
Meditation
on **“We Bear Fruit”** (John 15:1-8)
• *“How Shall We LOVE”* worship series •

::: ZERO :::

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

*“Grace to you and PEACE from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1 Co 1:3. (NRSV)

::: Amen.

::: ONE :::

Those of you who were here last week may have something like a Deja vu.

Didn't Mr. Preacherman extensively meander about 'abiding' last week?

And isn't this week's worship service called exactly like the former one? 'How shall we LOVE'

The answer would be a clear and precise “Jein”—this wonderful German word. What a wonderful expression to say yes and by the same time.

Number **ONE**: Yes, last week’s meditation was headlined ‘We Abide in Christ’. But not based on John 15 but based on 1 John 3.

Number **TWO**: No, the preceding’s worship series title was ‘How shall we LIVE?’ So, **ONLY ONE LETTER** but the **WHOLE OBJECTIVE** has changed.

Two insights we may gain from this.

→ Number one: Obviously ‘**ABIDING**’ is a **PROMINENT FIGURE** in the writings of John and the Johannine community. Us abiding in Christ. And Christ abiding in us.

→ Number two: It is important to have a **CLOSE LOOK**, to **LISTEN** to **EXACTLY** to what is said and written—in order to be able to **DISCERN** and really **UNDERSTAND**—understand how we live, and how we love.

∴ TWO ∴

Let me take you on a journey—as I read to you the story of an encounter, as told by Pastor Detlef Albrecht¹:

"She is sitting before me in a chair wearing a yellow suit that suits her well. She has applied makeup, her hair is neatly pinned back, and she is wearing earrings and a necklace. I am here to congratulate her on her 90th birthday.

"Oh, Pastor, it wasn't always easy," she says.

"My husband passed away early, when the children were still young. I was left to figure out how we would make ends meet. And then my eldest son passed away. In his early forties. Believe me, I still feel the weight of that today."

She takes a sip of tea and adjusts her glasses.

"But even though it was difficult, I wouldn't want to miss a single day. Life is precious. You know what always gave me strength? Being able to attend worship services."

That's true. As long as she could walk well, she was always in church on Sundays. But now her legs weren't cooperating as much. "It was

important for me to be there. To meet others in church. And even if the sermon wasn't good, there was always the blessing. That did me good."

We talk for a while longer about God, the world, and life. I am impressed by the significance that faith holds in this woman's life—and that we are discussing it for the first time on her 90th birthday. And I wonder: Will I be able to say the same about worship services when I am old?"

::: THREE :::

Life is precious.

'You know what always gave me strength?
That I could attend worship services.

It has been four years since I wrote to my former congregations—referring to all the cancelled worship services and celebrations during the Corona-lockdown:

"The announcement of all the celebrations that are now cancelled made me think...

Because it's not just the particular celebration or gathering that is cancelled.

This time is a time when celebrating is abolished.

Because celebrating involves coming together joyfully, being able to be exuberant, to be able to get in touch with each other, to hug, to embrace, to sing together, and so much more."

::: FOUR :::

"I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."

John 15:5

We certainly experience this in our worship services. And even more so when we celebrate the Eucharist, the communion.

Jesus speaks all of these words during his last supper with his disciples. That's the scene in which John places Jesus' words.

This scene depicts how deeply we experience the connection to Jesus and through him to the Father in the Lord's supper.

∴ FIVE ∴

Conversely, it says in John 15:

"Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned."

John 15:6

Actually, Jesus states a sheer impossibility. How can a branch **decide** to not remain with the vine?

This refers to people who do not live like Jesus himself.

It refers to people who do not live in love, who do not prioritize love for God and neighbour above everything else.

This is what Jesus called the **new commandment**:

*I give **you a new commandment**, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.*

John 13:34

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.

John 15:12-13

To abide in him and not abide in love is an impossibility.

To abide in him and remain self-centred or always self-prioritising is an impossibility.

To abide in him means to bear fruit.

And this fruit is love.

::: SIX :::

If people do not love they do not bear fruit, and so it is obvious that they have lost the connection with Jesus, the vine.

Jesus sees their lives taking the wrong direction. As they do not love, they are moving away from God.

Their life does not flourish and bear fruit of the vine—they do not love.

Love is God's creative power—incorporated in us through his Spirit.

And not abiding in Christ, not living in love means not to bear fruit.

So, not to love leads into a life of destruction and annihilation, isolation—and by this even self-destruction.

::: SEVEN :::

Jesus gives us a glimpse of the dark side—which means not to love.

BUT HIS FOCUS IS ABIDING IN HIM—AND BEARING FRUIT.

“I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.”

John 15:5

Jesus built this community of disciples. This community grew and has become what is called ‘the church’, in Greek the “kyriake”,...

- the people who belong to the Kyrios, the Lord,
- the people who abide in Christ and he in them,
- the people who **BEAR FRUIT**
- the people of love
- the people who know that the way they LIVE is LOVE.

Jesus built his community of disciples,
- which shares communion, the eucharist,
- which abides in his constant blessing.

So, we might also say...

"It was important for me to seek connection with God [...], just like here in this worship service.

And even if the sermon wasn't good, there was always the blessing. That did me good."

So, how shall we live?

We come together as the people of God, abiding in Christ. And we LIVE as the people abiding with the true vine who bring his fruit.

And the fruit is LOVE. ∴ Amen.

ⁱ Detlef Albrecht (2020), 4 Lebenswert – Gottesdienst feiern. Werkstatt für Liturgie und Predigt WLP 3•2020, p. 98.