

# Do you believe in Jesus? *Really* believe him?

Message for Sunday, May 15, 2016  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** John 15:4-6; John 10:10

## Children's Message:

*Begin with a "miracle" finger, inserted through the hole in the bottom of a box.* Last fall I was clipping my fingernails, and I put the clippings into our compost pile (make sure they know what compost is). Yesterday I was digging in the garden near that compost, and I found this finger growing there! I guess it had lots of fertilizer to make it grow, and lots of rain this past week to make it grow even more. It was a very happy finger — see, it even has a happy face! (paint one on beforehand).

How many of you believe that story? Well, you're right, I was telling a tall tale. You know that a finger can't live by itself. And the moment you saw this finger in the box move, you knew it was one of my fingers. In order for a finger to be alive, it has to be attached to a living body.

Jesus said something similar, in the Bible passage we just heard. He said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Remain in me, and you will produce much fruit."

Jesus is telling us that we need to stay close to him in order to produce fruit in our lives.

Do you remember the fruit of the Spirit we talked about the last few Sundays? God the Holy Spirit grows these fruit in our lives — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. But it only happens when we stay close to Jesus.

A finger has to be part of the body if it's going to do any good. And we need to have Jesus alive in us, if we're going to do any good.

**Message** "Do you believe in Jesus? *Really* believe him?"

## 1) What if Jesus meant what he said?

Today is Pentecost Sunday. "Pentecost" was the name of a religious festival celebrated by Jews in the time of Jesus, similar to Passover. But it has a special significance for Christians, because that was

the occasion when the Holy Spirit was given to Jesus' followers.

Back in February and March, we read in the Bible how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of Christians to produce the fruit of the Spirit. We witnessed the power of God to bring love into relationships where there is none left to give, to bring peace to a person who is used to boiling over, and so on.

When Jesus talked about being filled with the Holy Spirit and being fruitful as a Christian, he put it this way:

**John 15:4-5, New Living Translation:**

"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful apart from me.

"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

That's a pretty bold statement.

You can take that as a the arrogant claim of someone whose ego is ten sizes too large. Or you can take it as a promise from someone who speaks with authority and with truth.

What would happen if you took Jesus at his word?

During the Depression, there was a family named Yates who ran a sheep ranch in Texas. Like so many others in the dustbowl, they did not have enough money to pay their mortgage, and had to rely on government subsidies to make ends meet. Every day was a worry, wondering how they would pay all the bills.

Then a drilling crew came to that area, and asked if they could drill a test well on their land. They thought there might be oil underground. The family signed a lease, and the drilling started.

At 1,115 feet, the oil came gushing out. As more wells were drilled, it became obvious that there was a huge oil reservoir directly underneath them. The well called Yates-30A came in at 200,000 barrels of oil per *day* — still the record for the biggest producing well in the world.

And the Yates family owned it all. They had the oil and mineral rights. They had been living on relief,

yet they were multi-millionaires. They owned all that oil with its tremendous potential, but they didn't realize it.

How often we are like that — thinking of ourselves as poor and helpless, unaware of the extraordinary power that we have available to us, which is lying just below the surface.

What would happen in your life if you took the promise of Jesus seriously? Let's go back and look at that passage again.

## 2) Living with Jesus every day

Verse 4: "Remain in me, and I will remain in you."

We hear a lot of talk about positive thinking. "Don't dwell on the negatives; focus on the positives."

Well, you can't get any more positive than Jesus Christ. He is the very source of the positives of this world. When Jesus Christ lives in you, it's more than simply having a new outlook on life. It's more like having a new life altogether.

There's a condition here, though. In order for Jesus to live in us, we have to do something first. We have to live in him. What that means to me is that we start the day with Jesus, walk with him all through the day, and close the day with Jesus. I'll give some examples how you can do this.

- When you wake up, before you jump out of bed, or listen to the news and the latest world disaster, take a few moments to talk with Jesus. "Lord, you've given me another brand new day! I don't know why you're so good to me, but I sure appreciate it. Jesus, I'd like to spend today with you. Let's have a date together: I'll show you where I go to work, let you see the kind of stuff I do, introduce you to some of my friends, and I'll read a bit more of your love-letter to me (the Bible)."
- Through the day, pause every now and then to pray, "Jesus, am I following you right now? Are you pleased with what I'm doing?"
- At the close of the day, take some time again to pray. Give thanks for how he worked through you today, touching other people. Ask forgiveness for your sins, and ask for help to not

do them again. Pray for your needs and for others. And then have a wonderful rest.

## 3) Without Jesus, there is no fruit

Verse 4: "For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful apart from me."

To really know how important this is, we need to read it beside verse 6:

John 15:6, New Living Translation:

"Anyone who parts from me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned."

When two people fall in love, they talk and get to know one another. It's an exciting time. Then they get married, they have children, work becomes more demanding... and pretty soon they're living with a stranger. The result is often divorce. It's not that they wanted a divorce, or planned how to get one. It's just the result of neglect in a relationship.

That's how we get cut off from Jesus. No one else does it. We do it to ourselves.

Jesus says that, when we are severed from him — in other words, living under our own power, trusting our own goodness — then we are not simply failing to bear fruit. The wood from a grape vine is soft; it can't be used in a woodstove to give any heat; it can't bear any weight; all it's good for is to be thrown in a bonfire and burned up. It's useless. And we are like that when we cut ourselves off from Jesus.

## 4) The promise of life and fruit

Verse 5: "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

I want my life to make a difference. I don't want to come to the end of my days, look back, and see that I've done nothing of any significance. And you know what? Jesus doesn't want that to happen to me, either. Jesus wants me to be fruitful in my life.

One of the reasons why people are unwilling to become a Christian is because they are afraid that life with Jesus in charge is going to be dull; that he will take away everything that is fun, and replace it

with drudgery. Nothing could be further from the truth. Listen to what Jesus said:

**John 10:10, New Living Translation:**

“I came to give life — life in all its fullness.”

Do you want your life to make a difference? Do you want to enjoy the good things that life has to offer? Do you want to be fruitful? The answer is very simple. Jesus says, “Remain in me.” I think you can phrase that as “Live in me,” “Abide in me,” “Focus on me” and so on.

That’s a promise.

### **Invitation to prayer:**

Or are you like a moth? Moths can never make up their minds. They are irresistibly drawn towards a flame; yet at the same time they fear the heat. Are you like that with God? You hunger for more meaning in your life... you want to meet God, to really know God as an intimate part of your life... you want to grow spiritually, so that you will have the inner strength to make a difference in the world. Yet you’re also afraid of giving yourself completely over to God.

All I can say is this: you’ll never know until you give God a chance. Why not just simply be open to all that God may have for you?

Are you open to God at all? Have you even made the first step of committing yourself to Jesus as Saviour and Lord? If not, then why not today?