

The Vine

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[0:00] Our New Testament reading comes from John chapter 15. John chapter 15. Turn there in your Bibles or look on the screen.

This is God's Word. I am the true vine and my Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. In every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit.

Already you are clean because of the Word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine. Neither can you unless you abide in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches, whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned.

If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

[1:11] As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. Well as far as this is God's holy word. We're in the midst of a series on the farewell speeches of Christ from John 13 to 17 and if you've been around for this series at all, you know by now, you've seen by now that the text is just too full.

I mean it's so full that we just can't get into it like we want to. We can really only give a glimpse and that's especially true tonight. We can only give a glimpse of what's present in just these 11 verses. It's so full. There are two things in this passage that Jesus has been doing throughout the Gospel of John. One is vineyard stories.

Jesus in this Gospel and in the other Gospels, the authors write about Jesus telling vineyard stories and in these stories the vineyard is always the context of the parable but in this metaphor that we're about to look at Jesus has never talked about the vine.

[2:21] It's only the vineyards that have been contextualized throughout the Gospels. The second thing is this that he's doing here that he's been doing throughout the Book of John is he, this is the seventh and final of the great I Am statements.

You know I am the way, the truth and the life. We looked at that one just a couple weeks ago. This is the seventh and final one. The question that comes with these is always who is this man?

Who is Jesus? Two things I want to do tonight to unpack this passage. First is this, I just simply want to ask the question why is he using the vine metaphor?

This is an extended metaphor. It's got three parts. There's a vine, there's a vine dresser and there are branches coming off the vine. Why is he using the vine metaphor? It's the first thing.

You know in the last passage, the passage Derrick preached from 1431, the very end it says Jesus told them rise, let us go up from here.

[3:20] They've left. They're probably on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane at this point. Why is he using a vine metaphor? At least for one reason probably because he's probably looking at a vine.

It's a beautiful picture. Jesus is probably walking and pointing to a vine when he gives this illustration. And then the second thing we'll look at is this, what's there to learn?

Very simply, what's there to learn? So first, why the vine? Why the vine? And I'm going to give you the answer straight away. Derrick already gave you the answer when he read Psalm 80. Thanks for

taking that away from me.

Because in the Old Testament, the vine is the symbol of Israel. The vine is the symbol of Israel, of national Israel. So Hosea chapter 10 verse 1, Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields fruit.

Psalm 80, God brought a vine out of Egypt. We read that just a moment ago. The vine metaphor is for Israel all throughout the Old Testament. And not only is it a metaphor for national Israel, but it also is always associated with Israel's calling or what scholars will call Israel's vocation.

[4 : 29] So in other words, Psalm 80, it doesn't just say that there was a vine called out of Egypt, but that the vine was to spread its branches from coast to coast.

Abraham was the father of many nations, you see. Israel was the location, the location of grafting in. The nations were to be grafted in.

They had a vocation. They had a calling. We sang from Psalm 19 just a moment ago. The heavens declare the glory of God, but what's the second half of Psalm 19? The Torah, the law, the law of Israel is the manifestation of God's character.

Israel was called in having the law and having the land and being a national people, a covenant of people, they had a vocation to be a testimony to the entire world of the true God and His righteousness.

Look, we can say it in a phrase. Israel was to be the locus of God's redemptive activity in and for the world.

[5 : 27] While all lights were pointing at Israel, they were to be the ones that were shining forth the lights of the world. They were to be the vine that extended their branches from coast to coast, that grafted all the nations in, that brought them into the center.

But not only does the vine metaphor always come with a calling, a vocation, when it's used in the Old Testament, it almost always comes with a failed connotation. Hosea 10, Israel's compared to the vine and it says, but the vine did not bear fruit.

Instead, it built altars. Psalm 80, the whole point of Psalm 80, Father, remember your vine. We feel lost. We're lost. We're in exile. Remember your vine.

You see what's going on. You see what's going on here? What's Jesus doing with this? What's Jesus doing in John 15? 1. Jesus is interpreting the Old Testament.

He's interpreting the Old Testament for us. He's saying the point of Israel as the locus of redemptive activity, the light of the world, the light of the nations, the vine to graft in all other vines.

