

Remain!

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[0 : 00] As you sit, please take your bibles and turn back to John 15. That's where we're going to be. And as you turn there, let me pray.

Our Father, in this passage, you remind us so clearly that apart from you, we can do nothing. And that includes the preaching of and the listening to this sermon. We're not excited about hearing the voice of some man, but we believe that when your word is preached, your voice is heard. So please speak and teach us by your spirit and show us Christ. In Jesus' name, amen. It struck me that there is a certain thing we all do when we leave our houses.

We all have this kind of habit of checking that we have everything necessary for the day. I go by the routine of one of my friends called Paul, and he has four things, and he kind of does the pad down to make sure he's got them.

[1 : 05] So, keys, wallet, phone, brain are the four things that I and he check every time. We generally get three out of the four, but you have your own habit, probably wallet, keys, phone, brain.

If we forget one of them or more of them, it's a matter of kind of mild inconvenience. But generally, we'll cope, we'll get through our right. But I met this guy when I was in America one time, who as well as having wallet, phone, keys, brain had a fifth thing that he had to remember when he left his house.

He had wallet, phone, keys, brain, a canister of oxygen. This guy on a little set of wheels had a canister that he always had behind him, and it was constantly connected through his nose because he had a condition, I'm no medic, but he told me that if he did not have that, his body on its own would not produce or circulate the right amount of oxygen for his survival.

If he forgot that canister, if he didn't do the check before he left the house, it would be pretty evident pretty quickly. And he said that it could result in severe brain damage, if not death.

Now my guess is he never fails to take that with him. Constantly, he is always making sure that he is pulling his canister of oxygen behind him. Here's the point of John 15 this morning.

[2 : 30] John 15 is here to convince us, to teach us, that constant connection, utter dependence, total reliance on the person and work of Jesus is as important, if not more important to the Christian, than that canister of oxygen is to this man.

There is utter dependence upon Christ. Let me show you why this is. Have a look at John 15 with me. Luke down just at verse 1. We read, I am the true vine and my father is the gardener.

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 more fruitful. Do you see how God is describing these verses? God is a gardener.

And why is he gardening? What is the purpose of this creation? It is the production of fruits. Do you see that? God is pictured as this gardener down in the dirt on his hands and knees, gardening for fruit.

And so much does he care about fruit and your fruitfulness that he will not even spare the pruning knife for the sake of more fruitfulness. Do you see that? God is gardening for fruit. Have a look down at verse 16.

[3 : 45] Not only is God the father gardening for fruit. Look at what Jesus says. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.

Now that language of choice Jesus choosing is the language of what it means to be a disciple in John's Gospel. To be a disciple is someone who is chosen by Jesus. Now question, what is the purpose of Jesus' choice in that verse?

It is chosen to produce fruit. Fruit that will last. So not only is God the father gardening for fruit, Jesus is choosing for the sake of fruitfulness.

Do you see that? Now have a look down at verse 2. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit. And if anyone does not remain in me, this is verse 6, sorry, if anyone does not remain in me he's like a branch that's thrown away and withers.

Such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burnt. Do you see that there is no place for fruitlessness?

[4 : 54] No place. Not only is God the father gardening for fruit, not only is God the son choosing for fruit, but there is no place for fruitlessness.

See, God the father, God the son, God the spirit are not just concerned about your salvation, but as someone who is saved he is convinced he is determined that you will then be someone who produces fruit.

He is gardening, he is choosing for fruitfulness. So here's what we're going to do this morning. I want to work out two questions. Okay, why?

No, sorry, what is the fruit that we're meant to be producing? If we're meant to be producing this fruit, what is this fruit? What are the varieties? And then secondly, how is this fruit produced?

Is that clear? What is the fruit and then how is it produced? Well, this fruit comes in two varieties. It comes in a variety of love and a variety of joy.

[5 : 55] Let's look at love first. It comes in obedient love. Now, we get a lot of talking versus one to eight in this passage about fruit. So I think it's something like seven times. It's fruit, fruit, fruit, fruit, fruit, fruit, fruit.

Then all of a sudden in the second half of this passage, you get a lot of chat about love. Love, love, love, love, love. Now is that a change of subject? Is that a tangent? No, actually.

