**Sermon Summary – Sunday 4 June 2023**

**C.H.R.I.S.T.I.A.N – I AM NOTHING without CHRIST (Calven Celliers)**

If you look at the word, **C.H.R.I.S.T.I.A.N**, and you take away **C.H.R.I.S.T**, you're left with **I.A.N** – **I Am Nothing.** *I am nothing without Christ!*

**Read John 15:5.**

*"Without Christ, we are capable of no Christ-exalting good." (John Piper)*

Let us to consider Christ's statement, *"apart from me you can do nothing."*

The words *"apart from me you can do nothing"* forms part of a long conversation Jesus had with His disciples on the evening of the Last Supper. After Judas departs, Jesus tells the remaining disciples that He is the vine and His Father is the vinedresser. And He says that God takes away branches that do not bear fruit, and He prunes every fruit-bearing branch. And because of their parallel nature, we need to read John 15: 4 & 5 together, because context matters. When we learn to read the Bible in context — not just as a collection of memorable phrases — some familiar verses take on a much deeper, richer meaning – **Read John 15: 4 & 5.** In the immediate context, the phrase *"you can do nothing"* is directly related to *"bearing spiritual fruit"* and *"apart from me"* stands opposite to *"abide in me."* And so, when you look at it like that, it becomes evident that in order to fully grasp what Jesus was saying, we need an understanding of *abiding* and *bearing fruit*.

That night, in the Upper Room, Jesus told the disciples He would not physically be with them much longer, but He also assured them that their union would not end at the foot of the cross, He would ask the Father to help them by sending the Holy Spirit, and even though the world would not see Him, He would live inside every believer – **Read Ephesians 1:13.**

*"Christmas = God with us / Easter = God for us / Pentecost = God in us." (Canon J. John)*

The Holy Spirit is the Christian's seal. God's own Spirit comes to abide in or take up residence in the believer. And the experience of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life is proof to them, and a demonstration to others, of the genuineness of their faith. The Holy Spirit provides the inward assurance that we belong to God. And it is through the Holy Spirit's power and presence, that we as born-again believers are spiritually nurtured by Him, much like a vine nourishes its branches in hopes of producing fruit, so God remains in us through the Holy Spirit, and the result of the work of the Spirit in a believer's life is fruit. Essentially, bearing fruit means to become more and more like Jesus. Spiritual fruit will show itself in our lives as we spend time with Jesus and get to know Him better; His thoughts will become our thoughts. His purpose will become our purpose. The more time you spend with Jesus, the more we will become like Jesus. No branch can bear fruit by itself, it must remain in the vine.

To abide is a verb. It is active. Jesus has told us clearly what we must do in order to bear good fruit. Abiding in Christ is more than just a feeling or a belief, it's something we do. Christianity is about far more than holding right beliefs or adopting right behaviours, it's about entering into an intimate, living relationship with God, in which we experience life-giving fellowship with Him. And that's why Jesus illustrates the point so aptly with the relationship between a vine and a branch. As disciples of Christ, we must stay firmly connected to Him to remain spiritually productive. A branch draws strength, nourishment, protection, and energy from the vine. If it is broken off, it quickly dies

and becomes unfruitful. When we neglect our spiritual life, ignore the Word of God, skimp on prayer, and withhold areas of our lives from the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit, we are like a branch broken off the vine. Our lives become fruitless.

Abiding involves 3 interwoven aspects: to abide in the vine means to be united to Jesus *(that's connection)*, to rely on Jesus *(that's dependence)*, and to remain in Jesus *(that's continuance)*.

Abiding in Jesus means having a life-giving connection to Him. Remaining connected is the difference between a weak, ineffective life and one brimming with spiritual vibrancy. We *(the branches)* need to be connected to Him *(the Vine)* for our life and sustenance. It's only in and through a personal connection with Him that we are able, or rather enabled, to bear fruit. If there is no connection, there is no life, no fruit. It is fully attaching ourselves to Him and drawing our necessary life force from Him. Jesus is teaching us in this Scriptural account how an ongoing, vital connection with Him will directly determine the amount of His supernatural power at work in our lives.

If you take a fish out of water, it will die; water without fish is still water, but fish without water is nothing. And if you take a tree out of the ground, it will die; soil without a tree is still soil, but a tree without soil is nothing. And it's exactly the same with the relationship between man and God. When we disconnect from God, we are nothing; God will always be God, but man without God is nothing.

The branch is dependent on the vine. The branch derives its life and power from the vine. Without the vine, the branch is useless, lifeless, powerless. Sap flows from the vine to the branch, supplying it with everything that makes it grow. As believers, we receive the *"sap"* of Christ's grace through our life-giving connection to Him. **Read Galatians 2:20.** As born-again believers we are called to yield ourselves to Christ in order to be completely dependent upon Him for everything. It is only in Him that we flourish, and experience the abundance of life that Jesus said He came to give.

Abiding also involves continuance. In fact, the very word abide means to remain, stay closely connected, or continue. This simply means that we go on trusting, that we keep on depending, that we never stop believing. Abiding in Him isn't about working or serving ourselves into a frenzy. It is an ongoing, growing relationship that rests in the One who gives us the ability to be all that He has created us to be.

*"In abiding, it's always your move!" (Bruce Wilkinson)*

Picture the place on a vine where the trunk meets a branch. It's the *point of connection*, where the life-giving nutrients in the sap flow through to the developing fruit. The only limitation to the amount of sap that goes to the fruity potential is the circumference of the branch where it meets the trunk. In other words, the branch with the largest, least obstructed connection is abiding the most and will have the greatest potential for a bigger crop. Jesus wasn't encouraging us to do more for Him, instead I believe He encourages us to spend more time with Him. And so, in keeping with Bruce Wilkinson's terminology, when it comes to abiding the next move is up to you.

Abiding is all about making your relationship with Jesus a priority in your day. Simply put, more abiding means more of God in your life. And in this teaching Jesus is declaring the need for right priorities. Maintaining a secure attachment to the Lord is of utmost spiritual importance, because without Christ we are nothing.

I challenge you to evaluate where you are on the spectrum of abiding in Christ. Because without Christ, you and I are nothing. It's your move!

*"The degree of fullness in any life accords perfectly with the intensity of true desire. We have as much of God as we actually want." (Aiden Tozer)*