

(PP1) Becoming human- giving glory x 38 Sunday 23 September_2018.

Background text READ *John 15:1 - 17: Allegory of the Vine.*

This allegory of the VINE is used again and again in the Bible, over thousands of years of history to tell the story of God's relationship with his people. Allegories are found in the Bible, such as the extended metaphor in [Psalm 80](#) of the [Vine](#) and its impressive spread and growth, representing Israel's conquest and peopling of the Promised Land. (Isaiah also speaks of the unfruitful vineyard and the Vinedresser's care. Also the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hosea use the metaphor).

As a [literary device](#), an **allegory** is a [metaphor](#) in which a character, place or event is used to deliver a broader message about real-world issues and occurrences. Allegory has occurred widely throughout history in all forms of [art](#), largely because it can readily illustrate or convey complex ideas and concepts in ways that are comprehensible or striking to its viewers, readers, or listeners.

Writers or speakers typically use allegories as [literary devices](#) or as [rhetorical](#) devices that convey (semi-)hidden or complex meanings through [symbolic](#) figures, actions, imagery, or events, which together create the moral, spiritual, or political meaning the author wishes to convey.

This year we are exploring what it means to become truly, fully human and to bring glory to God. (In such a statement we are already linking together in relationship God and human beings as an essential truth about what we want to say about being human).

I have already spoken using the metaphor God the Potter and Human Clay Pots and the metaphor of us as the vessels in God's Household. **Metaphors and other devices** e.g. Parables are used throughout the Bible to illustrate truths about God and God's relationship with people.

Today we are focussing on the allegorical metaphor of the VINE in John 15 used by JESUS to speak about relationship, community, thriving and wellbeing as humans in relationship with God.

Jesus describes himself as the True Vine – the authentic vine as opposed to Israel which has so often turned out in nature and behaviour not to be the true **stock** and generally UNFRUITFUL. He describes those who are linked to him as the **branches** that grow out of the vine. God the Father is pictured as the **vinedresser**, the one who cares daily for and nurtures and prunes the vine with one purpose in mind – to produce **more fruit for the glory and praise of the vinedresser**. (The stock is the main part of the vine located between the soil and the first branches. We the branches have grown out of the stock or been grafted in – scion. *Romans – Gentile scion*).

In the agricultural economy of Jesus' day everyone would have understood what Jesus meant when he talked about the vine. We have to work a little harder to grasp his meaning. We understand national flowers like the rose for England or the Yellow Trumpet for Nigeria – well Israel's emblem was the Vine. God's comment on Israel was that all too often there was no fruit or just sour fruit – despite all his loving care as. But

God had predicted that from the stump or stock of Jesse a shoot would grow – the promised Messiah. **On Jesus' final night before his betrayal he spoke to his Disciples about the vine and fruitfulness.**

He spoke to the Disciples of the necessity of remaining in organic relationship to himself and living in community relationship with other followers. He warned that unless this happened they would bear no fruit, would wither, die and be broken of and discarded. The lessons of the Vine are very simple but absolutely essential. They must be understood in our minds and hearts or there will be no fruit and God's people will die.

The teachings of JESUS v2 *make us clean* – as with the vine the cleaning out, the stripping back wrong ideas and confusions (of generations and cultural accretions to God's truth) prepares us to grow and become fruitful. They will as Jesus is recorded as teaching prepare us for the time when God's truth is disputed, and we may face persecution. We must not embrace just a cultural expression of faith we must remain in the person of Jesus.

Here in relationship to Jesus and together with others also in relationship we will experience wellbeing and bear fruit. (Genesis humanity's blessing: be fruitful and multiply. Take care of the earth).

Commentators have disputed whether **the fruit spoken of here refers to fruitful** characteristics and experiences (*cf Galatians 5: 22, 23*) here spoken of specifically in terms of love and joy, or fruitful lips – here spoken of as in terms of effective prayer, or fruit in terms of offspring – others coming to personal faith in Jesus as Christ. **My opinion is that in this allegory “fruitfulness” is not narrowly defined – it describes wellbeing and the blessings of life which include multiplication. All these things are in the accounts of the Bible fruitful human things.** Communities of love, the experience of joy from the fruit of the vine, fruitful lips singing praises and praying to God, the birth of offspring, others added to the community are all expressions of the Kingdom of God on earth – the King's will being done and fruitful lives of wellbeing resulting.

READ Verses 16 and 17 add a real poignancy to what Jesus is saying. (Week of Prayer 2017) This is not just a matter of our choosing, but JESUS has chosen this way for us as humans to be a part of the living, growing, fruit bearing thing he is doing. Also we have been chosen to **GO and bear fruit** – this expands the metaphor – we are rooted in history but the VINE is NOT ROOTED IN PLACE. There are aspects of bearing fruit that relate to going to others and telling the Good News of Jesus. There is the need for prayer “in Jesus Name” within a practical relationship of laying down our lives for one another. This doesn't relate to spending all our time positively stroking one another's egos but getting on with being fruitful together. There is to be a growing fruitfulness in: being in the vine, doing and telling.

The **Happiness Course (Livability)** which we will be offering in a few weeks time is about exploring both wellbeing and being community. This allegory of the Vine used by Jesus happens to be about both wellbeing and community.

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Jesus (the vine stock) is distinct from the vine's branches but he is talking to his Disciples about being in community with himself and the Father God and other believers. He is talking about experiencing joy if we seek to bring fruitful lives and glory to God the vinedresser. He is talking about working out the command of mutual love – love one another.

V15 He is talking about **sharing friendship with God. Listening to God.**

JESUS is talking about all of us learning to live happier and more fulfilled lives – even if the conditions and climate are severe. Jesus is talking about the sacrifices and loss in life that speak of pruning for a greater fruitfulness.

Human fruitfulness is what we were created for – to know joy and love in relationship to God and other human beings. What fruitfulness are you experiencing?

HOW ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT YOUR LIFE - yourself? Wherever you are in your view of yourself, whatever your mind and heart state – are you growing to a deeper experience of wellbeing and community friendships? Is your prayer fruitful and are you sharing Good News with others.

Closing: JESUS said – ***by their fruit you will know them – (Sermon on the Mount Matthew 7: 15- 20).***

V18 A healthy tree will bear good fruit... the Vine Jesus is full of health – wellbeing, life...the true vine stock is Jesus who gives us our identity and fruitfulness.