

John 15:1-11

When talking about what it means to abide in Christ, there are 5 aspects that we can reflect on today. First, it is to receive life from Christ (v5). It's a realisation that outside of Christ we will die and "dry out" - just like a branch will die if it is disconnected from the vine. But when we have faith in Christ, we are united with Him - we *abide* in Him and receive life. The second aspect is about abiding in God's love (v9). For "by this we know love, that Christ died to forgive our sins." The life God has given us is not a life of survival but it is full, meaningful and filled with love. The third aspect is to abide in God's Word (v7). In verse 4, Jesus says "abide in me and I in you" and in verse 7 "abide in Me and My Words abide in you." As you can see, the word "I" and "My Words" have been interchanged in these two verses, so to abide in Christ means to abide in His Words. Without His Words, it is impossible for us to experience and receive the love of Christ. The fourth aspect is about experiencing and abiding in the joy of Christ (v11). It is Christ's own words that say "these things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." God wants us to abide in Christ and to experience His joy. And because the joy of Christ is in us, so our joy will be full. It is not a joy that stems only from the goodness and grace of God but a joy that comes from God Himself. Even in the midst of difficulties and struggles - if we abide in Christ, we will receive a joy and peace that comes from God. The last aspect of abiding in Christ is about our eating of the body of Christ and drinking of His blood. When we partake in the Holy Communion, we are reminded of Christ's life, love and joy. We are reminded of His work and how He has worked in us. May every child of God, when partaking in the Holy Communion, have their faith refreshed and strengthened to live more and more like Christ.

Now how can these 5 aspects of abiding in Christ be applied to our prayers? Let us reflect upon 3 kinds of prayer that we can learn in relation to abiding in Christ.

Consider the first kind as *our first prayer*. The prayer when the Gospel was first preached to us, and when we first understood our sin and how Christ is the only Saviour who has come to forgive our sins. When we understood that outside of Christ we could do nothing. When we learnt that Christ has come and died to forgive our sins and that He says "come to Me, all who are heavy laden, take my yoke upon you and learn from me - you will find rest for your souls." When we came to Christ, knowing that we needed Him, and believed in Him - this is the first kind of prayer. We are united with Christ like a branch is united with the vine. The second prayer is *a prayer of thanksgiving* for God's leading, goodness and grace. A thanksgiving for His Word that continues to guide our lives and He Himself who continues to give strength and love to us like a vine supports and gives to its branches. It is also a prayer of gratitude that gives thanks for God who has answered our first prayer. The third prayer is a prayer that expresses *our desire to bear fruit*. A prayer that expresses our desire for the love and joy that we have found in Christ to be experienced by the people around us. It is a hope and prayer that God will continue to lead our lives to bear fruit.

So, for those of you who have not received the Gospel - pray and ask Christ to give you the living water. And for those who already know the Gospel, keep asking for God's mercy to sustain you with the living water so you can continue to abide in Christ and Christ abide in you. Also, give thanks to God - not only as a congregation for His grace and goodness to our Church these past 25 years but also personally, for keeping you day after day, year after year. And lastly, let us also express our desire to bear fruit. Just as

the goal of a branch (as it sticks to the vine) is to bear fruit - let us all, as children of God who abide in Christ; we who have received His love, His life and His Words - preach the Gospel to others so that they too may also receive this grace.