

Old School: Abiding, John 15:1-5, 3/29/20

Now when I think Old School, I think about mixed tapes. I used to love making mixed tapes back in the day. Now for those under 25 or over 70 that might not know what I'm talking about, the way you made a mixed tape was by listening to the radio all day and when the DJ played a song you liked, you would quickly run over to your stereo and hit the record button and time it to stop at just the right time...annoyingly sometimes the DJ would talk over the end of the song. This was the most advanced musical technology out in the 80s and early 90s that we had. Now the mixed tape was the way you told a girl you really liked her. Hey girl, I made you this mixed tape...Nothing says, "I'm into you" more than Chicago's "Your My Inspiration", followed by Boys II Men. Now my Old school might not be nearly as old school as yours.

Records, 8-Track, tapes, CDs, iPods, music-streaming will come and go with advancements in technology. But there's another kind of Old School that is timeless, classic. There is an Old School that never seems to grow old, fade away or lose its effect. Songs like Sweet Caroline from 1969 will have Gen Z kids singing at the top of their lungs as if it was from their generation. Hymns like Amazing Grace have a kind of staying power that transcends cultural, technological or stylistic shifts in worship music.

Our Christian faith is this kind of Old School. In uncertain, ever-shifting days like the ones we find ourselves in where the world is frantically chasing something that will make them feel more secure, there is no better time to anchor our lives in the Old School spiritual practices of our faith. The biblical, time-tested, rock solid spiritual rhythms of life that God has given his people to thrive throughout the centuries, throughout ups and downs, during disaster and prosperity, times of suffering and of plenty.

And so for the next several weeks we are going Old School. You want to not just survive but thrive in this season of life? Build these 6 ancient, timeless spiritual practices into the rhythms of your life.

The first Old School Practice is Abiding. Open your Bibles to John 15, this may be a familiar passage to you...and sometimes what happens with familiar passages is we tend to think of them as elementary, and so we move on from the simple and familiar, thinking the key to the Christian life is learning new things, different things and more complicated things. But the opposite is actually true. It is the simple, classic, Old School, truths that make up the Christian life.

John 15:1-5

¹ I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

⁴ Abide in me, and I will abide in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must abide in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you abide in me.

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

Here's where we are headed today with this passage:

The Symbol of Abiding

The Secret to Abiding

The Snares of Not Abiding

The Symbol of Abiding

Jesus shares a simple analogy that a 1st century agrarian society would have understood clearly. Let me touch on this briefly to make sure we understand, since most of us haven't grown up in a society that grows and picks its own fruit, fruit doesn't grow at Wegmans.

Jesus in this analogy is the vine. The vine is the source of life, of water, of nutrients, of support and stability for the branches that grow fruit.

We are the branches. Those who have trusted Christ, who trust in the work of Jesus for salvation, not our own good works or merit. We are the branches who must be vitality connected to the vine for our life. And our goal is to bear fruit, in fact 6x bearing fruit is referenced as the goal in this passage. Bearing fruit is Christ-likeness in us and through us into the world so that the world would know Jesus. Jesus is our true source of spiritual vitality and fruit-bearing. Now we will come back to that relationship but there is a third character in this symbol.

God the Father is the gardener. The Father tends to the vine in two ways. 1) He cuts off branches that are taking nutrients away from the branches that are alive and bearing fruit, I see this as the Father's protective care in our lives. 2) He prunes the branches. What appears to the untrained eye as harmful and painful, is actually pruning. A gardener that is cutting away overgrowth, thorns, anything that doesn't allow the branches to get the vital sun...it looks like a disaster after its all done- leaves and branches and fruit all over the place, it's all scarred up...but the gardener has removed everything that was keeping the branches from maximum fruitfulness. You see what Jesus is telling us in this symbol? **If the goal of our lives in Christ is maximum fruitfulness we must expect the pruning of the Father.**

See, we all want the fruit, but we don't want the pruning. Fruit is sweet, pruning is painful. In some way, we are all experiencing a pruning process right now.

If the Father's goal in our lives is maximum fruitfulness, are you aligned with his goals for you? Or are you chasing your own goals? Isn't it amazing how quickly the things that this world tells you are the goals of this life can go away? Success! Career! Money! Comfort! Stability! Health! Coronavirus can take it all away within weeks. What if your health is compromised or you lose your job in this season but through that experience, God cuts away false securities and things that don't matter and you grow in Christ-like patience, love and hope? What if this social

distancing and sheltering has painfully cut away some relationships in your life, but you realize that those were unhealthy relationships and that God is actually pruning them out of your life so that you can produce more fruit? Has it been a success? Absolutely. Now that we understand the symbolism, lets look at the...