[6 : 30] He's saying it was never about Israel. That's me. You see, when you read 15.1, it says, I am the true vine. You should read this. I am the true Israel.

That's what he's saying. That's why he's using the vine metaphor. I'm the true Israel. And true here is not in opposition to falsehood.

It's not a comparison between true and false. It's a word for fulfillment. You see what he's saying? I am the fulfillment of Israel.

I'm the true vine. I'm the fulfillment of Israel. We've seen this already in the Gospels. Matthew chapter 4, the temptation of Jesus. Jesus goes out into the wilderness for 40 days and he's tempted by Satan in all sorts of ways and he overcomes the temptation.

You see what's going on there? Jesus is the Israel that Israel never could have been. He goes out into the wilderness. He's tempted by Satan 40 days, but yet he doesn't sin.

[7 : 36] He's the vine that Israel never was going to be, the one that could truly engraft all the nations into itself. Jesus is the Israel Israel could have never been.

Jesus is the locus of all redemptive activity. He is the life-giving vine. The Father is the one who plants the vine, the plant, and prunes it, takes care of it.

The Son is the life-giving vine itself and the branches are the people, the nations, us, grafted in.

This is the metaphor. This is the point.

This is why the vine. So that's the first thing. Now second, what do we learn? The rest of our time, just briefly, tonight will be, what do we learn? And there are four things.

There are tons of things, but there's four things I want to highlight. Jesus is true Israel. Jesus is the true center of the life-giving kingdom.

[8 : 30] What is this metaphor trying to answer for us? What question? What question is the metaphor trying to answer for you tonight? And I think the question is this, how do I become a better person?

How do I become a better person? No, it's even more. It's even more than that. It's even more than a better person. How do I become exactly who I'm supposed to be?

How do I become great? How do I become truly great? How do I become truly human? How do I become true Israel? That's the question that this metaphor is answering for us.

It's got an end goal in mind. The philosophers would say it's about becoming. It's about becoming something. Becoming something particular.

Becoming a particular person. The way he says it is, is it's growing into a fruit-bearing branch, a fruit-bearing branch. The point here is growth.

[9 : 29] There's a destination of you. You know, you think the verb abide in me. Abide in me. It's not a verb that means stand still.

Abiding in Jesus is, the point of abiding in Jesus is to get somewhere, to go somewhere with him. And that's what he's trying to get at. It's about growth. Now, what's this growth? Four things.

What's this growth? First, the growth is characterized in our passage by the word fruit. By the word fruit. If you abide in him, if you're grafted in to him, you bear fruit.

What's fruit? What's fruit? What does the Bible mean with this word fruit? Every time the Bible uses the word fruit, it always has to do with somebody's disposition, with their personality, ultimately with their character.

So you know, the best place to go for this, of course, is Galatians chapter 5, where Paul talks about the fruits of the Spirit. What are they? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, goodness, and self-control.

[10 : 34] I think I got them all. Maybe somebody probably in here is counting. These are the fruits of the Spirit.

Replacing the fruits of the Spirit is about replacing abrasiveness with gentleness, impatience with patience, self-admiration with self-forgiveness.

You see, it's about character change. The revelation of an internal change in an external form. It's the change of personality. It's the change of character.

A lot of times we look at this and say, where are the fruits? Where are the fruits of the vine? Where are good works? But he's saying something more specific than that. Fruit is about character.

It's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. These are the laws of love. Look, you know, if you go down to Waterstones or any bookstore in the city, major bookstore, or Barnes & Nobles in the States or whatever, you'll know that there's tons of self-help books on the shelf.

[11 : 41] You know, this is kind of a thing that's been going on since the 1950s. Self-help books are really popular. But you know, you're probably expecting me to hate on self-help books.

It would be easy. But the thing about self-help books is they get a couple things right. Every single time they get a couple things right. And one of the things they get right is this, that everybody wants to change.

Everybody wants to change. And everybody knows they need to change. They want to change. And they know that they won't be happy unless that happens.

One of the things that fruit is getting at here is found in verse 11. Jesus is simply telling us, the point of this is that your joy may be complete, that your joy may be full.