You get the point, love, love, love, love, and fruit, fruit, fruit means that the love is the fruit. The fruit is love. That is the fruit that God the gardener is choosing for.

He wants to see in us obedient love, obedience to Jesus, and sacrifice towards others. Look down at verse nine.

As the Father's loved me, so I have loved you, now remain in my love, if you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I will be my Father's commands, and remain in His love.

[6 : 56] Do you see there the link between love and obedience? If you love me, you will obey me. The fruit He is gardening for is obedient love.

Now here's a question. Why did God the Father plant or place the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in Eden? Why on earth would He put that tree there in front of Adam and Eve?

Well, here's one reason, because to show love, you need an opportunity to obey. God the Father had been so kind, so benevolent to Adam and Eve in Eden, but how were they to show their gratitude, their love to God in response for all of that, with no opportunity to obey?

And so God gifts them this opportunity. He says, okay, obey this one command, don't eat from this tree. And then that opportunity for obedience was an amazing opportunity to show love.

We know the story. Adam and Eve didn't show love for God in obedience, they showed love for self in great. And they ate the fruit.

[8 : 14] An opportunity to show love became a chance to love self for Adam and Eve. And in the story of the Bible, we need to wait for another man in another garden with another opportunity to obey, to say, not my will.

But your will be done. The man who would see the opportunity for obedience and would show his complete love for the Father by obeying even unto the cross.

If I ask you the question, why did Jesus die on the cross? You'll probably say something like, to forgive us of our sins, to give us eternal life. That is true, but what was the reason that Jesus went to the cross?

Because he loved the Father. And how was he going to show his love for the Father by obeying his Father's will to give his life on the cross? That is why Jesus, the Son, goes to the cross in obedience to his Father's will, showing his complete love for the Father.

And that love comes, we know in this passage, by laying down his life for his friends. Do you see that in verse 12? Great love has no man than this, that he laid down his life for his friends.

[9 : 39] The fruit of love that the Father is looking for is not only obedient, but it is self-giving, self-sacrificial. Not saying, I want to fulfill self, but I want to lay my life down for others.

That is the pattern laid out in the cross, isn't it? Self-sacrifice. So as you go out this week, every opportunity you have for obedience is an opportunity to show love to God the Father.

Now that puts a slightly positive slant on temptation. That means that when you are tempted, every opportunity for obedience is an opportunity to say, God, I love you.

And so I'm going to obey you rather than love myself. So what does that look like? Well, maybe for the students, it's when you're out at night and another drink is offered you. You say, actually, this is an opportunity to love God, so I'm going to obey him rather than indulge self.

Maybe it comes when you're alone with your laptop in your room. And there is a temptation to pornography, and you see that, okay, this is an opportunity to show how much I love God, and so I'm going to obey, rather than obey my lusts.

[10:58] Maybe it's you get home from work and you just want to slouch on the couch and let your wife do the dinner and the cooking and putting the kids to bed. That is an opportunity to show your love for God by obeying him to lay your life down for your wife.

And so to bring this fruit of love, every opportunity for obedience is an opportunity to show love to God. It's the pattern of Christ.

So this is the first fruit. What is the fruit? Well, first, it's obedient love. Second, it is complete joy. Have a look at verse 11. Not only love, but complete joy.

I've told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. How was it that Jesus could obey his father even to the cross?

How could he obey? How could he love to the point of enduring the brutality of crucifixion? Because of the joy set before him.

[12:05] The smile of his father outshined the darkness of Calvary. A man of complete joy. What do you think of when you think of Jesus?

What are the characteristics? We think, oh, a great teacher, good guy, loving, compassionate. How often do we think of Jesus as joyful?

A man of complete joy. That's not a kind of trivial happiness. It's not an external smiley-ness. That is a deep soul joy.

He was a man of sorrows, remember, familiar with suffering. And yet we're told a man of complete joy.

I don't know, you guys. You know that level and intensity of suffering in your life. But here is the example laid down with Jesus.

[13:01] That even being a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering, he had a deep joy knowing that his father, the gardener, even in his pruning, there were no random strokes.

