

CAREY BAPTIST CHURCH

SERMON BY CHAMINDRA LEENIYAGODA FOR SUNDAY 21ST AUGUST 2022

John 15: 1-17

Our Lord Jesus always took simple visual things well understood by the people of Israel. A little child on the lap, Samaritan, wheat and harvest and the last visual object – The Vine.

The logo of the ancient Israel, even on their coin!

The Lord Jesus, after celebrating the Passover, was leading the disciples to the garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus had told them about HIS suffering & death in advance and it would have been like a secret on the deathbed! Everyone would have paid real attention when HE said - “I am the true vine”

1/ First, our Lord shows the fruitless branches, full of lovely leaves, beautiful appearance, not-pruned huge vine creepers.

The Lord was talking about the unfruitful Israel.

HE can always take the unfruitful branches out of the production line so that it would not hamper the ultimate end result. And we can do nothing about it unless we pray earnestly. But HE does not do that immediately.

2/ Then what would HE do? Our Lord prunes. Most of the time, we misunderstand this to disciplining.

What's the difference between disciplining & pruning?

- Discipline - Hebrew 12: 6 - ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.’
- And here comes pruning! “*What’s that for?*” Don’t we ask that often when we are puzzled of the action we just experienced.

3/ Here, we are really doing well, serving God wholeheartedly, serving at Church extremely sincerely, loving our neighbour as ourselves and moreover, loving God with all our hearts! But all at once, bang! Here comes trouble, tribulation, disaster, and pain! **This is called pruning.** And we ask God, what’s that for! And the most frustrating thing is when God does not answer. Isn’t that true? Do you agree? And the worst is that we jump into the conclusion of being

disciplined or punished pondering what sin we have done asking ourselves
“now what”!

And we miss all that God offers because we are busy thinking how to put things right when Lord Jesus says it's finished.

4/ That's the reason HE has brought me here to encourage you and me both, with the truth.

We read Job's story so gladly and we even quote his story often, just imagine his predicament during the trials and tribulation! I wonder if he ever asked God “what's that for?” he had all the rights to ask though and we too can. God likes interrogatory prayers.

5/ Here is the secret. Now listen Church, very carefully. Just like I am talking from my death bed! If you won't get this today, then I would have to answer to the Lord as HE will ask, “Chami when was it in your Preaching that you lifted ME up and shared the secret with My Church family.

6/ Let me take the literal meaning of the vine first before going into the unpacking of the scripture. Closest the vine dresser gets to the vine is the only time when it's been pruned. Did you hear that correctly? The closest! Not even when the harvest is gathered, but when he prunes the vine. Why? Because he has a very sharp knife, and he must be really careful when pruning.

So, the next time you go through pruning, just remember that our Lord is the closest to you. HE is almost all over you. Isn't that amazing.

7/ Here is another secret, this pruning is heart-breaking to the Lord. Did you know that?

Then what makes HIM do that? HIS unconditional love makes it happen.

Why does HE do that? Have you heard the old British saying, if you would like a lovely rose garden, get your enemy to prune it! Our Lord does this, so that we bear much fruit.

8/ Fruit for whom? If I am suffering and my family is suffering, then fruits for whom? **Fruits for the Father.**

We are created to bear fruit for our God. Live for HIS Glory.

9/ Here is another truth which I will share the literal meaning first. Some branches run on the ground; however, the vine dresser tries to save them. Lying on the ground, full of dust & dirt, mud. Are they thrown into the fire? No no no, he comes with a bucket full of water. Carefully washes and ties them to the vine. What's the spiritual meaning? When our Lord says, abide in ME. Jesus lovingly washes us with HIS Precious blood and says, "Abide in ME" where we are safe & sound in the bosom of Jesus. So, what do we get in return! Yes, we are at peace and as an additional bonus blessing Look at verses 7 & 8 – *"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask **whatever you wish**, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."* You see, the next time when we think our prayers are not answered, it would be good to examine ourselves to ensure if we still abide in the Lord Jesus

10/ Here comes the harvest time. The gardener comes with empty baskets, places next to each vine abiding to the vine, full of plump & juicy grapes. For whom?

For the gardener. Now who is the gardener? Look at the first foremost verse – Jesus says, "My Father is the gardener". Do you see now, how precious we are in the eyes of God and the reason HE has saved us.

Does the story end here? No. Yet, our loving Father has to squeeze them to get the best wine! Remember Paul's words – *"I am being poured out like a drink offering"* This is another sermon!

We have two profound lessons to learn in today's scripture.

1. Your Union with Christ Jesus and the union with fellow Christian brothers & sisters.
2. The barren branch, without the Lord Jesus Christ, we can do nothing! It is useless wood.

Our Lord was a carpenter, and HE knew a lot about the wood and also knew that no furniture could be made out of it. The only purpose would for firewood, that's why Jesus said it at the first.

God will use your best wine to demonstrate HIS love for others. Not only for fellow Christians, but also for the non-believers as well so that, "They may see your good deeds & glorify your Father in Heaven"

Love one another...

Bear more fruit, much fruit, much more fruit for the Father, by loving, enduring;

All provision is given by the Lord Jesus... just go into the community & run the race. Constant communion with Christ & constant touch & love with one another. Go now in Peace. Amen.