And the self-help books are right about this. People want to change because they want to be happy. Everybody wants to be happy. We've seen this actually in the book of Ruth, everybody wants to be happy.

[12 : 41] And bearing fruit is about becoming truly happy, becoming truly joyful. What Jesus is talking to us about is the only way to get it. The only way to get it is found in this passage.

So that takes us to the second thing. Secondly, this growth requires being grafted in. Being grafted in. Now look, this is the Sunday night crowd.

This is the Sunday night crowd. You guys know the gospel. You know the gospel. You know the gospel. Look at verse 3 and 4. It's there. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

Abide in me and I in you. As the branch can't bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. Did you see that? Abide in me, I in you.

Paul picks up on this. Same idea throughout his letters. We call it the doctrine of union with Christ and theology. This is Sunday night crowd.

[13 : 43] You know the gospel. But the question is this. How does a fruitful branch become fruitful? How does a fruitful branch become fruitful?

If you walk around in the woods and you see a blackberry, I know blackberries grow with branches. A very branch walking around with its two little legs full of blackberries and saying to all of the bushes, hey look, pick me.

I've got fruit. Take me in. Put and graft me into yourself. I've already got fruit. Like I'm a huge bonus to you. Right? No.

You know that's not how it works. That's exactly what Jesus is getting at here. How does a fruit, how does a branch bear fruit? How does a branch bear fruit? Look, the reason Jesus uses the idea of the branch here is because branches left to themselves are what?

They're dead. They're dead. You cast a branch off of a vine and what happens to it? It's dying and it's dead. I mean, you see this every year when you cut down your Christmas tree or you do it the weak way and you go buy it somewhere.

[14 : 56] You don't go out in the woods and cut it down. You cut down your Christmas tree and for four weeks, for four weeks, it's fantastic. It's beautiful. It's sitting in your house, but then it starts to drop needles.

Then it dies. Look, branches by themselves are dead. That's the point of the metaphor. You see? It's a Sunday night crowd. You know the gospel, but do you remember it? Do you remember it? Jesus became the very branch cast into the fires of the vine dresser himself on the cross in order that we might have a life-giving sustenance of a vine, of a father, of a brother, of a true friend, of a bridegroom, of a light, a home, a place, an Israel.

Pick your metaphor. Pick your metaphor. Most of us here have been Christians a long time, but do you have life?

Are you grafted in? Are you grafted in? Being a long-standing member, a respectable citizen, and a frequent attender, these are not bargaining chips that will get you out of the burn pile.

[16 : 17] The answer to the problem is found in verse 3 when he said, already you are clean because of the words that I've spoken to you. Now there's two words in that passage that John's used a couple of times, the word clean and the word word.

The word clean, the Greek presentation of that word is actually a reference to ceremonial cleanliness. So it's the word for ceremonial cleanliness. It's the word for being washed at the temple by the blood of the lamb.

You see? And he goes on to say, how has somebody made clean? How has somebody washed by the blood of the lamb? How has somebody made ceremonial clean by the word that I have spoken to you?

What's the word? What's the law, Goss? You know from John 1, it's Jesus himself. Jesus is the word that was spoken by the life-giving speaker of all words of self, God the Father, and he speaks words of life to us.

He makes you clean. It's the only way. You know the gospel, to grow is to find joy, to grow is to truly find joy, to grow into a fruit-bearing person.

[17 : 28] That's how you find joy, and to find joy is only to be had in Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ. It's the only way. That's what the self-help books just don't quite get.

You know this, you know this, but do you remember it? Is it actually life for you? Is it actually life for you? Or third or fourth?

This growth is not mechanical, but it's organic. It's not mechanical, but it's organic. Now Jesus says three different times in this passage, whoever abides in me or in him bears much fruit.

Now I think there's a temptation here to read growth, to read this idea of growth in a mechanical way. What do we mean by that?

Something like merely in the terms of rule following and obedience. So thinking of Christian growth and the Christian life as rule obeying obedience.

[18 : 32] One commentator says it this way. He talks about three steps. You're grafted into Jesus. You obey the rules that Jesus gives, and then therefore you bear fruit.

