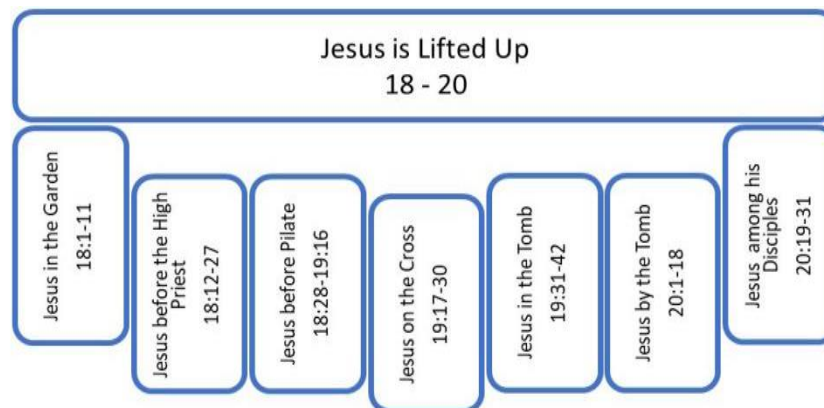


Lesson 26: John 15:12-17 Fruit That Remains

Introduction



John chapter 15 provides us with a powerful focal point on the nature of discipleship. Jesus is not going to say everything there is to say on discipleship in such a short amount of speech, but he sure packs in a lot. There are three parts to the chapter: the introduction of the vine metaphor, the further development of themes already introduced, and the disciples' relationship to the world.

Jesus' teaching here is masterful. The vividness of the vine and the branches metaphor gives us a picture of spiritual dependence essential to the very beginning of discipleship. This is a foundational idea, clearly expressed through a powerful image. Stay connected to Jesus, and he will produce fruit in your life. Then Jesus restates his new commandment from chapter 13, "love one another, just as I have loved you." That's a great start to discipleship. Stay in relationship with Jesus, spiritual dependent on him to work in you and through you as you try to love your brothers and sisters in Christ with the sacrificial love of Jesus. He is the vine. You are the branches. Love one another.

We get that message from our first read through the text. It's right there on the surface. Connected to Jesus, love each other. It provides us with plenty of real life application to struggle with as new believers. Abide in Jesus. Love one another. Abide in Jesus. Love one another. Let's just focus on that. You want to be a good basketball player? Dribble. Pass. Dribble. Pass. Dribble. Pass. Become an expert in those two things. You want to be a disciple of Jesus? Abide. Love. Abide. Love. Abide. Love. Practice those things in every situation through every moment of the day. Become an expert at talking with Jesus through your life situations, expressing your spiritual dependence on him in all things. Get it into your mind in all things, this call to love as Jesus loves. These are fundamentals. Some people depend on their gifts and their drive to play the game. They show talent for organization or planning or teaching or evangelism or singing or playing an instrument or leading kids. All great things. But so many push ahead in the Christian life in their own flesh, in their own ideas without learning the fundamentals. Abide in Christ. Love one another. Abide in Christ. Love one another. We need a coach to help us unlearn all our bad mistakes of doing Christianity out of wrong motives, or out of the wrong strength, out of our flesh. We make some baskets, we win some games, we receive some praise. But we really can only go so far playing the game our way, in our own strength.

Abide in Christ. Love one another.

This is not all there is to discipleship. But this is where you start. Just like dribbling and passing are not all there is to basketball. To play the game, you are going to have to learn to shoot and defend. There is more to discipleship. We start with the basic ideas of abide in Christ and love one another. We recognize these are not just ideas. These are skills that my Christian life must be built on. I need to learn to abide and I need to learn to love and I need to practice abiding and practice loving in my daily life. That's what makes me a disciple.

And with that functioning base, I build my understanding and practice of the Christian life. And Jesus has given us so much of that here in John 15. So, let's continue to unpack the chapter with some review from our last lesson. There is more to discipleship. There's a lot more. And Jesus has given us so much of that here in John 15, even if on the surface we have the clear instruction to abide and to love, there's a lot here. So, let's continue to unpack the chapter with some review from our last lesson but also moving forward to see what Jesus is developing here.

