

TITLE: I AM THE VINE

TEXT: JOHN 15: 1 – 8

GOD’S WORD: GALATIANS 5: 19 – 25

I – PLUGGED IN:

It seems that in my last job and in this one I have spent a lot of time in emergency rooms, I.C.U. units and other areas of hospitals where people who have suffered major trauma or debilitating disease of some sort are receiving care. You can’t be in one of these rooms without noticing that the medical people have a lot of electronic machines to help keep us alive. There are heart monitors beeping away to make sure it’s still beating, I.V. machines dripping vital fluid and medicine into our system, and ventilators, which work our lungs and breath for us when we can’t, just to name a few. As you watch the scurrying around of doctors and nurses as they treat the patient, these machines fill the atmosphere with their beeping, buzzing, and humming as they go about their duty.

Whether you like technology or not, these machines play an integral part of medical care for people in life threatening situations. There are a lot of people walking around today because of the existence of these machines. Each one of these machines serves a purpose in the saving or sustaining of human life. It would be easy to see only these machines and their usefulness in our treatment, but there is something else at work here, which can’t be overlooked. Without it, none of these machines could do what they were supposed to do. It’s so basic we sometimes take it for granted and overlook it.....the plug.

No matter how intricate the machines are, no matter what their purpose is or how important they are to survival, none of them can function unless they’re plugged in to the power source. Without power they cease to function and become useless.

II – CHRISTIAN POWER:

I want to carry this analogy over into our Christian lives as well. The Bible says that we are intricate machines made by God. Psalm 139, verse 13 – 15 puts it this way:

¹³ You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body
and knit me together in my mother’s womb.

¹⁴ Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!
Your workmanship is marvelous—and how well I know it.

¹⁵ You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion,
as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.

What we sometimes forget is that God made our bodies and we need God to power our bodies. As I look at the life of Jesus I see this principle at work, we need power to function:

- In the story of his birth we see that it was God's power that overshadowed Mary and she conceived God's Son. (Lk.1:35)
- When Jesus came out of the desert to begin his ministry he was filled with the Holy Spirit's power. (Lk. 4:14)
- When Jesus sent his disciples out to do ministry he gave them power to heal and cast out demons. (Lk. 9:1)
- When Jesus was resurrected and ascended into heaven God placed him on his right hand, the place of power. (Lk. 22:69)
- And in the great commission Jesus told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait until the Holy Spirit came and brought them the power from heaven so they could do their work. (Lk. 24:49)

It all comes down to the fact that we need to be plugged in to be a Christian. Without the power source we will cease to function, and that power source is God. We get plugged in to the source through our relationship to Jesus. Jesus is the outlet to the power we need.

III – TEXT:

As we look at today's text we find Jesus himself explaining this connection. Jesus explains that our relationship to him is primary to everything else and our very existence depends on our union with Jesus.

John 15:1 - 8 (NLT)

¹"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³You have already been pruned for greater fruitfulness by the message I have given you. ⁴Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful apart from me.

⁵"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Anyone who parts from me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷But if you stay joined to me and my words remain in you, you may ask any request you like, and it will be granted! ⁸My true disciples produce much fruit. This brings great glory to my Father.

Jesus uses the image of grape vines to get his message across to his disciples. They all

would have been familiar with these images of rows of vines being cared for by the farmers, of the various branches that came off the vine and produced the groups of luscious ripe grapes used to eat and make wine out of. They were familiar with the fact that gardeners spent hours and a lot of energy to find and maintain just the right vine and then they watched the branches come off of that vine and they cut off the dead ones and pruned the good ones so that they would produce a lot of grapes for the harvest. If a branch produced little or sickly fruit it was lopped off and disposed of. They knew that without being attached to the vine the branches would wither and die. They had no roots or way to grow on their own. They had to depend on the vine for the life giving sap which gave them life and fruit.

Jesus tells his followers through this story that he is that vine. He's not a wild vine or a fake vine; he is "THE" vine, the one that all the branches should cling to. As Christians we are the branches that grow from the vine. We get our power, our nourishment, our ability to produce fruit from this vine we call Jesus. If we are attached to the vine firmly we'll be alive and full of the life giving power that comes from having him as our Savior and we can't help but produce fruit, to follow him and do his work. But if we're not producing the gardener, God, who planted Jesus will prune us back and work with us until we do produce good fruit. If we just don't get it then we become dead wood and the gardener cuts us off, rakes us up, and burns us up.

The key here is that the ability to do what we're supposed to do, the ability to even live comes from being attached to this vine. Jesus said if we remain attached to the vine we will always have power running through us, we'll always be alive, but apart from him we can do nothing. Apart from him we lose the power, the plug gets pulled, and we die and are cast into the fire.

Jesus was pretty plain when he said, "I am the vine, you are the branches." I don't know about you but I want to be one of the branches firmly attached to the vine. I want the power of Jesus coursing through every part of me, now and for all of eternity.

IV – FRUIT PROVES ATTACHMENT:

In the world today there are a lot of vines growing. There are vines of money and politics where the branches try to gain power of other branches. There are vines of personal gratification and possessions where the branches aren't worried about

producing fruit for anyone else but themselves. There are vines of other religions where the branches try to draw their life giving power from things such as crystals, science fiction, or even witchcraft. Real life and power comes from only the “true vine, Jesus the Christ.

You can tell which vines the branches are attached to by the fruit they bear. According to the reading this morning from Galatians I can tell the branches coming off of the false vines because they will produce fruit like:

sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, ²⁰idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, ²¹envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin.

To be attached to these vines and produce these kinds of fruit will result in God cutting you off the vine because you are not producing good fruit. You will wither and die and be gathered up to burn.

But the branches attached to the true vine produce the fruits of:

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control.

The sap of life, God’s Holy Spirit runs through these branches and God, the Master gardener will prune you, care for you, and make sure you receive the nourishment you require. These are the branches he wants to grow.

V – ARE YOU PLUGGED IN:

So as we continue to look at this question of “who do you say I AM” that Jesus asks his disciples, we find that he is the vine, which brings life to the branches. Jesus is the power source for our lives, both here on earth and eternity. My question for you is this... “ARE YOU PLUGGED IN?” Are you connected to the power source that keeps you alive?

It’s really very simple. If you’re plugged in to Jesus you have life.

If you’re not plugged in....

AMEN

