

VCEFC Daily Devotion March 27-April 2

March 27: John 15:1-4 I am the true vine.

Notes:

- v. 1-2 We have here the last of the “I am” sayings of the Gospel. The background of the vine image is the Old Testament where Israel is repeatedly judged as an unfruitful vine (e.g. Jeremiah 2:21). In contrast to Israel, Jesus presents Himself as the true, genuine vine, and by implication, the true model of Israel. Israel’s place as the people of God is replaced by the true vine and His branches- the church. As a good gardener, the Father trims and prunes the branches that are connected to the vine so that they will bear much fruit. Unfruitful branches in Jesus will be cut off.
- V. 3 The word which has been spoken to the disciples refers to all that Jesus taught His disciples through His deeds and words.
- V. 4 To remain in Jesus has a deeper significance than simply to continue to believe in Him, although it includes that. It connotes continuing to live in association or in union with Him. In the divine relationship grace is the source and support of faith, without which one cannot bear fruit.

Meditate:

1. Are you one of the fruitful branches in Jesus? What kind of fruit are you bearing? Have you experienced the pruning of the Father?
2. Give examples of how you may remain in Jesus.

March 28: John 15:5-11 Apart from me you can do nothing

Notes:

- v. 5 Apart from Christ: nothing, in Christ: much fruit. To remain in Christ is to become fruitful. Fruitbearing signifies vitality of faith and effectiveness in evangelism.
- V. 6 Unfruitful branches are thrown away, become withered, are collected and used as firewood.
- V. 7 The meaning of remaining in Jesus is to remain in His words, which include the revelation that He brought. Such a believer is assured that his prayers will be answered, for his prayer will be dominated by the desire for the service of the Kingdom of God, rather than their own selfish desires.
- V. 8 In such fruitbearing the Father is glorified in the believer, as He is in the Son in His redemptive work, and so doing the believer becomes a true follower of His Lord.
- V. 9-10 To remain in Jesus is also to remain in His love, just as Jesus throughout His life remained in the Father’s love. Jesus further explains the meaning of remaining in His love- it is to obey His commands, as He obeys the Father’s commands.
- V. 11 Such a relationship of love leads to joy to the uttermost. Jesus experienced it, even when facing the dread hour of sacrifice. He reveals these things to His disciples that they may have the same joy in fullest measure.

Meditate:

1. What is the pre-condition of “ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you”?

2. What is the secret of Christian joy? Can you figure it out in this passage?

March 29: John 15:12-17 A Friend's love

Notes:

- v 12-13 The paragraph begins and ends with Jesus' command to love one another. Jesus' love for His disciples has set the standard of love within the Christian community. Just as Jesus laid down His life for us, we shall also lay down our lives for one another. This is the definition of Christian love and Christian friendship.
- V 14-15 Abraham was noted as a 'friend of God'(Isa 41:8), also was Moses. (Exod 33:11) The disciples are declared to be Jesus' friends because of His love for them manifest in His death on their behalf (v. 13) and their obedience to Him. That is a renewed relationship between Jesus and His disciples in the light of His revelation to them, so that He no longer calls them servants but friends.
- V 16-17 The privilege bestowed on the disciples was not on account of their worth but through electing grace. They are appointed (set aside) to go forth and bear fruit for God., to this end assurance is given that prayer in the name of Jesus (as they engage in seeking fruit for God's glory) will be answered by the Father.

Meditate:

1. What does it mean to lay down your life for your friend? Can you give some practical examples?
2. How can you grow in your friendship with Jesus?
3. What is the fruit that lasts (v. 16)?

March 30: John 15:18-25 No servant is greater than his master.

Notes:

- v 18-19 "The world" refers to those who are opposed to God, and hence opposed to God's people. The world's hatred for the disciples is a factor with which the disciples have to come to terms. Two roots of that hatred are here mentioned: the world's prior hatred for Jesus, which inevitably becomes directed to the disciples through their connection with Him, and its perception that the disciples are not "of" the world, that their origin is in another world and that they belong to that other world.
- v 20-21 The mission of the disciples will result in the same twofold response as the work of Jesus Himself: persecution or obedience. To persecute the body of Christ (the church) is to persecute Christ. On the positive side, the disciples. Message will often be received, not as the word of men, but as the word of God. This is the portion of those who bear Jesus' name.
- V 22-24 The guilt of the world consists in its rejection of the revelation brought by Jesus, and since that revelation is from God, it entails the rejection of God Himself. Its rejection of Jesus causes its sin of unbelief to be fully exposed.
- V. 25 The Scripture finds its fulfillment, "they hated me without reason."(Ps 69: 4) This verse is frequently cited in the New Testament in connection with the sufferings of Jesus.

Meditate: Have you ever experienced hatred from the world because you are a Christian? How do you deal with it?

March 31: John 15:26- 16:4 Are you ready to testify for Jesus?

