

Focus on John 15:1–8

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Sarah S. Henrich

All the language of this passage turns on the image of Jesus as the vine. He twice declares this of himself (vv. 1, 5), in each case developing the image in a different direction. Bearing fruit is a phrase also repeated in verses 2 (three times), 4, 5, and 8. How does Jesus as the vine connect with the disciples’ bearing of much fruit? The relationship is one of mutual abiding. A third cluster of repeated terms has to do with abiding or remaining (*menein*): there are seven occurrences of this verb in these verses. It is the interconnection of these images that Jesus presses.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Stephen A. Cooper

Jesus’ parable, however, through its imagery suggests a living and growing community of faith, a site of productivity and increase. Based on its presence on the vine, each branch is to recognize its part in the whole and do its part. That part involves the production of fruits, or goods, which accrue not to the private good of the individual but to the good of the whole. Or, to extend the logic of the simile, these fruits accrue to the farmer: they are God’s goods, with a view to which God planted and tended the vine. Thus the passage is ultimately about divine providence and the goodness of creation when it acknowledges its dependence on the Creator.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?—

From “Pastoral Perspective,” Nancy R. Blakely

As Jesus counsels and prays with his disciples, he invites them to stay close to him by placing their trust in him. He warns them that they cannot go it alone, trusting in their own strength. On their own they would be cut off from their life source. The temptation to go it on our own is great. We live in a society that promotes independence and making something of yourself. Though a valid goal, self-worth often becomes equated with our own success and what we can produce. It becomes very easy to think that it is all up to us and our own resources as we try to solve problems and meet challenges.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”

Barbara J. Essex

The community that Jesus calls forth is one that embodies an African proverb: *Because we are, I am*. The branches that do not yield fruit are the ones in the community who profess faith but do not engage in acts of love. This does not mean that one can *earn* salvation; rather, those who see and hear Jesus are moved to respond to the gift of salvation through their own acts of love. In other words, a sign of discipleship is doing good works for the right reasons.