

## **I AM THE TRUE VINE**

**2 MAY 2021**

### **Today's reading - John 15:1-8**

Jesus said to his disciples: <sup>1</sup>I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup>He cuts away every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit. But he trims clean every branch that does produce fruit, so that it will produce even more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You are already clean because of what I have said to you.

<sup>4</sup>Stay joined to me, and I will stay joined to you. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit unless it stays joined to the vine, you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me. <sup>6</sup>If you don't stay joined to me, you will be thrown away. You will be like dry branches that are gathered up and burned in a fire.

<sup>7</sup>Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you. Then you can pray for whatever you want, and your prayer will be answered. <sup>8</sup>When you become fruitful disciples of mine, my Father will be honoured.

### **Background**

In John's Gospel there are seven sayings of Jesus that start "I am ...". Last Sunday the reading included another of these sayings: I am the Good Shepherd. John was very careful in the way he constructed his Gospel and chose to report the seven sayings because 7 was the number that signified completion. For the same reason he reported seven signs (or miracles) of Jesus.

He also points beyond the words themselves by using *I am* as the introduction to each of Jesus' sayings. We probably miss the point because *I am* is the natural and obvious way to start such a sentence. But to a first century Jew *I am* was one of the ways of describing God without mentioning his sacred and holy name. In fact *I am* is the way God described himself when he spoke to Moses out of the burning bush: *Tell the Egyptians that I am has sent you* (Exodus 3:14). So there is no doubt that Jesus, by using these words, claimed for himself an essential attribute of God.

### **Looking at the reading**

Notice that Jesus doesn't claim identity with God - in his picture of himself as the vine, God is the gardener and ensures the health of individual branches as well as of the tree as a whole. Since the purpose of a vine is to produce fruit, branches without fruit have to be cut off.

But from verse 4 onwards the reading stresses the intimacy between Jesus and those who wish to follow him. The vine and the branches become so closely connected that they can't be separated. The climax is the instruction: *Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you* (v7a). As a result Christians can be sure and safe in their prayers (v7b). They become fruitful and honour God (v8).

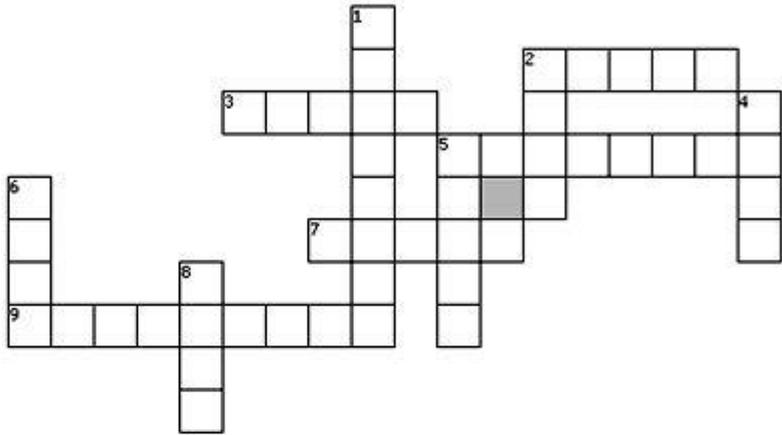
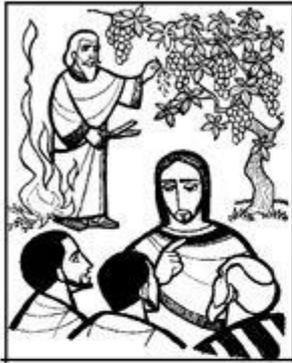
### **To think about**

- In what ways is the picture of Jesus as the True Vine helpful? Is God's role as the gardener consistent with other ideas about him?
- How do you feel about the concept of Christians as branches of the vine, and the resulting intimacy with Jesus?
- What about the need for pruning healthy branches, and cutting off those that bear no fruit?
- In what ways should Christians seek to be fruitful?
- How might Christians adopt fruitfulness above secular measures of success such as wealth, status, power, celebrity etc?
- What might God want you to take to heart from this passage?



# The True Vine

John 15:1-8 (NIV)



## ACROSS

2. The part of a vine or tree which is eaten
3. Not dirty
5. A person who works with plants and flowers
7. To toss something through the air
9. Those who follow Jesus

## DOWN

1. Arms that grow out from the trunk of a tree
2. Burning flame
4. The opposite of false
5. Praise or honor
6. Something that is spoken
8. A plant that climbs or creeps along the ground

true	fruit	clean	fire
vine	word	glory	disciples
gardener	branches	throw	

P	L	E	N	W	T	E	Y	E	P
Y	O	G	O	E	N	U	R	P	S
T	L	R	N	T	H	R	O	W	N
N	D	I	S	C	I	P	L	E	S
E	V	R	U	F	R	O	G	L	Y
L	S	T	I	U	R	F	E	S	F
P	A	R	N	I	A	M	E	R	R
T	E	E	F	R	O	C	U	A	I
O	S	O	B	H	U	T	I	E	U
E	H	C	N	A	R	B	A	B	T

VINE BRANCH FRUIT PRUNES  
 WORD HOME PLENTY THROWN  
 FIRE BURNT GLORY DISCIPLES