Even when he gets out his gardener's pruning knife, he makes no mistakes, but he is gardening for the sake of your goods and for eternal fruit.

The Christian can have great joy even in suffering because of the hope set before him, because of the joy that is found in obedience to the Father.

As some of you will know, Athel Rennie quite well, Athel's church planting down in Leith, and he had some American guys come over to help him out, and one of the Americans deliberately walked around Edinburgh just looking in the faces of those who walked past in the street.

And this guy said this, I quote, he said, there was a look in people's eyes in Edinburgh that seemed to suggest they'd just given up having hope for anything better. They seemed resigned to a lack of fulfilment.

[14:14] Interesting, isn't it? Only an American could get away with saying that. But here's a guy who looks in people's faces and sees that they're resigned to dissatisfaction.

The joys that this world offers are like flowers, that when you pick them, they are already dead. That's why I don't get flowers as a romantic gesture. Here, let me show my love by giving you something that's dying, in fact, already dead.

That's the world's joys, that's what the world has to offer. You pick it, you eat it, you enjoy it, you indulge in it, and already it's dead. It brings no satisfaction.

And that is the look in the eyes of the faces walking down the royal mile. And Jesus says, you know what, there is something better. You don't have to be resigned to dissatisfaction.

But there is a deep soul rest, a deep life joy that is found in knowing Him and the Father.

[15:17] I don't know what the fruit count is like at St. Columbus. I don't know how you're doing with this obedient love and this complete joy. I don't know what that would look like for you this week.

But I hope there would be example after example of self-sacrifice, of people looking at Christ and laying down their life for their flatmates, for their wives, for their kids.

That there would be something in the lives of those of you who are Christians that testifies, that lives life, showing that you are not living for the dead joys of the world.

But that you're living life in a way that convinces the world that there is something more. This obedient love and this complete joy.

The second question then is okay, fine. How is this fruit produced? Where does this fruit come from? And I almost don't want to insult your intelligence by explaining. Let me just read it. It is so clear.

[16:21] Verse 4, see for yourselves. How is this fruit produced? 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. I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I and him, he will bear much fruit.

Apart from me you can do nothing. Where does your fruitfulness come from? You can do nothing apart from Christ.

All your fruitfulness comes from being intimately connected, utterly dependent, constantly reliant upon him. As much if not more as our guy with the oxygen canister.

Our fruitfulness comes from remaining in Christ. Apart from him you can do nothing. It is the result of being constantly connected.

[17:20] It makes sense in some ways, doesn't it? He was the one who displayed these two fruitful characteristics more than anyone. We've had a guy who's come to Charlotte as a student.

He's called Martin and Martin is from Manchester. When Martin turned up at church for the first time three years ago, he turned up in his Mancurian Sunday Best.

That was a football strip, a pair of trackies and a pair of trainers. Martin has now been at three years in Edinburgh, mingling with Edinburgh University students.

Last week Martin turned up at church wearing boat shoes, chinos, one of these padded quilt jackets, a nice shirt.

What's the point? When you abide, when you live with Edinburgh University students, even if you're from Manchester, you end up producing the same kind of things as them.

[18:19] What's the point? When you remain and when you live close to Jesus, when you observe his self-sacrifice, when you live in his joy, you cannot help but start producing the same kind of fruit that he produces.

Your fruitfulness is a direct result of your intimacy to Christ. So what is Jesus' command? Count them. Look at them. Verse 4, remain, remain, remain, remain.

Verse 5, remain, verse 6, remain. Verse 7, remain, remain. Verse 9, remain, verse 10, remain, remain. Do you get the point? To be fruitful, what do you have to do?

Remain. Stay. Abide. Live. Don't go anywhere. Remain here. Stay with Jesus. He is the only source of fruitfulness for the Christian.

Look back to chapter 14, verse 23. If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.

[19:32] So if God, the Father, and Jesus have come and made their home with you, you don't go moving out. You don't go looking for new flatmates. You remain. Abide. Stay. Don't go anywhere.

That is the source of your fruitfulness. Do you know what the stark contrast is? Look back to chapter 13 and verse 30.

