

Interactive lesson



picture from MMMS collection

Who likes grapes? <Let them respond>

Where does fruit come from? <Let them respond>

Grapes grow on grapevines. Do they grow on the main stem of the grapevine? <Let them respond>

Branches grow off the main vine, and grapes grow on the branches. What does a vineyard owner do if a branch has no grapes on it? Why? <Let them respond>

A vineyard owner is better served and happier if his/her grapevine branches produce a lot of good fruit. What happens if a branch separates from the main vine? <Let them respond>

Who is the source of our life? <Let them respond>

What do you think Jesus wants us to produce? What do you think good fruit for God would be?

<Let them respond>

I want you to listen closely to the Gospel reading today, to hear what Jesus says about our relationship with Him and God, what we need to do, and what happens if we do not do it.

Gospel lesson

We hear today from Jesus' farewell discourse to the

disciples, which followed the Last Supper.



picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/bunches-of-grapes-hanging-from-vines-3840335/>

John 15:1-8 (NRSV)

¹ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower.

² He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.

³ You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.

⁴ Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

⁶ Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" UMH #384

Message: We Bear Fruit



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/how-shall-we-love/fifth-sunday-of-easter-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/fifth-sunday-of-easter-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Gracious source of all life,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may bear plentiful fruit to Your glory. Amen.

Today we consider how "We Abide in Christ":

"Throughout the three weeks of this series, the theme of giving glory or glorifying God arises again and again, which raises important questions for [us]: "How do we give God glory?""

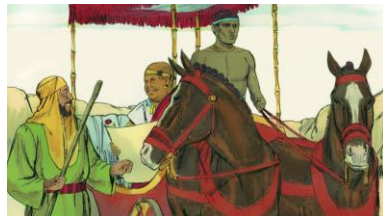
How do we give God glory? Jesus said we are to bear fruit. What does that look like?

Napoleon Bonaparte is said to have looked back and commented that Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and he

had all created great empires by conquest, yet those empires fell because they were based on force. Jesus built an empire by love, and it is still growing today, with millions committing their lives to Him.¹

God is glorified in the sharing of love. That is how we bear fruit. And it will look different depending on the circumstances and needs of the people involved.

The psalmist spoke about poor people and those who die. For them, sharing love was enabling them to “eat and be satisfied” and hearts that live forever, with each generation proclaiming deliverance of the Lord.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/philip-ethiopian/>

In Acts, we heard about a devout eunuch who had been worshipping in Jerusalem and was reading scriptures on his way home, trying to understand them better. In those days, eunuchs were not considered full members of the Jewish community, because they could not bear offspring. He would have been excluded from some of the discussions men held at the temple, regardless of how much he loved and honored God in his heart.

What did sharing love look like for him? Philip

¹ King, Martin L., Jr., *Strength to Love* (Minneapolis:Fortress Press, 2010), p.51.

joined the eunuch, engaged with him in discussion of the scripture, and brought him fully into the body of Christ by baptizing him. In this way, Philip shared the love of Jesus and power of the Holy Spirit with the eunuch, enabling him to go and do likewise for the glory of God.

With whom have you spoken about Jesus lately and invited into our faith family?



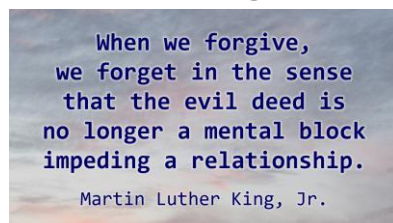
picture from <https://www.pexels.com/photo/group-of-multiethnic-people-gathering-around-female-speaker-in-studio-3856027/>; credit: Matheus Bertelli

Note that God created all of us and loves us regardless of the condition of our body. Whom have you noticed that is living on the fringes, not fully accepted because of some physical attribute? Have you helped them to see that they are beloved children of God no matter what they look like, how they dress, or any unusual physical characteristics they have, by treating them with the respect of an equal to you rather than as someone needy or less than you, or overserving them to their embarrassment?

It is a hard balance sometimes. Many times we do not even realize when we go off-kilter, but as the epistle of John points out, we need to love one another. If we say we hate someone, we are not filled with the love of God, because love drives out hate.

If we are afraid of how the other person may react, we need to trust God to guide us and do the best we can, because “perfect love casts out fear.”

Jesus gave Himself for us, so that we could be reconciled with God and, freed from the bonds of sin blocking us, reconciled with one another. Are you holding a grudge against someone? It is time you learned how to forgive them, because God forgave you.



*background picture from MMMS
collection*

You have heard the expression “Forgive and forget.” I prefer what Martin Luther King, Jr. said about forgiveness: “When we forgive, we forget in the sense that the evil deed is no longer a mental block impeding a relationship.”²

We are separated from God and others by Sin, which causes hate, fear, denigration of others, bigotry, tearing others down, excluding them, and various kinds of harm. Yet Jesus came that we could know God’s forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not about letting someone walk all over you or about ignoring destructive behaviors. It is about re-establishing a relationship on healthy

² King, Martin L., Jr., *Strength to Love* (Minneapolis:Fortress Press, 2010), p.45.

terms. That is what Jesus enables for us, when we abide in Him and He in us.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/how-shall-we-love/fifth-sunday-of-easter-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/fifth-sunday-of-easter-year-b-graphics>

Only through being connected to the love of God in the Holy Spirit through Jesus can we bear good fruit that nurtures others, nurtures us, and nurtures community. So I beg of you: stay connected!

- † Seek God – through Bible study, through church, through discussions with others in faith
- † Invite Christ into all that you do – pray about it!
- † Look for ways that you can serve up the fruits of the Spirit to others (song based on Gal 5:22-23: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control”)

Think about what sharing the love of Christ in concrete ways may mean for the people in your life, whom you encounter. Nervous about starting? Breathe in the Holy Spirit, pray to Jesus, and trust God. And remember that the way we bear fruit is in being connected through the Lord, with Jesus’ love in our hearts, and sharing our gifts of the Spirit with others.