Let's start with a reminder of the structure of John 15. Do you remember? The content of the second half of chapter 14 parallels the first half of 16. The key idea in both is that, though Jesus is going away, he is sending a "parakletos" or Helper to be with the disciples who is the Holy Spirit. Both sections connect the going of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Both sections refer to the Spirit as the Helper and the Spirit of truth.

These two passages about sending the Holy Spirit create a sandwich around our central passage of John 15:1-16:4 which has three parts: the vine and branches metaphor, that was our last lesson; the themes Jesus further develops, you know, we were getting into that some in our last lesson and more now; and the disciples' relationship to the world, which we're going to consider in our next lesson. In this lesson, we continue to unpack the themes Jesus has come back to. Three issues especially. These were three issues stated in John 14:12-15 that caused us to pause and think. How do these things really work in the Christian life? The first was Jesus' claim that his followers will do greater things than he does. The second was that if we ask anything, he will do it, and the third was that, if you love him, you will obey. Jesus has brought all three issues back at this point of his teaching. With promise of the Spirit and the metaphor of abiding, we are better prepared to consider these issues, to understand what Jesus means by these things. Our text for this lesson is John 15:12-17. Verse 12 is the repetition of the commandment to love one another. I'm going to start back a little bit, I'm going to start at verse 7 to remind us of the context. So let's read John 15:7-17.

The Context of Abiding: Heart, Works and Fruit

⁷ "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. ⁹ "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹ "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. ¹² "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. ¹³ "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ "You are My friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. ¹⁷ "This I command you, that you love one another.

The three issues raised in 14:12-15 were, "You will do greater works...ask anything in my name...if you love you will obey." These ideas come together in this abiding metaphor. To unpack the teaching of Jesus, it's helpful to create some kind of organization, some extra boxes to put all these ideas into. I did that in the last lesson by creating three categories of abiding: the heart of abiding, the acts of abiding, and the fruit of abiding. Everybody wants the fruit of abiding, the fruit of an abundant life. But we do not always recognize that the fruit of abiding comes from acts of abiding. To use the basketball analogy again, you don't increase your free throw shooting percentage without practicing shooting free throws. The fruit doesn't just happen. There are certain actions that lead to the fruit. Christianity is not, however, merely a moral or religious system through which you bring about positive effects in your life through your actions. It is not fundamentally about acts that lead to fruit.

Christianity is a relationship with your Creator through Jesus Christ. The heart matters. There is a heart of abiding.

So what is the heart of abiding? What are the acts of abiding? What are the fruit of abiding? These categories help us sort out what Jesus is teaching in these chapters, from chapter 13 up through 15. We've already filled these out in our last lesson, so I'll just give the quick review here.

If you love you will obey. Love is a heart motive of abiding in Christ. The acts of abiding are meant to be acts that flow from a heart of love. Surveying chapters 13 and 14, we can also add humility and faith. These are the heart attitudes of the one who truly abides in Christ. We abide out of love, humility and faith.

Think back to Mary at the beginning of chapter 12 when she poured out a year's wages in perfume on Jesus and she wiped his feet with her hair. Faith, love, humility. That is the heart of a disciple, the heart of one who abides in Jesus.

When we have this heart of abiding, we are moved to action, as Mary was moved to act in extravagant worship. If you think of the other story about Mary and Martha from Luke 10, you see more action. At that moment, Mary is committing herself to learning and Martha is committed to service.

What acts does Jesus call us to in these chapters here in John? He repeated in verse 7, "ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you." That is a promise given to the one who abides in Jesus. It is also a call to action. The fundamental action of the one who abides in Christ is prayer. We acknowledge our relationship to him. We pray in the name of Jesus. We ask the Spirit to guide us and empower us for the glory of the Father. Prayer is relational. And I'm not just talking about prayer times, like the prayer before you go to bed, or a prayer at the meal, or a prayer meeting in church. I'm talking about ongoing, through-the-day prayer. It is conversation with God. We ask about all things. We acknowledge our dependence on Christ. We agree that we can do nothing truly good and lasting apart from Christ. We want to be branches receiving nourishment from the vine. Prayer is a fundamental act of a disciple as he or she expresses dependence on Jesus through the day.