What has just happened? As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night. The context of Jesus' command to remain, to stay, to abide is in the context of Judas who has just left.

It is in the context of Judas who decides to obey his own lusts, who decides to go after the world's joys, and he leaves for the sake of 30 silver coins.

[20:36] And he clutches for satisfaction at the dead flowers of the world. And it drives him to his suicide. And it's in that context that Jesus says, remain. Don't go out into the night like Judas.

Don't leave. That is not life. That is death. Remain here. Stay. Maybe it's some of the young people. You need to see this example of Judas.

The world seems to have a lot on offer. The joys of the world seem a lot more pleasurable and a lot more instant. But Judas went after them and it ended in his destruction.

Jesus says to you, if you're thinking about leaving, if you're thinking about walking away into the night, he says, hold up, hold up, remain. Stay. Don't leave.

So what does it look like to remain? It's a very simple example. It was pretty easy that first night. It meant, all right, keep your seat boys. Let's stay here in this upper room. But what does it mean for someone who lives after the ascension of Jesus?

[21 : 51] What does it mean for us and for the disciples once Jesus has gone? Well, there are three clues in this passage, three things that will hopefully help us apply. What does it look like to remain?

Three things. We remain in his word. We speak to him in prayer and we stay afront. Seven. We remain in his word.

Jesus says, if you remain in me and my words remain in you. We all know what it is to have someone's voice in our heads, don't we? You know what it is to have... Normally it's when you're doing something wrong, you hear someone's voice saying, hang on, hold up, don't do that.

The two that are prominent in my head. One is from my grandmother, who used to try and teach me to be a gentleman. She tried very hard. But one of the things my granny taught me, when I'm walking down the street, what side must the bloke be on if he's walking down with a lady?

Curb side, my granny taught me. The guy is to go curbside so that if a car comes passing, splashes the rain, he takes the hit for the girl. Gents, this is good advice.

[22 : 56] So whenever I'm walking down the street with someone of the opposite sex, you know what I've got going on in my head? I've got my granny's voice saying, curbside, curbside, curbside, curbside, constant. The other one is, I used to go running in London with a guy called Pete.

And for some reason, Pete used to be the one who sets the pace of the run. And when we got up to a pace that he deemed acceptable, he used to put on this dodgy kind of Eastern European accent and say, Zid temp is good, zid temp.

And so whenever I run, even in Edinburgh, I have Pete's voice saying, zid temp is good, zid temp.

And so I've got this prominent voice that drives me on in my running. What does it mean to have Jesus' words remain in us?

It means that his voice is the prominent voice, that his voice, his words are constantly in our heads. So that maybe when we're tempted to self-reliance and pride, you just hear him saying, listen, apart from me, you can do nothing.

Maybe it's when we're tempted to walk away, to give up, we just hear him say, remain, remain, remain.

[24 : 09] Maybe it's when you're in the eye of temptation, and there's that opportunity for obedience, you hear him say, if you love me, you will obey me.

Or maybe it's when you've had a day that has been characterised by a self-love and a pride and a selfishness. And you hear him saying, greater love has no manliness, that he laid down his life for his friends.

What does it mean to remain in Jesus? You get his voice prominent. Kerbside, kerbside, kerbside, zid temp is good. Remain, stay, love, obey, joy.

So make his voice prominent, devour his words, study his words, repent to it, meditate on it, memorise it, so that it is the prominent voice when you leave the house in the morning.

So that it's not Chris Moyles or Chris Evans or whoever, but it is the voice of the Saviour Christ who is prominent, the dominant voice in your heads.

[25 : 14] This world preaches to us, love self, indulge self, obey your lusts. We need to counter that preaching with the voice of Christ.

We remain in him. We carry along the oxygen canister as we remain in his word. Second thing, we talk to him in prayer. Have a look at verse 7. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you.

Then in verse 16, then the Father will give whatever you ask in my name. Now that's not an unconditional magic formula. That is not saying you can ask whatever you want and you will get it. Do you see the condition? It's conditional on his words remaining in you and asking in his name. Do you know when he's got the dominant voice in your heads?

When you're remaining in his word, you will start to pray in line with that voice. His words become your words in prayer. You know my top tip for praying? Do you find prayer hard?

