



SERIES: Walking with Jesus
SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD
Saturday, December 23, 2023
Scripture: John 15:1-2; 7-8
TITLE: The Source for Life and Purpose

One of the dreaded parts of the holiday season for me is the checking of the lights. Each year I go to decorate the tree or put lights on the house. But before I do, I'm reminded by my wife to make sure the string of lights is working. Inevitably two things happen: first, I plug the string in, and it exposes the working lights. The other thing that happens is I think I plug the lights in but don't, so no light appears.

This is a lot like people's relationship with God today. Many people aren't experiencing the life God promises because they're not plugged into Him. Others may be on the string but aren't actually producing any light. Why is this? Jesus gives us the answer in John 15:1-2 (CSB).

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit.”

These are some tough words from Jesus. Jesus declares himself as the true vine. He is the source of spiritual life. Apart from Christ, we are spiritually dead. Just like my Christmas lights when not plugged in. God is the gardener who oversees who is plugged, who isn't, and who are the dead bulbs.

What is Jesus saying when God removes the unproductive branches? According to D.A. Carson, “The transparent purpose of the verse is to insist that there are no true Christians without some measure of fruit. Fruitfulness is an infallible mark of true Christianity; the alternative is dead wood, and the exigencies of the vine metaphor make it necessary that such wood be connected to the vine.¹”

As James said, faith without works is dead. Saving faith works. That is what Jesus is saying. He's not saying that if people stop producing works, God removes them. He's not saying that Christians can lose their salvation. He's saying those who are in the true vine will be pruned by God to produce more fruit. Then Jesus continues by saying,

¹ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 515). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples.” (John 15:7-8)

So if we are Christians who engage in God’s Word and live it out, does that mean no matter what we ask God for, He will give it like a genie?

No. King David said in Psalm 37:4, “Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart’s desires.” When we delight in the Lord and embrace Jesus’ message, our lives and desires will be conformed to His. This results in effective prayer and healthy fruit in works.

So here’s my challenge for you today: prune. What is it in your life that needs some pruning? What is it in your life that is taking away from your time, treasure, and talent? What is it that is detracting you from pursuing God’s Kingdom? Prune it and begin producing fruit like never before.

When we are connected to the true vine, we will win the day.