

STRINESTOWN SON

Volume 1 / Issue 1

FROM THE DESK OF PASTOR JODY

Hello All! Welcome to the first edition of the Strinestown SON. No we aren't going to compete with the York Dispatch or the Patriot News, but we decided that just because we can't be together physically, we are still together SPIRITUALLY. Our social connection is the best one of all; we are ONE in Jesus, joined together across space and time through the power of HIS SPIRIT!

So, as you know we will not be together physically at worship until at least April. We are continuing to monitor the situation of the spread of the Corona Virus and will make decisions going forward in keeping with state and federal guidelines. Our biggest concern right now is that all of us and our families are safe and healthy, which means physical distance. We have been working on some creative ways for us to stay connected as the family of God at Strinestown Church and this is one of the things God has shown us. So here goes!

It is important that although we are physically separated, we do not want to become socially and spiritual isolated. There are a few things we CAN do even though we are staying at home.

1. Pray! Yes it seems like a no brainer, but we really do need to bring all of our concerns big and small before the Lord. "For NOTHING is impossible with GOD" (Luke 1:37)
2. Stay connected! Call, text, email...whatever works for you; stay connected with your family, friends, neighbors and our church family. There is strength in numbers! "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A Cord of three strands is not quickly broken." (Ecc. 4:12)
3. Focus what we CAN control! There is a lot right now that may feel out of control. Limit the amount of news and media you are watching or listening to. Be aware of what is going on but stay focused on what you can do to stay safe, stay connected and trust that GOD is in CONTROL! There is nothing happening that HE does not already know about. "Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord Almighty is with us: the god of Jacob is our fortress" (Ps. 46:10-11)
4. If possible, get outside and enjoy the fresh air. A change of scenery is always good.

Announcements:

Holy Week Worship Schedule
(Pending)

Thursday, April 9 – Holy Thursday
Communion Service 7:00PM

Friday, April 10 - Good Friday Service –
2:00PM - Strinestown Church will be
hosting the Manchester Ministerium
Community Good Friday Service this
year.

Saturday, April 11

Joint Easter Egg Hunt @ The Church @
10AM

Sunday, April 12

Easter Sunrise Service – 7:00 AM

Easter Worship Service – 9:15AM

Here is a brief devotional that I read this week (March 18);

“Trust me one day at a time. This keeps you close to me, responsive to my will. Trust is not a natural response, especially for those who have been deeply wounded. My Spirit within you is your resident Tutor, helping you in this supernatural endeavor. Yield to his gentle touch; be sensitive to His prompting

Exert your will to trust Me in all circumstances. Don't let your need to understand distract you from my presence. I will equip you to get through this day victoriously as you live in deep dependence on Me. Tomorrow is busy worrying about itself; don't get tangled up in its worry-webs. Trust me one day at a time” (From Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence by Sarah Young)

AMEN!

So stay connected to the Lord and to each other. Check on neighbors and loved ones who may be alone. If you need someone to pick up groceries, prescriptions, etc. please call me (Pastor Jody) 717.332.4804 or Tina S. 717.495.0663.

God is in control and he will NEVER leave us or forsake us!

Sunday's Message from Pastor Jody:

We are continuing our series about Relationship. This week we are looking at our relationship to Jesus our Life source and our relationships with each other. We have hope because of the Spirit of Christ within us!

Call to Worship:

Show me your way, O God, my Shepherd. Open a right path and let me hear your call to follow. Show me your way, O Christ, my Healer. Open my eyes to the needs of my world.

Series: It's all about Relationship!

“Of ONE Vine”

John 15: 5-17

When Cole and I were dating and first married, his youngest brothers still lived at home. I can remember some occasions when there was some kind of disagreement and I would tell Cole's mom that I was going to buy her a referee's shirt! She seemed to always be sending them in different directions to cool off!

We have all either experienced this or have seen a video of it somewhere. Siblings squabble...the last thing they want to be told is to love each other! Yet mom or dad may insist that they apologize and make up...of course the absolute worst punishment would be to hug each other and say I love you! They have the same roots, but they are very different people.