Notes:

- v. 26-27 After warning the disciples of their future persecution, Jesus gives them the assurance of the presence of the Holy Spirit with them. They will not be left alone during their time of crisis. Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit (the Counselor) Who not only will testify about him, but will empower the disciples to testify for Jesus in the midst of their persecution. (cf. Matthew 10:19, Mark 13:11, Acts 5:32, 1 John 5:7) Note the word “testify”(martyrein) in this context comes close to meaning martyrdom or “bearing witness with one’s life”. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth in contrast with the world that falsely rejects Jesus and his message.
- v. 1-2 Once again Jesus warns the disciples about the price they have to pay for testifying about Him. They will be expelled from the synagogues and face death (cf. Matt. 10:17,21; Mark 13:9, 12; Luke 21:12, 16). Expulsion from the synagogue has already been mentioned in conjunction with the man born blind, who has come to faith in Jesus, and his parents (9:22-24). John has also mentioned that many of the religious leaders, though believe in Jesus, fail to confess their faith openly for the fear of being expelled from the synagogue. Jesus further points out that many of His disciples will be killed by people who think that they are offering a service to God.
- v. 3-4 The affirmation that unbelieving Jews who so act know neither the Father nor Jesus follows on from 15:18-25, and is to be understood in that context of hatred of Jesus and rejection of the revelation in His words and works. The sufferings which the disciples are to endure should serve as confirmation of their Lord’s knowledge of the future and therefore of their faith in Him.

Meditate:

1. In the first century, believers had to risk their lives to testify for Jesus. In today’s world, what price would a Christian pay for witnessing Jesus?
2. Have you ever suffered for Jesus? What have you sacrificed for the sake of your faith in Jesus?

April 1: John 16:5-11 It is for your good that...

Notes:

- v. 5-6 The disciples are grieving over their impending persecution and the departure of their master. They are so self-absorbed that they fail to understand the implications of Jesus going to the Father.
- v. 7 Jesus once again reassures His sorrowful disciples of the advantage of His departure. Jesus has to complete His mission through His death, resurrection and ascension to the Father before the Holy Spirit comes. The Holy Spirit will enable the disciples to carry on Jesus’ mission to the world.
- v. 8 Jesus explains the role of the Holy Spirit in relation to the world that has rejected and continues to reject the revelation of God in Jesus. The key term is “convict”, which means “expose, unmask, show up an error or misrepresentation”. Thus, the role of the Holy Spirit is to expose the world and demonstrate its error with reference to sin, righteousness and judgment.

- v. 9 The recognition that the prime sin is unbelief in relation to God's revelation in Jesus runs through the whole Gospel. Such unbelief entails rejection, not ignorance, of the proclamation of Christ in the Gospel. The Holy Spirit will expose the the world's unbelief and guilt before God.
- v. 10 The lifting up of Jesus on the cross, which in the world's eyes is the demonstration of Jesus' unrighteousness, becomes the means of His exaltation to heaven by the Father. Hence, Jesus' return to the Father demonstrates His righteousness and exposes the unrighteousness of the world's condemnation of Him.
- v. 11 The Holy Spirit will expose the wrong judgment of the world in that its submission to the "prince of the world" leads not only to its rejection of the Son of God, but to becoming the tool of its prince to his murder. When Jesus is lifted up on the cross, the prince of the world will be condemned and "driven out" (12: 31).

Meditate:

1. If you were one of the disciples, would you be also filled with grief because of Jesus' departure? How could you look beyond the loss and see the gain behind?
2. In what ways does the Holy Spirit expose the world's sinfulness, unrighteousness grand wrong judgment in today's world?

April 2: John 16:12-15 Who is able to guide you into ALL truth?

Notes:

- v. 12-13 Although Jesus has revealed all that the Father has given Him to the disciples, they are not able to understand it all without the help of the Holy Spirit. The "Spirit of truth" will lead the disciples to grasp "all the truth", so that they may comprehend the depths and heights of the revelation as yet unperceived by them. Jesus also points out that the revelation mediated by the Holy Spirit will not be His own, but one that He will receive, just as Jesus reveals the truth He receives from the Father. Thus, Jesus brings the truth, and makes it present through His coming into the world, the Spirit opens up this truth and creates the entrance into it for the believers.
- v. 14-15 Since in the Gospel of John, "glorification" of Jesus always refers to His death and resurrection, the revelatory work of the Holy Spirit which "will bring glory" to Jesus may have a special relation to the redemptive work of Jesus, wherein the revelation of God in Christ reaches its climax. In the Spirit's unfolding of that revelation the glorification of Jesus in His death and exaltation continues. For the revelation of God is supremely Jesus, given in incarnation, death and resurrection for the life of the world. (John 3:16)

Meditate:

1. How does the Holy Spirit help you to understand the teaching of Jesus?
2. What shall we do to facilitate the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives?