

## Sermon Draft

**Text: John 15:1–8**

### Sermon: "Bearing Fruit"

Easter is all about life, and our text, the Gospel tells us that it is only through our connection with Jesus Christ that we live the kind of life in him that bears fruit.

Spring is busting out all over! Fields have been plowed. Seeds have been sown. Gardens have been tilled and planted. Now comes the work of tending to our fields and gardens. We do this with an eye to the future. We look forward to the harvest: the corn, wheat, tomatoes, carrots, and potatoes.

God's glorious creation at this time of the year brings out the farmer or gardener in many of us for some more so than others! God's Word today speaks to each of us, whether or not we've ever done any farming or gardening. We know what our Lord Jesus is talking about in this section of the Gospel of John, where he speaks of the vine and the branches. God's Word is clear. Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches. God has created us branches to bear fruit. And his Word is clear about how this will happen: God is the one who enables us to produce fruit. He does that through our connection to the vine, who is Jesus Christ. If Jesus is a part of our lives as Savior and Lord, then fruit will appear. Jesus, the Vine Divine, works a fruitful life in us through the connection of faith.

Fellow branches connected to the vine, what are some examples of the fruit Jesus talks about here? From other places in the Word of God, we know that this fruit includes the attitudes found inside us, described in Galatians as "**fruit of the Spirit**": joy and peace and kindness and more (Galatians 5:22–23). This fruit also includes the God-given ability to resist sin and the power to live a Christian life filled with good works in service to those around us. These are examples of the fruit Jesus wants to see in each of us. We bear fruit when we help one another, care for

those in need whether physically or emotionally. We bear fruit when we give of our time and talents for others.

If you were to admire and commend fellow Christians for their fruit-bearing, they would likely say, “Thank you, but it’s no big deal.” They might also say, “To God be the glory.” Do you know why Christians would say such a thing? Because our strength and ability to produce such fruit comes from Jesus, the life-giving vine! That is why. In verse 5 of our text, Jesus says, **“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.”**

Then, Jesus quickly adds this warning: **“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”** (vs 5–6).

People who have big trees in their yards will tell you that, along with the blessings of big trees—their beauty, the curb appeal they give to the property, the shade they provide—they also make a mess. Seeds, leaves, twigs, and branches fall. The owners often have a growing pile of branches somewhere on their property. Use as kindling in a backyard firepit is not far off for those branches. Or maybe burial at the dump. And speaking of that, have you ever seen the section at the dump for all the yard debris? It is not a pretty sight most of the time taking up the whole back corner of the facility.

In our lives as the people of God, we don’t want to become like those dead branches. How do we prevent such death, when it comes to our relationship with God and bearing fruit for him? Jesus makes it clear in our lesson today. The key to our remaining vital, living branches and not becoming dead branches in the kingdom of God is to remain connected to the vine, Jesus, and to receive life from him.

That’s why Jesus came to earth in the first place: to bring and to give life. Before Jesus came to us with his life-giving work, we

and all humankind were helplessly dead branches whose destiny it was to be picked up and thrown into the fire. We were lifeless, fruitless, worthless, dead-in-sin branches! But at the right time, even when we were lifeless, fruitless, worthless, dead-in-sin branches, Jesus Christ, true God from heaven, was planted in this world. Jesus was and is the Vine Divine, and he came to bring life to us all!

Our heavenly Father had a most unusual plan to bring us life through the Vine Divine, his beloved Son. The plan for life would involve death. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would have to suffer and even, for a time, be cut off from God the Father as Jesus took upon himself on the cross the sin and eternal punishment of all humankind. The vine, Jesus, died. He was buried. But in three days, he rose from the dead. Forty days later, he ascended into heaven. And from heaven, Jesus Christ, the living Lord, has given you the great gift of the Holy Spirit, who, through the tools of God's Word and the Lord's Supper, keeps you connected to the vine, giving you and keeping you in saving faith—active, fruit-bearing faith.

What grace! What a blessing it is that, by God's power through the mighty life-giving message of Jesus Christ, you and I remain connected to the vine and we live forever! Oh, how God loves us and wants us to be living branches and his dear children now and forever!

This love of God for us ought to be so precious that we let nothing get in the way of regular worship and the study of God's Word—unless poor health or immobility prevents us from gathering with fellow branches of the vine for worship. Life comes from the Vine Divine, Jesus and that life flows to us through his precious Gospel promises found throughout the Bible, for our reading any time during the week, and it is given to us personally here in the Lord's Supper. So, we come here, we hear and read God's Word on our own and with others, and we are strengthened

in our faith. In our worship services, we receive Jesus' very body and blood in the Lord's Supper, bringing to us all the life-giving gifts of Jesus, including his forgiveness for all our sins and the strengthening of our faith. Yes, through his Word and the Lord's Supper, we remain connected to the life-giving vine, Jesus.

This faith connection to Jesus is of utmost importance. But there is much more Good News! There are more benefits that flow to us, according to what he tells us today in his Word. These benefits are centered in the way his words shape our wills to align with what he wants for us, in two very important ways. The first benefit is prayer. Our Lord says in verse 7 of our lesson today: ***"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."*** Here, Jesus invites us to pray. This is a special kind of prayer. This is prayer aimed at carrying forward the work of Jesus. This is prayer based upon God's Word and will. This is prayer that acknowledges, ***"Not my will, but thine be done."*** This is prayer that trusts a loving Father in heaven to provide for our needs.

Besides a life of prayer, another benefit of staying connected to Jesus by faith is the delight of glorifying God by our fruit-bearing. Jesus says in verse 8, ***"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."*** You see, Jesus makes us his followers through his words, and we in turn reveal that we are his followers through our fruit—our attitudes, words, actions. Knowing Jesus and living in him affects how we talk about others, where we go, what we do with our time, how we spend our money. We live with purpose and hope. Oh, we still can have fun, but this is the best kind of fun! People notice we are a little different than others, and they may wonder why. We can say we are different because Jesus is our Savior and God is our loving Father. We want to live a "thank-you" life to God; we want to honor him with our lives. That is fruit-bearing that glorifies God. And that kind of life is always in season. There is always a harvest,

for Jesus is the faithful Vine Divine. And as we are connected to him through faith, he promises we will be fruitful branches. God grant this for Jesus' sake.

Amen