Along with prayer and the Word we commit to acts of obedience. We obey whatever we believe Jesus has called us to do. And these are our three acts of abiding: prayer, Word, obedience. These acts of abiding out of a heart of abiding produce the fruit of abiding. The act of the word is reading, studying, and reflecting on the Word of God. We're abiding on the Word of God. This is also an act of dependence. Jesus is the light. We acknowledge that. We are dependent on him for our understanding of who God is, of who we are, of what life is. Along with prayer and the word, we commit to the act of obedience. We obey whatever we believe Jesus has called us to do. And these are our three acts of abiding: prayer, Word, obedience.

These acts of abiding out of a heart of abiding produce the fruit of abiding. In verse 11 Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." The fruit of abiding includes internal transformation and external transformation. My life is changed but I'm also involved in helping other people's lives change. The three examples of fruit spoken by Jesus in these chapters are love, joy, and peace.

Two Summary Ideas

These are the two big ideas we have so far.

First, the concept of abiding in Christ is fundamental to life as a disciple of Christ. Abiding in Christ is an expression of spiritual dependence in ongoing relationship with Jesus. And I'd say that the Biblical idea of being filled with the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 5 or walking in the power of the Spirit from Galatians 5, those are essentially the same idea of abiding in Christ. Abiding in Christ is being filled with the Holy Spirit. It is walking in the power of the Spirit. So this is our first big idea from this chapter: abiding in Christ fundamental to being a disciple.

The second big idea recognizes that the concept of abiding in Christ brings together several themes of discipleship that can be helpfully organized under the categories of heart, acts, and fruit. This second idea is not presented in the text but serves as a way to organize and understand the themes that are introduced in the text.

With those two big ideas established, we are ready to consider Jesus' teaching in verses 12-17.

Fruit that Remains (John 15:12-17)

The New Commandment (12-13)

And we start with the new commandment. Jesus teaching about abiding, that metaphor flows right into the new commandment that he gave his disciples earlier in 13:34. He repeats it here in 15:12, "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you." And we noted in an earlier lesson that this commandment doesn't really seem new. Moses commanded in Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus taught this as the second great commandment that sums up the Law. You know, love the Lord your God, love your neighbor as yourself.

But there is something new about the way Jesus words the commandment. He does not encourage us to use self-love as our motive. That was before, "Love your neighbor as yourself." How do I love my neighbor? Well, I love myself, and I'm supposed to treat my neighbor just as I would treat me. Instead, Jesus is encouraging us to use him as our model. "Love one another, just as I have loved you." And this is something new with the New Covenant. We don't have the vision of God's ultimate self-sacrifice on the cross until we have Jesus. So, this is new. We are to love as he loves. That's a different focus. That's also a higher standard. Jesus loved unconditionally, sacrificially, all the way to the cross. We see that he has his own sacrificial example in mind in verse 13 when he says, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." That's the love Jesus is thinking about, that kind of sacrificial love. And it doesn't mean the glorious jumping on the hand grenade kind of love, either. It means day by day that you're willing to give up your own needs, rights, desires in order to serve a brother or sister in Christ, in order to serve your wife, or your children; that you're giving of your own life, that you're laying down your own life into care for their life, to speak words of love into their life, to do acts of love in their life.

Another possible new aspect about this command, a reason Jesus said this is new: maybe that it envisions a new way of formulating the people of God. The command to love your neighbor was given in the civil code of Israel: the Law of Moses. In the Old Covenant the people of God were defined geo-politically as the nation Israel. Loving your neighbor makes a lot of sense in a command from God about the social context of a nation. How is the nation going to work? It's going to work as people love their neighbor.

Jesus does not just say here, "love your neighbor." He says, "love one another." I do not think this is supposed to undo the command to love your neighbor. You still love your neighbor. That command is repeated in Romans 13:10 as a fulfillment of our obligation in society. I think the change in words here gives an emphasis to the new community of New Covenant believers that begins with these disciples. Our center is no longer the physical temple in the physical city of Jerusalem. The people of God is not defined geo-politically in the New Covenant. Our center is Jesus Christ. We are defined spiritually by those who believe in Jesus Christ and those who follow Jesus Christ. We are a spiritual body of brothers and sisters. We are to be marked by love for one another. That love is to extend out to our neighbors, even to our enemies. But the focus here is on a new body of disciples who love one another, who are all branches abiding in the same vine. We enjoy a special relationship with one another because of our special relationship with Jesus. So, Jesus commands us to love one another in the sacrificial way that he has loved. In chapter 13, he said, "This is how the world will know that you are truly my disciples." You know, abide in Christ. Love one another. That's fundamental.

