



WESTMINSTER  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# “THE TRUE VINE”

John Galbreath  
Bible Study Series

Text: John 15:1-11  
Date: February 7, 1960

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on February 7, 1960.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (John 15:1-11).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would “fill in” the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

## I. Introduction

- A. On the front lectern are found the words, "I am the true vine."
- B. These words were chosen, for herein Christ summed up the relationship between himself and his followers.
- C. The heart of the New Testament is to be found in the 14th and 15th chapters of John -- words spoken by Jesus in his farewell talk with his disciples at the last supper.
  - 1. It is with these words that Jesus gives the meaning of the sacrament of the cup.

## II. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

- A. Stern words -- that except in Christ, we are spiritually sterile.
  - 1. So-called progress of our world, apart from spiritual values, nets no joy for the world.
    - a) *Education and science are two edge swords that can build or destroy*
    - b) *High production and industrialization without human concern may multiply our possessions but leave us empty within*
  - 2. A church can become Christless -- go through all the motions, but be unprofitable to the Kingdom
    - a) *We rejoice in the beauty of our church -- but the most beautiful part cannot be seen by the traveller -- the dedication of the men and women whose sacrifices in the name of Christ made it possible; the giving of life through it, the fellowship within it.*
    - b) *If the love of God in Christ does not flow through this church, then, as in Moscow, it should be turned into a museum -- a place to honor the recollections of past generations*

### III. Apart from the branches, the vine is fruitless

#### A. The love of Christ is mediated through the hearts of men

1. The nature of a sacrament is a physical substance, used as a channel through which God's spirit blesses men.

*a) The grape juice and bread were bought at stores -- at a cost of about 1 cent each, but through them you and I come into relationship with Christ*

*b) Our lives are a sacrament through which Christ's love becomes real in the life of men.*

#### B. The bread tells us that we are the body of Christ -- literally.

### IV. A Threat

#### A. "Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away."

1. Physical attachment is not enough.

*a) The lifeless branch may yet be attached, until it is pruned.*

*b) A branch may even be rich with leaf, but fruitless*

2. The fact of judgment is all about us -- the tragedy of Christless homes.

#### B. One of the 12 was soon to cut himself off from Christ.

## V. A Promise

A. "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you."

1. We would need to know the miracles of botany to fully understand the meaning of this -- the reciprocal nourishment of the branch and the vine -- the marvels whereby the leaves receive from the sun, and passes its nourishment down into the vine, and the vine in turn draws life up from its roots to nourish the branches.

2. The significance is no magic lever to force God's hand, but speaks of God's willingness to sustain our deep needs.

B. "These things have I spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

1. What should be the mood of communion?

a) *Penitence? Sorrow for the price of the cross? Thanksgiving? Joy!*

## V. Conclusion

*Within this sacrament we rededicate ourselves -- seeking Christ's life more deeply implanted within ourselves.*

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**Study Questions -- Part I***Bible Reading: John 15:1-11*

John 15:1 says: I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

- How does the inclusion of the word "true" in this verse impact the way you read it?
- What picture comes to your mind when you think about a gardener?

John 15:2 says: 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.

- Do you ever feel God's hand in eliminating things about you that don't serve Him?
- Do you feel His hand encouraging you in the ways you serve Him?

John 15:3 says: You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

- What other words would you use to describe how you feel because of the words that have been spoken to you?

John 15:4 says: Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

- Do you think people can "bear fruit" of good works without remaining with Jesus? How do you think Jesus would feel about those who do "Christian" work yet are not Christians?

John 15:5 through 8 say: I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. <sup>8</sup>This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

- How do you show yourself to be Jesus disciple at work? In your social circles? In the community?

John 15: 9 through 11 say: As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

- Which of Jesus's commands do you find easy to obey? Which ones are harder for you?

## Study Questions -- Part II

*Sermon :*

I.B. Dr. Galbreath indicates that the words "the true vine" sum up the relationship between himself and his followers. If you were asked to create another phrase that summed up the relationship, what would it be?

I.C. If the 14th and 15th chapters of John are "the heart" of the New Testament, what other chapters or verses would you want included on a list of key passages for inquirers to read?

II.A.1. -- The original word "happiness" was replaced by "joy"

II.A.1.a In what ways do you find education and science to be positive when it comes to spiritual development? In what ways do you consider them negatives?

II.A.1.b Have there ever been times when you have looked at your possessions and realized that some are not as important to you as they were when you acquired them? What do you do with those possessions? Do you ever think about them when you are making other purchases?

II.A.2. In what ways do you think a church becomes Christless?

II.A.2.a What were your initial impressions when you first entered Westminster? Have others ever shared their first thoughts with you? What we can as a congregation do to make sure that visitors see the true beauty of our church?

II.A.2.b What can you do each week to keep the love of God flowing through Westminster? Through the Presbyterian Church? Through the Christian Church?

III.A.1.b In what way could you describe your life as a sacrament?

III.B. In what ways do you act to make your body the body of Christ?

IV.B. How can you be the body of Christ in dealing with those who have cut themselves off from Christ? What about for those who don't know Christ?

V.A.2. What deep needs do you need God to sustain for you? For your family? For your church? For your community?

V.B.1. How do you answer Dr. Galbreath's question?

The Prayer of Confession that week was:

*Almighty and most merciful God; We acknowledge and confess that we have sinned against Thee in thought, word, and deed; That we have not loved Thee with all our heart and soul, with all our mind and strength; And that we have not loved our neighbor as ourselves. We beseech Thee, O God, to forgive what we have been, To help us to amend what we are, and of Thy mercy to direct what we shall be; So that we may henceforth walk in the way of Thy commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in Thy sight, Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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There was also this note in the bulletin:

We will be pleased to take the sacrament to any in your home who may wish to have it brought to them.