Sometimes as adults our relationships may become more difficult. We have the same biological roots, but our lives are very different. Somehow we need to find a way to navigate those differences. We may not be close to our siblings or other relatives, but we still need to respect them as people, even if we disagree with them at some level.

Our text today is similar, however Jesus is talking about a much deeper bond; something that goes beyond our biological connections. The bond we have as sisters and brothers in Christ is grounded in the Love we share as his followers. And Jesus gives his disciples and us some important instructions about what that Love for each other should look like!

The Vine and the Branches – It's all about Relationship, a relationship of LOVE!

Again, Jesus uses an everyday image to tell the disciples what it means to be in relationship with him...a simple vine and the branches – most likely in a vineyard...

The place of the section of scripture is in the middle of Jesus teaching on the Holy Spirit. What happened before this was the last supper and washing of feet. So Jesus is teaching his disciples about how to move forward without him – empowered by the Spirit.

1. Jesus' relationship with us – The vine is the life source of Love!

15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. **If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.** 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

Again, this is most likely a familiar passage for us. Like the sheep and shepherd last week, Jesus is once again talking about relationship. The use of the vine and branches is something we can relate to. But this picture goes a little deeper for us...Sheep were really smart animals, right? Not so much! They depended on the shepherd to lead them and take care of them.

The idea of a vine is a little different. Branches need to stay connected to the life source, the vine, to stay alive and produce a crop.

- Jesus makes a very true statement, apart from the vine branches can't do anything. So as his disciples, to remain connected to him meant acting as He does.
- Of course this is pre-crucifixion, so the disciples were still not sure what was going to happen.
- When Jesus ascends to the Father, the disciples will need a connection to the life source...which is the HOLY SPIRIT.

Apart from the life source of Jesus, His love and his Spirit, we can't do anything that effective for HIS kingdom!

- Jesus uses IF statements repeatedly here showing what happens when we stay connected to him and when we don't.
- The goal here is that disciples stay connected AND bear MUCH fruit for God's kingdom.

So There are a couple of things here that we need to think about as we look at our own relationship with Jesus and with each other.

- We need to check our motives. Are we “doing” good things apart from the life source and love of Jesus?
- Are we not bearing fruit at all?
- What does bearing fruit that will last mean for the rest of the body of Christ the Church?
- Are we loving each other enough to want to produce fruit that is good and not take away from what Jesus is doing?
- Are we careful about becoming unfruitful branches?
- Are we taking Jesus seriously that when we do remain connected to his Life source, that we can ask anything of him? Are we bearing good fruit for God's glory?

Jesus is using strong language here, but he goes on to say why. It's all about the relationship of love. Love for God, Love for him and love for each other.

9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 **I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.**”

Again Jesus uses the If statement....keep his commands and love will remain. He is our ultimate example of following God and being reconnected with HIS love.

- Loving God and keeping his commands means we need to do a couple of things.
- Know the commands in the first place – read the word!
- Connect with the life source – pray!
- These things help us to remain in the love of the Father through the son which in turn brings us incredible joy!
- Think about a time in your life when you took this seriously; how was your joy increased?

It is through this relationship of Love that we are connected as brothers and sisters in Christ himself.

2. Our relationship with each other in Christ – Love each other!

12 **“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.** 13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

This command was central to Jesus instructions to his disciples. He knew their personalities, their short coming and their strengths. He knew they were prone to squabble. But instead of being a referee, he gave them a command...LOVE EACH OTHER!

- The relationship has taken on a new direction. It has gone from the vertical connection between God and us to the horizontal, each other as branches of the same vine with the same life source.
- The Love for each other should follow HIS example...the willingness to sacrifice for each other.
- Jesus makes another important statement here. Not only are we branches, extensions of Him, bearing the fruit from the LIVING SPIRIT, but he calls His disciples his FRIENDS.
- How do you see yourself in relationship to Jesus? Are you willing to accept that he calls you his friend? What does that mean for our relationship with each other?

What Jesus says next should not only end our sibling squabbles in the Christian community but also give us a new appreciation of the command to LOVE EACH OTHER...