[26 : 18] I find it really hard in the morning. What is the best thing to do? Read his word first, then pray his words. You're struggling to know what to pray? We'll let his words remain in you and then just repeat them almost back to him.

Okay, I read John 15. How does that help me pray? Well, I pray, okay Father, you have taught me that greater love has no one in this scene. Lay down his life for his friends. Help me today to lay down my life for his friends.

That is the prayer that is answered because it is the prayer that is in line with the words of Jesus and in line with his name. It will revolutionize my prayers when I understood this.

I take his words and I make them mine in prayer. And he says, ask whatever you wish. If you pray for fruitfulness, you will get fruitfulness because he loves, he's gardening for fruit, he is choosing for fruits.

Pray always. I wonder if, is our lack of fruitfulness a result of our lack of prayerfulness? Or another question, is our lack of answered prayer a result of the fact that we're not remaining in his words?

[27 : 34] We must be those who pray because apart from him we can do nothing. Again, it's the oxygen canister. Remain, pray. Final thing, be a friend. Have a look at verse 15. Remain in his words.

Speak to him in prayer and be a friend. Verse 15, I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I've called you friends for everything that I learned from my father.

I have made known to you. See what it is that characterizes friendship? He has told you everything. Facebook has robbed us of the word friend.

To be a friend now is just kind of some loose kind of connection to someone that you maybe met once. That's not a friend. A friend is someone that you tell everything.

And Jesus says, I have called you friends because I've taken everything from my father and made it known to you. How is your relationship between yourself and Jesus defined?

[28 : 43] Is it that divulging everything friendship or is it more of a kind of Facebook friend acquaintance? It's to be a constant intimacy.

What does it mean to be a friend? You love listening to their voice and you love speaking to them. You love hearing his words and you love turning to him in prayer.

You almost have to stop at this point as well, don't you? What? Jesus calls me a friend. Really? I deserve no such title.

I deserve no such relationship. I don't deserve a gardener that would prune me. I deserve a gardener that would burn me up.

And yet amazingly in John's Gospel, Jesus would say, I have called you friends. He is the one who has cleansed us from the sin that ought to bar that friendship.

[29 : 41] And He is the one who has laid down his life so that we might be friends. The word cleanses and the death that brings life.

That is stunning. And when it comes to a gardener gardening for fruits, who gets the praise? Who gets the glory when you look at a garden?

The gardener, right? So have a look at verse 8. This is to my Father's glory. The joy of friendship with Christ and fruitfulness in Christ is all for His praise and to His glory.

This is in the context of Jesus preparing his disciples for mission. How is St. Columbus 3 and Charlotte Chapel going to do mission in Edinburgh?

Where is our fruitfulness going to come from? It is going to come from us remaining, staying. And that is going to be the seedbed of our mission, our evangelism, our witness, our faithfulness in Edinburgh.

[30 : 55] Let me speak to you finally. If you are not a Christian, if you are here today and this has just been weird, here offered in the Gospel of Christianity is the greatest of loves from the greatest of friends.

A love that you do not deserve. You do not deserve for this Jesus to lay down his life, to obey even to the cross, to die so that you might have life.

But that is the Gospel of Christianity. Greater love has no one than the cross where Jesus laid down his life for his friends, his obedient love for your complete joy.

The command to you might not be remain, it might be belief today to come into this fruitful garden to the praise of God's name.

Let's pray together.

[32 : 04] Gracious Father in Heaven, we thank you that in the Gospel of Jesus Christ we have the greatest demonstration of love.

Let's thank you that in the person of Jesus we have the one who obeyed perfectly, the one who lived the life we should have lived and yet died the death we should die.

Father, we thank you that his obedient love for those who believe results in our eternal life and our complete joy. Father, we pray that we would be those who obey that command, who remain, who see the warning of Judas, who see the deadness of the joys of the world and so who cling to Christ, who remain in Christ as a branch does a vine.

And we pray that you would produce in us this fruit of love and joy that your garden in Edinburgh might grow, that the fruitfulness of your Gospel in Edinburgh might increase.

Father, please, may we remain and may we produce this fruit and it is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.