This is the mechanical way of thinking about it. He says this, one might be tempted to interpret this metaphor in a mechanical way as if the relationship between Jesus and his disciples can be exhaustively described in terms of obedience and perseverance.

What would then be missing is the numerous associations connected with the vine, which means dependence, vital union, pruning, and love.

What does this mean? What is he talking about, this idea of taking Christian growth in a mechanical way? A mechanical way of thinking about growth, of thinking about the gifts of the Spirit, sorry, the fruit of the Spirit.

A mechanical way of thinking about it is taking Christianity as a duty and forgetting about the delight.

[19 : 38] Taking it as a duty and forgetting about the delight. In other words, it's obeying the rules without knowing the point of the rules. Now let me illustrate it.

In America, in the States, we have a way of talking about the government, or we talk about red tape. Is that a thing here? Red tape? Yeah. Red tape all over the place, the word for it is bureaucracy. bureaucracy. It's bureaucracy. Red tape happens when laws have been enacted that get in the way of the point of laws. You're trying to accomplish a goal, and you can't get to that goal precisely because the thing you put in place to accomplish it is standing in your way.

This happens all the time in civil government. In the States, the locus classicus is the DMV. A couple of people in here don't know what that is. The DMV is where you go get your driver's license. It's the worst. It's the most bureaucratic place. It's impossible to get your driver's license. It takes forever. Here, my biggest experience with red tape is dealing with council tax.

[20 : 42] You can't get anything done that keeps any same letter over again because the rules are blocking the whole point of it all. This is the same idea as a mechanical way of treating Christianity.

You want to grow. You want to grow? Jesus says, abide in my words. Abide in my words. Now you know what those words are. You know what he's talking about. He's talking about the scriptures. He's talking about the scriptures. You want to grow? Abide in my words. Abide in the scriptures. We know this. You know this. Of course you know this. But a mechanical way of conceiving of Christian growth takes the scriptures and makes them an end into themselves.

It's taking a daily quiet time and making the point of a quiet time a quiet time. It's thinking that putting in the time with the scriptures necessarily equals a specific outcome and that's growth. You know this from experience. It doesn't work like that. It doesn't work like that. You put in the time. You have a great week. Every single morning. Prayer.

[21 : 53] Scripture. Everything's right. But you just don't feel like you're growing. You just don't feel it. It's just not there. This is a mechanistic view of Christian growth.

It's viewing inputs and outputs in a mechanical business-like way. Now the distinction in this passage. The difference in mechanism and organism. Being organic is the verb abide.

The verb abide. He says abide in me. Abide. Abide. Abide is a verb of relation. It's mutual indwelling.

It's you being in him and him and you. It's a term of love that's sometimes spoken of between the father and the son. Between best friends.

This word literally means to remain. To remain in what matters. To remain in what matters. Look, here's the point. God is not into mechanistic rule following but organic transformation of our inner selves.

[23 : 01] Organic transforming character change. Rule growth happens not when you simply put in the time but when you see the words, the scriptures, prayer, what we call in Reformed theology, the means of grace as truly means to get to something else.

They're not ends. They're means. Church attendance, prayer, scripture. They're not ends into themselves. They're not even going to be here forever. Even the scriptures because we're going to see him.

We're going to see him. You see, what's the point of Christianity? The point of Christianity is not the means of grace. The point of Christianity is Jesus himself. It's to get him. It's to have him.

Organic Christian growth comes to the scriptures. It comes to the means of grace and it doesn't just put in the time. It abides. You see the difference?

It abides. It seeks. It wants. It yearns. It comes to the scriptures wanting to see the gospel afresh, not for information, not from your information.

[24 : 15] Mechanical Christianity does the means of grace because that's what one is supposed to do. It's like coming to Christianity. It's like an unbeliever coming to Christianity and asking the question, what are the rules?

I'm thinking about this, this whole Christian thing. But what are the rules that I have to follow? What are the rules that I have to follow? And what do you say to that? What do you say?