16 **“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”**

- Jesus chose each one of US! Just like the disciples, we are very different, we have different strengths and different spiritual gifts. But he has chosen and appointed US! To be his witnesses in a dark and hurting world.
- Like branches that are deeply rooted in the life source of the vine bear good fruit, when we are deeply rooted in our life source – JESUS – we WILL bear fruit through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

The Amplified bible says it this way:

Vs.16 **“... I have appointed and placed and purposefully planted you, so that you would go and bear fruit and keep on bearing, and that your fruit will remain and be lasting, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name [as My representative] He may give to you.”**

Jesus has called us and placed us here with a PURPOSE! That purpose is to bear fruit that reflects who is, the Vine, the LIFE SOURCE, the SOURCE OF LOVE!

- Not only will we produce fruit from our connection with Jesus, but that fruit will last into eternity!
- What does this kind of fruit look like? How do we know if we are producing what we are supposed to?

- This goes back to reading God’s word, praying, spending time with the family of God and finding ways to witness to our relationship with God to others...Mission!
- God isn’t interested in how much we do, but why we do it. This passage tells us that it is our connection to Jesus, the vine that is at the heart of what we do.
- The commandment that we have been given to go and make disciples (our mission) must be grounded in the love of God and wanting others to know and love him too! It’s all about a relationship of LOVE!

Because we are chosen and empowered, we may ask God through Jesus in prayer, according to HIS will, and he will answer.

- When we ask according to what Jesus teaches us, we go before the father as Jesus’ representative.
- Jesus gives us the ability to boldly enter God’s throne room and present our requests to the creator of the universe!
- Because of what Jesus has done for us in LOVE we can pray the prayer that never fails with confidence...“YOUR will be done”!

The final verse of this passage sums up everything that Jesus is saying to his disciples and to us.

Vs. 17 **“This [is what] I command you: that you love and unselfishly seek the best for one another.”**(AMP)

This passage begins with a story about a vine and branches. The branches are connected to the same thing. They are OF ONE VINE.

- Since the branches, Jesus’ disciples, have the same connection, they are to have a loving relationship with each other.
- This isn’t a nice thought or surface, casual care for other, but an unselfish love; love that is willing to die for the other as Jesus did; Love that seeks the best for one another.
- This relationship of Love isn’t a suggestion from Jesus but a COMMAND!

Since we are OF ONE VINE, we are there to Love Support and help each other grow in our relationship with Jesus and each other. This example of Love is attractive to a world that doesn’t see much love like this.

This passage is key to our life as Christians in community. We are to be in a relationship of Love . That relationship can only exist through being connected to the vine. John’s words in chapter 15 remind us of two very important points.

1. We must stay connect to the vine – we need to have a relationship with Jesus!
 - Our relationship needs to bear fruit
 - Jesus may need to “prune” some areas of our lives so that we remain focused on him
 - If we don’t bear fruit, we run the risk of being separated from the vine (Jesus) itself and becoming useless.
2. We are called to be in relationship with each other; commanded to have a relationship based in LOVE!
 - The Lord has chosen YOU! Not the other way around!
 - He chooses each one of us and given us a specific purpose and place to bear fruit.
 - If we find ourselves in a place of disagreement, we are reminded of Jesus COMMAND – to LOVE each other as HE has loved us!

Jesus calls us to be branches of his Spirit given the power to be the light of the relationship of love he offers to a sin sick and dying world. Jesus isn’t the referee of our “family squabbles,” he is the source of Love that grounds our relationships.

Where do you see yourself in this story? Is Jesus your LIFE SOURCE? Does being connected to him help you to Love each other as he has loved you?

If you are not sure how Jesus can use you to produce fruit, stop and pray right now. Remember he has given you the privilege to ask God in HIS name, the prayer that never fails... "THY WILL BE DONE"

It's all about Relationship – a relationship of LOVE!

Go Forth, woke to the call of God, your creator

Go Forth, true to the path lit by Christ, the true Vine and your redeemer

Go Forth, woke to the conscience of the Holy spirit, your helper and guide!

Be Bold in prayer – THY WILL BE DONE!