The Secret to Abiding

The secret is found in this repeating word “remain” or “abide” repeated by Jesus 5 times in just these few verses. This is the Greek word- **“Meno”** which means to **Attach**.

The branches successfully produce fruit when they MENO.... they attach to the vine. Now let’s not overthink this. That’s what branches are supposed to do right, they stay...no one has to teach that to the branch. They just hang in there and the vine and gardener make sure it produces the fruit.

What is Jesus trying to tell us about the secret to producing fruit? To growing in our spiritual lives and being productive? **The secret is attaching to Jesus!** In that vital relationship with Christ. All we have to do is stay connected, dependently trusting in Him for everything and he does it all. We hang in there for our growth, to overcome sin, to teach us, to sustain our needs, to make known his will, to give us peace... And Jesus does the rest, he produces the fruit... Our relationship with Jesus is a little bit like skydiving with an instructor. You are literally strapped to the instructor he has the parachute, he does all the work, you just hang in there by faith that he’s going to get you there safely.

It’s so simple...It’s Old School. No tricks, no new strategies and fads and gimmicks, no 10 step processes. Jesus is saying just stay connected, that’s all I’m asking, I’ll take care of what the rest...but... we overcomplicate it sometimes...it is exactly what our enemy, Satan would love to do to make us unfruitful. Because he knows that if you just abide in Him, stuffs gonna happen. Your marriage might begin to heal, you might start winning the battle of that addiction to alcohol or pornography. You might stop getting anxious about the Coronavirus. You might start seeing love and joy and peace... you might start getting excited about your faith and wanting to tell others about it. He can’t have that. And so he distracts, overcomplicates, deceives so that we become unfruitful. This leads us to

The Snares of NOT Abiding Two of them.

Snare #1 We attach to counterfeit vines.

Some of us have chosen counterfeit vines to attach ourselves to in order to find life. We turn to false securities, false joys and comforts and hopes that make us feel like we have the good life. Job, spouse, friend, a relationship, beauty, our kids, education, popularity, money, drugs and alcohol. All of which cannot hold the weight, like a tree branch that snaps off in a storm, the storms of life reveal just how fake, fragile and untrustworthy our counterfeit vines are.

Jesus says- I’m the TRUE vine. Are you attached to the true vine? He’s the only one that can carry the weight, and the only one that gives life. How do I know if there are counterfeits?

Now Monday on Facebook Live at 10am I am going to give you some questions you can ask yourself to discover if you have counterfeit vines and what they might be. We won't be doing a Facebook live today after the service, moving that to Mondays.

Snare #2 We think we can bear fruit on our own.

A branch doesn't say, "I'm gonna make some fruit!" Let me try really hard. It doesn't say, I got this vine, let me do it. In fact, Jesus gives this illustration here. He says, imagine how pathetic it would be if a branch on the ground thinks it is going to bear fruit, unattached to the vine...he can try all day, trust me, nothing's going to happen. And this is how so many Christians try to live the Christian life. We try really hard by following a moral code, religious efforts, do the right things, thinking that through them we are more like Jesus and more loved and accepted by him. This is Plastic fruit duck taped to trees. It doesn't work... It just burns us out, gives us false pride, false security. But most deceptive of all...It doesn't have the power to change our sinful hearts. Fan illustration...

See the gospel is not just believe in Jesus to go to heaven. The gospel is that we lay down our feeble attempts to save ourselves, to spiritually merit anything before God, to grow ourselves, and that Jesus is the one whose merits and work and life save us, and it is through our relationship with Jesus that we experience his power, his transformation in our lives, produce spiritual fruit. He changes our hearts' desires, he works with a power through us...turn on the fan.

Church, return to the **Old School basics of the Christian life of abiding**. You want a healthy emotional life? Connect it to vine, How do I have a healthy marriage? Connect it to Jesus, How do I have a healthy family? Connect it to Jesus, Friendships? Connect...

A prayer to pray everyday:

"LORD- I believe that in Christ, there is nothing I could do to make You love me more; nothing I have done that makes You love me less. You are all I need today for everlasting joy and security. (Goes to war against our counterfeit vines). Help me, through your Holy Spirit, to abide in you today to fight sin and bear fruit (Goes to war against our feeble "self fruit-bearing" tendencies)."

Giving:

James 1:17-18

⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸ He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

In light of what God has done for us, giving us life- let's give back to him. Let us pass the virtual offering plate by reminding you two ways you can give on the screen.

Prayer