Intimate Relationship (14-15)

Jesus adds in 14 and 15,

“You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

We can still envision ourselves as slaves to the master. That’s not completely wrong. Paul calls himself several times a bond-servant. He’s a willing slave of Jesus. But there are so many negative connotations with slavery that it is easy to misconstrue the nature of our relationship with God when we use that metaphor. We can take the slave metaphor and develop this vision of Christianity as this moral religious system that’s imposed on us from the outside, it’s not something that we really want to do so we do it grudgingly or without joy. We just do it to get to the next stage, just to get to heaven.

Jesus elevates his disciples in relationship with him from the position of mere servants to a the more intimate, loving position of friend. I can easily see how this has applied to these men who walked with Jesus. The spent a time with him and they went from place to place together, and they’re doing ministry with each other, and they’re eating together, and they’re sitting around the fire together. And they’ve become friends over time.

Amazingly, I think Jesus is saying this about us as well. He desires that we come to be his friends. Friends of God. Friends of Jesus. When we abide in Christ as his disciples our relationship is meant to grow into a friendship. And yet, just like with the slave metaphor, we can take this wrongly, we can misconstrue this. It depends on our cultural understanding of friends and what we leave out. Friendship for Jesus does not mean “acquaintance.” It is not someone you see once in a while and say, “Hey, there’s Jesus!”, or somebody who you’ve allowed to view your social media posts. Friend means friend, somebody you’re close to. Somebody you trust, somebody you would invite into your confidence, somebody you share your life with, somebody you tell things that you don’t tell anybody else. Friend.

Friend also doesn’t have to mean, equal. You can have friendship with those who are your equals. That’s a parity relationship. You’re on the same level. You can also develop friendships with people who have authority over you. That is maybe a rare thing. And it is a different kind of thing, a different kind of relationship. But Jesus is not saying that he’s on an equal level with the disciples. Jesus is still Lord and Teacher, just as he said in 13:13. His expression of friendship does not equate to equality in authority any more than it equates to equality of nature. We are not equal in nature with Jesus. He is still God. We are still human. He is still King. We are still his subjects. But we are not merely subjects. This is what’s beautiful here. There is loving relationship between us and him. He expresses that relationship by calling you friend.

It is truly a radical way of envisioning relationship with God. Can you imagine God calling you friend? That idea should unsettle you I think, in a positive way, joyfully. But it shouldn’t feel quite right that God would call me friend; that Jesus wants me to be friend - that my King would die for me. That’s incredible and unbelievable. That my King would call me friend. I have no words. What do you say?

But as you walk with Jesus day by day, inviting him into your life, in every moment of life, this idea of friendship takes shape. As you seek to serve him and enter into the work he has for you to do, you become his companion. He has made the will of the Father known to his disciples, known to you. He has work for you to do. There is purposefulness in this designation. You could be merely slaves he commands. No. He invites you to understand the commission he gives, for you to embrace it and to freely join him. He wants you to understand what he is asking you to do, so that you participate not just with your hands and not just with your feet but also with your mind and with your heart. That is what he said here, “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.” He invites you into his understanding and into his purposes.

Jesus continues on in 16 and 17, “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the

Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another.” People tend to get uncomfortable with the idea of Jesus choosing. We want to have the free will. We want to be the ones who choose. I’m very comforted by the idea of choosing. I didn’t choose following Jesus around just as a fanboy and I want him, this great person, to be my friend. Jesus chose me. Jesus wants me to be in relationship with him. That encourages me. He also chose me with purpose. “I chose you to go bear fruit, that your fruit would remain.” And that, to me, is encouraging, that I am not in control of producing the fruit. This is the goal and as long as I abide in Jesus, he’s going to be producing fruit through me. It’s not coming out of my mind, or my strategies, or my plans, or my human effort. And as I grow with him, those things all matter, and I begin to learn how to plan and strategize and I’m using my gifting and my effort for Jesus. But regardless of that, that’s not the primary thing. The primary idea is that Jesus desires to produce something through me. He’s got a plan. He’s got fruit to produce and if I abide in him and walk with him, he’ll do it. So, I’m quite comforted by the fact that I didn’t choose Jesus. Jesus chose me. This is his plan. It also gives me some pause to consider and think, “Okay, the purpose here is not my purpose. He chose me. It’s his plan that I produce fruit. What does he want me to do?” “This I command you, that you love one another. Okay. I’ve got to, in some sense, bite into that, because this is the whole plan. I didn’t choose him. It’s not my plan. I’m not the one who produces the fruit. It’s through his strength. Loving my brothers and sisters in Christ is not optional: that’s the plan. Now, how is Jesus calling me to do that?

