

A. Introduction

1. This morning we are celebrating the Lord's Supper
 - a. as we do on the first Sunday of each month
 - b. it is the memorial that our Lord Jesus Christ has left us
 - c. at the Passover meal in the night He was betrayed
 - d. at this time we both look back to His death for us
 - e. and ahead to the time He will gloriously return to earth

2. because this is intended to be a time of contemplation, of self-examination, of refreshing our fellowship with God; so that you can pause and ponder on this subject, I have not included any congregational handout this morning

3. our text this morning is the first verse of that John 15
 - a. **I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine-dresser.** (NAS)
 - b. which immediately follows Jesus words
 - (A) as the Passover meal was finished, where he said
 - (B) **"... Arise, let us go from here"** (John 14:31b)
 - (C) then, Jesus and His disciples headed to Gethsemane
 - c. so we find that this text is very closely connected with the memorial service in which we participate this morning

4. but first, let us fill in the context more fully
 - a. in John 13, we read
 - (A) of the disciples coming together in the upper room
 - (B) **Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.** (John 13:1 NAS)

- (C) then girding Himself with a towel, he washed the feet of the disciples; yes, even Peter's feet as well
- (D) then of the departure of Judas Iscariot, who had already agreed to betray Jesus later that evening
- (E) then the warning that even Peter would deny Jesus
- b. John 14 then quiets the troubled hearts of His disciples
 - (A) "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me." (John 14:1 NAS)
 - (B) and then goes on to give reasons for this statement
 - (1) as a leader He goes ahead of them to the Father
 - (2) He is sending another Helper, a Comforter, the Holy Spirit who will continually abide with them
 - (3) "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." (John 14:27 NAS)
- c. this brings us to this 15th chapter of John
 - (A) the first part of which concerns the deep, abiding relationship that is to exist between the Lord Christ and His disciples after He left this world
 - (B) this relationship Jesus depicts in a most graphic fashion
 - (C) it is like that existing between a vine and its branches
 - (D) and Jesus begins His teaching with these words "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine-dresser." (NAS)
 - (E) and we will be looking at this picture, off and on, in our morning services in the weeks to come

B. Let's Look at the Picture of Jesus as the Vine

1. why would this particular illustration be used at this time?

- a. we can conjecture on the answer
 - (A) perhaps they were passing one of the vineyards on the road to Gethsemane under the full moon
 - (B) or perhaps they remarked on the decoration over the gates of Herod's temple which they had frequented over the past few days, "a golden vine, with its branches hanging down from a great height, the size and fine workmanship of which was a surprising sight to the spectators, to see what vast materials there were, and with what great skill the workmanship was done." ^{-{2}}.
- b. in any event, vines were a common part of the landscape
- c. remember, this was the country that when the spies went in "Then they came to the valley of Eshcol and from there cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes; and they carried it on a pole between two

men, with some of the pomegranates and the figs." (Numbers 13:23 NAS)

2. but there is another, and deeper reason: think back to our Scripture reading this morning from Isaiah 5; the reason is this:
 - a. Israel — God's chosen; God's elect — was God's vineyard
 - (A) in the time of the Maccabees, I am told that the coins of Israel were embossed with the symbol of the vine—^{3}.
 - (B) you cannot distinguish between a vine and its vineyard
 - (C) *In Hampton Court near London there is a grapevine under glass; it is about 1,000 years old and has but one root which is at least two feet thick. Some of the branches of the grapevine are 200 feet long. Because of skilful cutting and pruning, the vine produces several tones of grapes each year.*—^{4}.
 - (D) so the vineyard is defined by the spread of the vine
 - b. and Israel was called God's to be God's vineyard; His vine
 - (A) given every blessing
 - (B) given every advantage
 - (C) and intended to be a testimony of righteousness
 - (D) but instead brought forth worthless grapes — injustice
3. but, our Lord Jesus, the Christ, is the one True Vine
 - a. He alone is the one of whom the Lord says, "*Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.*" (Isaiah 42:1 NAS) —^{5}.
 - b. when in a few short hours
 - (A) all His disciples had scattered
 - (B) and Peter had denied Him
 - c. only the man Jesus was the True Vine; only He the One who did the will of His father; only He was qualified to bring salvation and God's blessing to the Gentiles; as we are told in 1 Timothy 2:5 (NAS): *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*
4. let us consider for a moment that word "True"

- a. He is the True Vine because He is the Faithful One
 - (A) And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it [is] called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. (Revelation 19:11 NAS)
 - (B) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9 NIV)
- b. He is the True Vine because He is Truth ... just a few moments before, Jesus had told His disciples, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." (John 14:6b NAS)
- c. He is the True Vine because He is one with the Father
 - (A) what you see in volume of branches above the ground in a tree, bush or vine, is approximately duplicated below in terms of roots
 - (B) so an old and immense vine will have a deep root that can draw water and nourishment in the harshest clime
 - (C) In a few moments in Gethsemane Jesus prays for His disciples to be one, even as He and His Father are one
 - (D) like a deeply rooted vine in the earth, the Son and the Father are inextricably linked; He is the True Vine

C. Conclusion

1. There are seven "I AM's" in the gospel of John; two are
 - a. John 6:35, "[I AM the Bread of Life](#)" — in a few moments we will partake of the bread which speaks of His body which was given for us; and
 - b. today's verse, John 15:1, "[I AM the True Vine](#)" — and in a few moments we will partake of the fruit of the vine
2. but let me first give a word of admonition
 - a. that the Lord Jesus gave this memorial to His disciples and those who later would become His disciples, His church
 - b. there is no point in partaking of this memorial feast until you have first made the Lord of the feast the Lord of your life by accepting His finished work & Him as your Saviour
 - c. but if you have already taken that all-important step, then use this time this morning to refresh your

relationship with your Saviour and Lord as we sing the first verse of the hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

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Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com. Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick’s database are identified by “Holwick” followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book XV, Chapter XI, Section 3 (Whiston)
3. From “The True Vine and Its Branches” by Rev. Wil Pounds, Holwick Sermon #6572
4. From “Bearing Fruit” a message by Dr Joseph B. Fuiten; Holwick Sermon #8475
5. See also Isaiah 45:4, 65:9, 22