They say, well, I've heard that I'll have to stop sleeping with my girlfriend. I've heard that I'll have to stop doing X, Y, or Z. I've heard that I'll have to stop doing all these things. I'll have to stop drinking as much as I drink.

I'll have to stop. What do you want to say to the person? No, you don't get it. You don't get it. It's the wrong question. You see, the rules are bigger and harder than you could have ever imagined.

It's more difficult than you could have ever possibly known. The rules are harder and they're better than you could have ever desired. Look, C.S. Lewis and Mary Christianity, he puts it this way.

[25 : 22] He's contrasting the Christian way versus the atheist way. And he says that, or alternative other religions. He says this, the Christian way is different.

It's harder and it's easier. Christ says, give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work.

I want you. I've not come to torment your natural self. I've not come to torment you, but to kill you.

No half measures are any good. I don't want to cut off a branch here and a branch there. I want to have the whole tree. I don't want to drill the tooth or crown it or stop it, but to have it out.

Hand over the whole natural self. All the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked. The whole outfit, I'll give you a new self instead. In fact, I'll give you myself. My own will be yours.

[26 : 24] You see, organic Christianity realizes that coming to Christianity and saying, what are the rules? What do I have to do? They know the answer to that. The answer is you've got to lose everything.

You've got to lose everything. It's not just about what you've got to give up here and there. You've got to lose your whole self. You've got to give everything. You've got to give your entire being.

You're not yours anymore.

And this is truly hard and it's so easy. That's why Jesus says sometimes following me, what does it take to follow Jesus?

Take up your cross. What does that mean? It means get ready to go die. And then at other times he says, because my yoke is easy, my burden is light.

You see? It's the hardest thing in the world. It demands everything, but it's only route to joy. It's the hardest thing that's the easiest at the very same time.

[27 : 28] Organic growth, abiding, abiding, it gets that. It doesn't follow the rules. Because they're the rules, it follows the rules.

It does the means of grace because it wants Jesus. Because it wants Jesus. The question of growth is not what do I have to do, but who am I to become?

You see? That's what it means to get the fruit. Not what do I do, but who am I to become? Here are the rules. Here are the rules.

Where are the rules? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, goodness, self-control. These are the rules, the law of love.

All right, fourthly and finally, lastly, and this point follows directly on from the previous point, this growth comes through pruning.

[28 : 25] Through pruning. I'm the true vine. My father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. In every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes.

That it may bear more fruit. What's going on here? Pruning, the metaphor of pruning, the metaphor of training is the idea of discipline.

So I mean, it's very clear here what he's saying. He's saying something hard. He's saying exactly what C.S. Lewis was just talking about, Christianity, it's the hardest and it's the easiest.

He's giving a hard saying, as it sometimes says in the Gospels, that the Father prunes away, trims back the fat, that he disciplines.

This is a doctrine that's throughout the scriptures. The Father disciplines his children. He prunes, he cuts in order that they may bear more fruit. Now, here's what I can't tell you about this.

[29 : 27] I can't tell you what pruning is. In other words, I can't tell you what events in your life have been pruning and what have it.

We can't look into the works of God. They're invisible. We don't know. But what we can tell you is that it happens in what it's for. That it happens in what it's for.

One of the points of this being, one of the points I think of John putting this in this metaphor is to say that the idea of discipline, a Christian discipline from the Father of Lights to his children, the idea of discipline is not mechanical but organic.

In other words, God is not a fate. This idea of pruning, of trimming back, it's not a retributive justice by some notion of karma. It's not what goes around, comes around.

It's not you get what you sow. It's nothing like that. It's nothing like a self-help book would tell you. But it's personal. It's personal. It's a father and his child.

[30 : 32] It's a father and his child. Now, what's pruning? What's pruning? I pride myself in knowing exactly what pruning is and I think that most people probably don't.

I don't know. Maybe you do. Because I used to own a lawn business when I was in high school. I cut yards and did all sorts of stuff like that.

For three years I had about 20 customers from pretty big commercial properties, in fact. And if you need me, just give me a call.

And I used to prune all the time. Why are we prune? We trim mostly today for aesthetic purposes to make things look nice.

