead and to an inheritance that is imperishable,
undefiled, and unfading. Once we were no people, but
now we are your people, declaring your wonderful deeds
in Christ, who called us out of darkness into his
marvelous light. When the Lord Jesus ascended, he
promised to be with us always, in the power of your Word
and Holy Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread,

Gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

On the day you raised him from the dead he was recognized by his disciples in the breaking of the bread, and in the power of your Holy Spirit your Church has continued in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup.

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final

victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. **Amen.**

And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray the prayer Jesus taught His disciples:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

BREAKING THE BREAD

Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The cup over which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

The Body of Christ broken for you. Eat and be thankful. Thanks be to God. Amen!

The blood of Christ shed for you. Drink and be thankful. Thanks be to God. Amen!

MUSICAL MEDITATION

Tranquility

Lawrence

PRAYER

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

***CLOSING SONG**

Lord I Need You

Verse 1: Lord, I come, I confess.
Bowing here, I find my rest.
And without You, I fall apart.
You're the one that guides my heart.

Chorus: Lord, I need You, oh, I need You.
Every hour I need You.
My one defense, my righteousness;
Oh, God, how I need You.

Verse 2: Where sin runs deep, Your grace is more.
Where grace is found is where You are.
And where You are, Lord, I am free.
Holiness is Christ in me
Where You are, Lord, I am free.
Holiness is Christ in me.
Where You are, Lord, I am free.
Holiness is Christ in me.

Chorus: Lord, I need You, oh, I need You.
Every hour I need You.

My one defense, my righteousness;
Oh, God, how I need You.

Bridge: So, teach my song to rise to You
when temptation comes my way.
And when I cannot stand, I'll fall on You.
Jesus, You're my hope and stay.
And when I cannot stand, I'll fall on You.
Jesus, You're my hope and stay.

Chorus: Lord, I need You, oh, I need You.
Every hour I need You.
My one defense, my righteousness;
Oh, God, how I need You.

Chorus 2: Lord, I need You, oh, I need You.
Every hour I need You.
My one defense, my righteousness;
Oh, God, how I need You.
My one defense, my righteousness;
Oh, God, how I need You.

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***BENEDICTION**

Woodmar and online friends...who are you? I am a beloved child of God, called and sent to make a difference in the world. Yes! That is who we are! We are created to abide in Christ so that we might live out God's holy purposes each and every day!

May the blessing of God Almighty, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, be with us today and remain with us forever. Amen.

***POSTLUDE**

Suite Gothique

Boellmann