Greater works (16-17)

You remember we have those three challenging issues from 14:12-15, “You will do greater works...ask anything in my name and I will do it...if you love you will obey.” So, three things. We considered “if you love me you will obey” in our first lesson on chapter 14. Jesus is not manipulating us. Jesus is stating a fact about the human heart. If indeed you do love God, that will come out through active obedience. I did not address the other two issues, or these problems with the other two issues. I am not yet ready to talk about “ask anything and I will do it.” That is going to come up a third time in chapter 16. We will wrestle with that idea then.

But now that we’ve had the vine and the branches metaphor and we have Jesus saying that he chooses to bear fruit that will remain through us, it is a good time to address what Jesus means by saying we will do greater works than he did.

This is how he said it in 14:12, “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.” What is Jesus talking about? What kind of works? Well, even though the word “works” does apply to the miracles of Jesus through the Gospel of John, I have already said that I do not think Jesus speaks about miracles here. What he says here he says for all the members of the body of Christ. One of Jesus’ greatest works was to raise Lazarus from the dead. Do we all do greater works than that? Raising the dead is a miracle limited to a tiny number of followers of Jesus, such as, Peter or Paul. And no one raises himself from the dead like Jesus. That was a greater miracle. Greater works cannot mean greater miracles. We don’t do greater miracles than Jesus.

I think the meaning is connected to the condition Jesus expresses at the end of the statement. You will do greater works, “because I go to the Father.” What changes when Jesus goes to the Father? He sends the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to do the work that God commands for us to do. What is that work the Holy Spirit intends to work through us? What does God command? What obedience is he calling us to? The one commandment Jesus has repeatedly highlighted is: love one another. Love is saturating these chapters.

The greater works that every member of the new community is called to are not miraculous works. The greater works are not the gifts of the Spirit but it’s the fruit of the Spirit. The greater works are works of love. That is the new commandment.

But in what sense do we love greater than Jesus? We still have the problem that no one can love greater than Jesus. I believe we are to understand greater works as greater in scope. The acts of love Jesus accomplished for other people during his life on earth were limited both by his short time with us and by the very small geographical area he operated in.

Did Jesus wash the wounds of lepers in North Africa? Did Jesus feed migrants in North Carolina? Did Jesus care for coronavirus victims in Italy or New York? Did Jesus teach children Bible stories in Estonia or in Lithuania? Did Jesus share the gospel in Zagreb or Tehran or Daytona Beach? No. When Jesus was here, he never left Israel. His words of love, his touch of love was limited to the people he encouraged, the children who sat in his lap, the sick he healed, the lost he preached to.

Now Jesus says, "Because I go away, you will do greater things."

Who have you loved in the name of Jesus? You personally? How many people have you loved? How many people have you spoken words of encouragement to? Shared the Gospel with? Cared for? How many people have you loved in the name of Jesus? Multiply that love, the love that you have extended in the name of Jesus by the millions of Christ followers who have lived throughout the world over that last two thousand years, since the cross. You will do greater things.

Even as I say this, you may pick up that there's a catch in it all. When we love in the name of Jesus by the power of Jesus with a love that has lasting effect, it is still Jesus doing it after all. You do not do greater works apart from Jesus. Maybe apart from Jesus physically being present in the moment. But apart from Jesus spiritually you can do nothing. You do greater works because your life flows from the spiritual life of Jesus. And in that sense, yes, Jesus has cared for the leper in North Africa, and the child in Estonia, and the grandmother in Zagreb, and the migrant in North Carolina, and the college student in Tehran. Jesus has loved you through his people. And he has loved, through you, other people.

And you are invited to participate in the greater works. Your love matters, even though it is not you doing it in your human strength. We love with Jesus. It's something we do together.