But what is the true point of pruning? You gardeners in the room, what's the true point? The true point of pruning is that if you don't prune, then plants grow in directions you don't want them to grow in.

[31 : 29] Did you know that? If you prune consistently over time, you actually teach a plant to grow in a certain direction. So you can train a tree to grow a certain way.

If you want a tree to bend right, you can train it to bend right in time if you know what you're doing. You see the point of pruning? You see the point of pruning? It's not willy-nilly.

If you step back, if you're far away and you watch a guy prune a bush, what does it look like? There's all this stuff all over the ground.

It looks like it's a vindictive homicide of some sort of this bush, right? But then you step back. When it's all said and done, you step back. And what do you see? You see that it's more beautiful if they've done a good job.

And what else do you see? Back a year later, and the bush is still growing in the right direction. It's still doing what it's supposed to do. It's for the health of the plant.

[32 : 28] What does this mean? Thankfully, I don't have to think about this too hard because Hebrews 12 is a sermon on the idea of the discipline of the father to his children.

And I'm just going to read it briefly because it preaches. So just listen. My son, this is straight up Proverbs 3, by the way. My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.

For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastises every son whom he receives. It's for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as a son and a daughter.

For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you're left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are an illegitimate child and you are not a son.

Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time, but he disciplines us for our ultimate good that we may share his holiness.

[33 : 39] For the moment, all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

The discipline of the Lord, the pruning, the training, it hurts. It kills things in your life. It kills former dreams. It kills the things you have desired.

It tells you that there are things that you have to give up, that there will be hopes in your life that will never be fulfilled, but here's the thing. When the father prunes, he takes away nothing that did not need to be taken away in order for you to grow into the fullness of true joy.

Pruning is for the sake of truly becoming great, you see, of bearing fruit, of being noble, of being honorable, of being humble, of being gentle, of being joyful, of being self-controlled. That's what pruning is for.

Look, I have no idea what events in my life, what events in your life, what it is that are prunings, what it is that are trimmings.

[34 : 47] I have no idea. I can't read the life circumstances onto God's work. Hard things happen to every single person. Hard things happen to everyone.

The question is, are you connected to the vine? Are you connected to the vine? Hard things are going to happen. Are you connected to the vine? Are those things going to be things that prune you into the fullness of joy?

There's no joy without hard growth, and there's no growth without being grafted into Jesus Christ. We'll just close with this. No one is grafted into the tree because of the fruit they already have. No one is grafted into the vine. No one who, that is grafted into the vine remains the way they were. In verse 8, there's a clause that you prove to be a disciple.

[35 : 51] Vine fruit exists for your joy and that you prove yourself to be a disciple. Now listen carefully. No one is grafted into the tree of Jesus Christ because of the fruit that they already are bearing.

It's total grace, and no one who is grafted into the tree remains the way they were.

So what we're called to do today is to ask questions of ourselves. That you prove to be a disciple, he says. Here's some questions. We did this in the Ephesians series.

I just want to close with these, and I think these are good to do every few months, every six months, every year. You can make up your own questions. Do I still cherish the gospel in the ways that I cherished it when I first came to know it?

Have I forgotten what I once was and what I have become? Am I kinder, humbler, gentler now than I was this time a year ago?

[37 : 00] Have I grown at all in communing with Jesus Christ through prayer and Scripture and the means of grace since I was converted? Has there been any growth there?

Am I a refreshment to the people around me in this church and in the other contexts that I exist in? Am I a refreshment to them? Am I more of a refreshment? Am I more of a joy than I was this time a year ago? And finally, the last question is this. When the answer is no to any of these, when the answer is no, where do I turn?

Where do I abide for hope and help in the midst of my lack of growth? Let's pray. Father, we thank you that you've given us metaphors to help us understand your works.

And we ask that you would give us eyes to see Jesus Christ tonight, that we would look at the passage, look through the passage in order to see the one we truly love, the one we are made for, the one that we need eyes to see, the one that we will see in eternity, and that's Him, Him, the God-man Himself.

[38 : 15] We long to see Him and we long to be like Him, to truly bear fruit, which is to be Him and His character. And so we ask that you would give that to us now in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen.