

John 15:1-18 'Abide in me' (19.10.14)

- As I was beginning to come back to work God spoke to me about what we need to do next as a church here in Mitford and it was 'to look to our own discipleship and growth', **not as a church but as individuals.**
- At the moment I don't want us to think about what we are doing as a church, or where we are going or what we are going to do or not do.
- I believe God is asking us all to look into our lives, our relationship with him-it is the only way forward for us.
- That's very inward looking and it mustn't stay like that, but for now we need to understand how to be disciples ourselves so we can grow as disciples and then make disciples
- This church has seen some wonderful times. Many of you came in the last 15 years or so because you needed somewhere to bring your children where they would be welcomed, and be taught about Jesus, and in the last couple of years most of them have now left and gone to university or got jobs elsewhere...so what now?
- Do we go back to the beginning and start again? No, things have changed, we have changed, society has changed, and the church changes too.
- God isn't necessarily going to do the same thing. Many of you came for your children's sake and have stayed because you love and are loved here.
- I believe God wants to do a new thing, something different-I don't know what that will look like yet but we have some preparation to do before he can do it.
- **We need to pray more** as a church. We need to be asking God what he wants to do in us and through us so we know what we are called to next. Saturday morning **Dec 6th** 10am-12noon Dick is organising us to get together and pray. Everyone is welcome
- So what are we here for now? What is church for? Why do you come?
- 9 months ago in January I brought to us as a church our **New Year theme and vision of discipleship.** The sermon is on the website – you can go back to it and see what I said then. Perhaps try answering the questions too
- Today I'm asking, (my 1st sermon back after being off sick for 6 months) **What have we been learning since then?** How are we developing this theme in our lives? **How are we growing?** Or even **Are we growing?**
- **How would you answer that question?** Think about it now-(pause) Could come to the front and say how you have grown since January? What story could you tell? We need to hear more about what God is doing in our lives.
- **What does growth look like for a Christian?**
- **What do we compare ourselves to? How do we measure growth?**
- In the passage Jesus teaches he is the vine and God the Father is the vine grower/vine dresser/gardener- this is all about **our relationship with God.** Jesus was dependent on his Father
- That is how it needs to be for us too-Jesus says we should '**Abide**' in him,
- **v 4 abide in me,** remain in me, live in me, make your home with me
- never mind anyone else-this is just you and God.
- 'abide ' is used 11 times in 11 verses-really important
- Sounds a bit mystical but in reality we are to keep in contact with God, don't try to live without him, don't become self-sufficient and think you can manage without him-easy to do when you've been a Christian for a while.
- Jesus needed his regular contact. He would go off to pray to his Father-showing his need and we need this too
- So personally organise some time to read your bible and pray, not only when you are in church or in a crisis

- We can't live the Christian life without him, and also without others of the faith. We need to come to church-it just doesn't work going it alone. Please come more often if you have begun to come monthly or every few weeks-not because we need you, or we miss you, nor because you can but because you **MUST...** for yourselves-you need to be here regularly.
- **Abide in me-** we can't be a branch disconnected or you will die, and you can't bear fruit off the vine. Jesus remained in the Father (John 14:20)
- We can't be a disciple of Jesus without an active, living, growing relationship with him. We need to be joined to, dependent upon, connected to Jesus the vine.
- but its not only one-way –amazingly Jesus says 'Abide in me **as I abide in you, apart from me you can do nothing.**' **He needs to live in us.**
- just as the branch cannot bear fruit unless it is attached to the vine, so we can't have spiritual life and substance without being in him- it's really obvious but **are we neglecting our relationship with Jesus?**
- **So how do we know if we are abiding in him and he in us?**
- There's a promise in **v5-'you will bear MUCH fruit** ..if you abide in me and let me abide in you'
- Ask yourself am I abiding in Him? **Am I fruitful?** What is there to show I am growing? Not just being a branch or leaves-that shows you are alive.
- **What is the fruit? What are 'grapes' in my life?**
- **v10** Jesus says '**If you keep my commandments** you **WILL** abide in my love'. That's a conditional promise and its how it worked for Jesus
- **To be fruitful is to** love Jesus, do what he has taught you, live by his words and teaching
- I recently read of a church leader who asked his people 3 questions he described it as '*3 questions for sleepy Christians*' ☺

1. How real has God been to your heart (not mind) this week?
2. How has God's word been alive and active, either to comfort or challenge you? Are there promises that have been true in your experience?
3. Do you know and love God more now than ever before?

- 'When you mature ' it says in The Message version- '**you will be my disciples**'
- This also is the **fruit** of our relationship with Jesus-we become his disciples, not just believers but followers and doers of his word. We begin to really live it.
- This is what Jesus is looking for. Not just believers, he wants us to become his disciples.
- **And what do disciples do? v8** They abide, remain, stay, grow, in that love, and **glorify God.**
- **And what is the result of abiding in God's love, in this relationship, and living out his teaching?**
- **JOY**, not shallow happiness but deep joy, '**that my joy may be in you**'. God will be delighted in you, really pleased, you will give him pleasure. Isn't that amazing?!
- and not only that but that '**our joy will be complete**'.
- 'Complete' means whole, fulfilled, satisfied
- This is what life is about, living it to the full.
- This is what we need to be doing right now-**getting back to basics-re thinking where we are in God, with God, our relationship with him, just for ourselves.**
- This is how we will grow.
- Is this what you want? Then it is here for the asking
- Jesus says to each one of us 'Abide in me'.