Jesus chose you to bear fruit that remains because you have your own family. And you have your job, and you have your neighborhood, and you have your calling from Jesus. There are people in your sphere of influence that Jesus wants to touch. Jesus wants people to be loved and he wants you to participate in doing that. He wants you to produce fruit that remains. The fruit that remains is fruit that comes about through the power of the Holy Spirit. That is why he says, "ask that it may be given you." Anything that has lasting value is something that's come from him. And it comes from him when we express spiritual dependence and ask. And so also, he receives the glory for it. As he said in verse 8, "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."

So, I'm going to add this to the heart of the disciple. We have a heart of love, a heart of humility, a heart of faith, and a heart of glory. I need to explain that just a little bit, but I think you get it. We are motivated by the desire to magnify the glory of God. It's not about me doing greater things than Jesus. It's Jesus doing greater things through me that, ultimately, he is glorified. I believe that he is the source of all beauty, all goodness, all truth, and I want to glorify his nature. I want him to be known, I want him to be seen. I want people to praise and give glory to God just like I praise and give glory to God. And that gives me joy. And it brings purpose to my life. There is purpose in my life in the fruit that lasts. There's my changed life, other people's changed life. That brings purpose but ultimately the greater purpose is shining the light of God's glory through the production of lasting fruit, as he works in us through us, his goodness, his beauty, his truth is revealed. It is all the better that my love is not by itself, but the love of Jesus through me, so that the glory is not mine alone but more rightly his. So, my heart is beginning to desire his glory. Let them know Jesus and give him praise!

I think this is a good place to stop this lesson. Jesus has called us to produce fruit that lasts. That fruit follows acts and acts follow from the heart. Fundamentally, living for Jesus is about abiding in Christ and loving one another. We give ourselves in dependence on him and he produces something lasting and glorious.

To illustrate that, I love the old story, even if we can't verify it, it's a great illustration. It's a story of a young mother living around 1900 who sought to inspire a vision for piano in her son. She had just started him on lessons when the famous Polish pianist Jan Ignatius Paderewsky booked a tour that included her city. So she paid the money to for seats right up front, front row, so her son would get this full experience, this vision of what piano music can be, you know, the beauty of it, so he can see the fingers of the master moving across the keys.

She happily settled into her front row seats with her son on the concert day. She chatted pleasantly with her neighbor as the orchestra warmed up in the pit below. When another sound, the sound of muffled laughter rippled through the audience the young mother looked up just in time to see her son sit down at the piano on stage. Horrified, two things happened at once. Her son began to play Chopsticks with two fingers, the only piece he could play. And Paderewsky strolled on stage behind the boy.

Clueless, the boy continued to bang away at the piano. When the master reached the boy, he leaned down from behind and whispered into his ear, "Keep playing," which he cheerfully did. Paderewsky then reached his arms around the boy and began to weave in Mozart into the boy's Chopsticks.

And the master produced a masterpiece around the work of the child.

This is how I still feel. After 30 years of walking with Jesus, I am just banging out Chopsticks. I look at the way I love and how I abide in Christ. I am giving what I know, what I can do. I can't love anything like Jesus. I can't teach like Jesus. I can't produce lasting fruit like Jesus. I can offer up who I am. I can offer up me to Jesus. And I can trust him to wrap his arms around me and to take what I offer and to turn it into a masterpiece.

Love one another while abiding in Christ and the Master will work a masterpiece through you. He will produce fruit that lasts.

Reflection questions

1. Read John 15:12-17. What stands out to you as interesting, important, strange or confusing? What are some questions that come to mind?
2. Thinking over chapters 13-15, how important is the new commandment as an aspect of Christian discipleship? How important is it to you in your understanding of living for God?
3. What is your relationship to God when you recognize God as Father? You are then _____? How about when you recognize God as King, you are _____? And when you recognize God as Lord, you are _____? We understand our relationship with God through a combination of different comparisons. When you think of these three relationships, what is added to your understanding when you also consider yourself friend? How might you incorrectly understand your relationship with God by focusing on being his friend without also recognizing these other aspects of your relationship with God? On the other hand, what do you lose when you avoid allowing Jesus to call you friend?
4. How does consideration of the promise to send the Holy Spirit and the language here in this passage help you to put into context Jesus' declaration in 14:12, "He who believes in me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do"?
5. What fruit has God produced in you and through you that has the potential to remain forever?