

GRADUATION SUNDAY

“Roots, Shoots & Fruits” John 15:1-10

June 1, 2025

John 15:1-10 is rooted in regular garden imagery

Some notable tree moments and imagery in Scripture (this list excludes many passages that are specifically tied to harvesting, such as the Parable of the Sower)

- Garden of Eden – Genesis 2:9
- Saving the trees in wartime – Deut. 20:19-20
- A healthy tree – Psalm 1
- The tree that was cut down – Ezekiel 17:22-24 & 31:10-14
- A tree & its fruit – Matthew 12:33-37
- Fig tree – Mark 11:12-25
- Jesus on the tree – Galatians 3:13 & Deut. 21:22-23
- Eden restored – Revelation 22:1-3

Overall context of John 15

In John 13:27-30, Judas leaves to betray Jesus, then the disciples – one-by-one – begin to ask Jesus a series of important questions that carries through chapter 16, culminating in Jesus’ prayer in chapter 17. The questions they ask are prompted by Him saying He’s leaving and they are to love one another (13:33-34)

- 13:36-37 *Peter* asks where He’s going and how they can follow
- 14:5 *Thomas* asks how they can know the way if they don’t even know where
- 14:8 *Philip* asks for Jesus to show them the Father
- 14:22 the other *Judas* asks why show them but not the world
- 16:17-19 Jesus answers a question they are thinking but don’t ask: “What does He mean ‘leaving’?”

The end of this dialogue wraps up in 16:29-31 where the disciples say, “Now you’re speaking clearly; now we see!” and Jesus says “Finally!” (my paraphrase). What’s curious about this is that in the text (16:25-28) He doesn’t seem to say any new content nor a new way of saying that content, just another repetition that He’s “going away” (16:28)...and yet *now* they get it?

Jesus reiterates these points over and over again

- 1) He’s going away (13:33, 14:2-4, 14:12, 14:18, 14:28-30, 15:13-15, 16:4-7, 16:16, 16:19-20, 16:22, 16:28)
- 2) the Trinitarian relationship in various ways (13:31-32, 14:16-17, 14:20, 14:24-26, 14:28&31, 15:1, 15:21-23, 15:26, 16:5-16, 16:27-28, 17:3)
- 3) loving and obeying (13:34-35, 14:15, 14:21, 14:23-24, 15:10, 15:12-14, 15:17)
- 4) asking God and He’ll do/give what they ask (14:13-14, 15:7, 16:23-24)

Immediate context of John 15

Immediately before our passage in 14:31, as Jesus wraps up another answer – and right before He says, “I am the vine...” – He tells His disciples, “Come, let’s leave.” They are on the move, *possibly* walking by a vineyard.

Immediately after our passage in 15:12-17 Jesus maps out the new command to love as He has loved them. In v.15 Jesus says He now calls them “friends” instead of “servants”. This tells them that He will die for them, but they also now have a permanent part of the family (see John 8:35). After this, in 15:18-16:4, He gives a warning that the world will hate them because of Him, which is why the Spirit will come.

Content of John 15:1-10

“I am the [true] vine, you are the branches” (v. 1&5) is the focus in this passage and is one of the 7 metaphorical “I am” statements in John’s gospel. These purposely mirror the claim in Exodus 3:14-15 where God tells Moses “I AM THAT I AM”, an exclusive identification reserved for God alone

- “I am the bread of life” (6:35)
- “I am the light of the world” (8:12)
- “I am the door” (10:7)
- “I am the Good Shepherd” (10:11)
- “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25)
- “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (14:6)
- “I am the true vine” (15:1)

There are two additional “I am” statements that carry no figurative weight to them, but are statements. First is, “Before Abraham was, I am” (8:58) and at His arrest in the garden when the group said they were asking for Jesus of Nazareth, and He responds, “I am He” (18:4-5)

“...remain...” v.4 (4x), v.5, v.6, v.7 (2x), v.9, v.10 (2x) – to stay, dwell, abide

1. Remain in **Christ**. Condition: you will bear much fruit (v.5)
2. Jesus’ **words** remain in you. Condition: ask and it will be given (v.7)
3. Remain in His **love**. Condition: obey His commands in order to remain (v.10) – remember that the word here is “remain” and not “gain” or “have” or “keep”

This is the work we are to do, the next is the work God does, similar to Romans 12:1-2

“...bear fruit...” v.2 (2x), v.4 (2x), v.5, v.8 – to carry, to bring (*not* “make” or “produce”)

- This *will* happen (indicative in v.5)
- Pruning (lit. “cleaning”) makes more possible (v.2)
- God wants this to happen (v.8)
- This proves we are His disciples (v.8)

This is the work God does, similar to 1 Corinthians 3:6-9

- Fruit of repentance (Matthew 3:8-10, Luke 3:7-9)
- Fruit of righteousness (Proverbs 11:30, Phil. 1:11, Heb. 12:11, James 3:18)
- Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24)

Warning: introduced in v.2 (“He cuts off...”), clarified in v.4 (“No branch can bear fruit by itself”), ramped up in v.5 (“apart from Me you can do nothing”), and realized in v.6 (“thrown into the fire” – useless)