

Remaining in Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] Well, hey, church family. I know most of us are snowed in right now, and we will get through this time. And I know it's a bit of an imposition, maybe. Not what we were expecting up until just a few days ago.

And so I want to just direct us for a few minutes, even though we can't gather together in person right now, if you're able to gather with us online this Sunday, or if you're able to go back and watch this later, then I want to draw your attention to John chapter 15. John chapter 15.

Jesus is talking about remaining, or your Bible might say abiding. And it's kind of the same word. This was a Greek word. Of course, we know the Bible was, the New Testament was written in Greek.

Old Testament largely written in Hebrew. And so even though we are grateful we now have an English Bible that we can read from easily, we sometimes want to go back and find what was that original word that was used.

Well, when we see this word remain or abide in John chapter 15 and verse 4, it was the Greek word meno. And what it meant was to abide, to remain, to stay, to dwell, or to continue.

[1 : 1 0] So kind of we get the full picture of what Jesus is trying to teach us here in John chapter 15. So as most of us are snowed in, the roads are closed, our plans have changed, or been postponed.

I know many of us had games. I was supposed to coach a game this Saturday. Of course, that got rescheduled. And whether we like it or not, we're being told we need to remain inside.

Sometimes we're telling ourselves, you need to remain inside. The roads may not be safe to travel, or whatever hazards this weather has brought our way is causing us to mostly stay inside for a couple of days.

So I've been thinking about this over these last couple days. And what if this idea of remaining is not an inconvenience, but it's an invitation?

And I think that's what Jesus was expressing to us here in John chapter 15. He says, I am the vine. You are the branches.

[2 : 2 1] Our two boys, Austin and Bo, have memorized that verse.

And occasionally in our family devotional time before we tuck them into bed, we'll have them say this verse along with some others. And I love how they do it. They say, It really emphasizes that idea that, look, apart from God, we can do nothing of true eternal value.

He is the access. He is the key that unlocks the eternal world. And we only get access to that through Jesus. So, Jesus is not raising his voice here.

He's not trying to challenge us into something big and bold. He's actually bringing it down to something quiet, something calm. It evokes the psalm that says, Be still and know that I am God.

He's not taking us on a guilt trip. He's just simply issuing a very basic command. Remain in me or abide in me.

[3 : 36] And then he reminds us, I'm the vine. You as the branch will grow from me. So, a branch is not doing the work itself.

It's growing out from the vine. That's why he says, You've got to remain attached to me. So, a branch, what does a branch do?

Its one job is to stay connected. So, whether we're stuck at home, or we're busy with our normal, usual weekday schedule, we have the same job.

To stay connected to the vine. And when we start doing that, focusing on that, then we find ourselves with less anxiety, less restlessness, our drive to go out and accomplish, it might change a little bit.

Our need to feel useful and productive, it might look a little different. When we're staying connected to the vine. That's going to be uncomfortable for many of us.

[4 : 46] Because being still, like the psalmist encouraged us to do, has a way of revealing the noise in our own hearts, the noise in our own minds that we usually try to quiet down and distract with everything else going on around us.

Sometimes that noise can drown out everything else. And that's the noise that Jesus wants to address directly. I'm thinking of Luke chapter 10 and the story of Mary and Martha.

Many of us who have been in church for most of our lives are familiar with this story. And if you're not, that's okay. Jesus went back to his hometown to visit some of his best friends, Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus.

And he comes into their house and it's a big party and everybody's having a great time and everybody's so excited to see him. And the two sisters, Mary and Martha, responded or reacted very differently to Jesus' visit.

Mary was so overjoyed at seeing the Son of God, whom they knew well, lifelong friends, come and visit her house that she just sat down and said, Jesus, I'm so glad you're here.

[5 : 54] Just teach me. I just want to listen to you. I want to listen to you talk. I don't want to miss a thing of this time with you, this experience. Martha, on the other hand, responded differently, didn't she?

She was so distracted by her task. And in chapter 10 of the Gospel of Luke in verse 38, it says, Martha was distracted by her many tasks, but Mary sat at the Lord's feet and was listening to what he said.

Martha wasn't being lazy. She was being responsible. She was serving Jesus. Isn't that what we're called to do? We're called to serve God? That's literally what Martha was trying to do in that moment.

Her heart was in the right place, and yet, her heart was also not in the right place. It missed what was most important. And that's what Jesus said to Martha.

It seems that he addressed her gently, and he said, Martha, Martha, you're worried, and you're upset about many things, but only one thing was truly necessary. And Mary chose that.

[6 : 57] She sat at my feet. Her heart was toward me. It wasn't just toward serving me. You know what's interesting there? Is you and I can get caught up in a lot of good things that can actually cause us to get disconnected from the vine.

It can cause us to stop abiding or remaining in Jesus. We can be so busy trying to keep all his commandments that we read in the scriptures, trying to do all the work that we feel like he's laid out for us to do, trying to keep up with all the things that God has given to us in our life that we forget that really the main pursuit is him.

It's a relationship with him. Mary chose that. She chose presence over productivity. Martha was so concerned with being productive, she missed just the presence of Jesus.

Mary chose abiding over activity. Martha was so caught up in I've got to go do something. I've got to get this all taken care of.

And some of us are just wired that way. Others, it's just easier to sit down and say, you know what? I'm just going to sit here right in this moment. I'm going to be with Jesus right now.

[8 : 14] I'm going to soak in everything that he has to teach me. Everything else can wait. So, Jesus doesn't shame Martha, but he invites her just like he invited all of us in this passage in John to rest in him, to abide in him, to remain in him, to stay connected in him.

And so maybe in your life, maybe there's been a time when you were connected very closely. Maybe you've gotten a little disconnected. And that's why Jesus says remain.

Stay there. Don't break the connection. The connection can always come back, but don't break it. Because if we want the fruit that will grow from God, we read about the fruit of the Spirit.

Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, patience. All these things that we need in our lives, our souls know we need them, our relationships know we need them, our spouse knows we need them, those in our life that interact with us on a daily basis, they know we need this fruit of the Spirit and we want it.

But often we don't see that fruit because we've become disconnected and we're not remaining. We're not abiding. So let's take advantage of this time, these snow days. I don't know if school's going to be canceled on Monday, I'm sure we'll know that soon, but listen, whatever our situation is in the next hours or days that come and then as we get back into regular life, let's abide in Him.

[9 : 47] Let's remain in Him. Slow our pace, soften those reactions, loosen our grip, hands open, eyes up, and God, teach me to abide.