**Transcript**

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I am Jesus – I am the True Vine 01/26/25
Today we are wrapping up a series called, "I am Jesus," taking a look at 4 of the 7 "I am" statements that Jesus made. If you'll remember, the first few weeks what we studied, "I am the resurrection and the life." We discovered the resurrection is a person not just an event. Then the next week "I am the Good Shepherd." Remember, He is the Good Shepherd that would leave the 99 to go after the one and we learned a lot about sheep. I did make a false statement in that message that someone brought to my attention. A shepherd would never break a sheeps leg. My resource was incorrect and when I did more research after someone brought it to my attention, I discovered that is a myth. But I found it hysterical that google also said “but that statement will preach! Never take our word for things, we do our best to be as accurate as possible but some things will just preach!
Then last week Mike talked about Jesus saying, "I am the light of the world." More importantly, that Jesus would be the light of your world. That darkness never overtakes the light.
Today we are going to talk about in my opinion one of the most important "I am," statements that Jesus made. And it goes right with our theme for the year – Any body remember what that is? Living as Branches. In John chapter 15. Take a look at what Jesus said in John 15, and I believe to be one of the most important "I am" statements. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches, if you remain in me and I in you, you'll bear much fruit, but apart from me you can do nothing." That statement alone is very significant. If you abide in me and I'm in you, you're going to bear much fruit, but apart from me you can do nothing. That's pretty important to our everyday life. Let’s look at where this came into play
In John 13 – just a couple chapters before this, we see what's called the Last Supper. Why is it called the Last Supper? Because it was the last supper that Jesus had with His disciples before He went to be crucified. Arrested and crucified. In chapter 18 we see Him get arrested. So Chapter 13 of John, it’s the start of the Last Supper, and in Chapter18 he goes out to the Garden of Gethsemane, He's arrested and taken away to be crucified. Let’s call what we have in between chapters - dinner conversation.
The last dinner that Jesus was going to have with His disciples. Let me ask you, if I said, "You are going to sit you around a table with your friends and family and it will be the last time you speak to them before you die." Would you think about that conversation a little bit. Would you think about maybe what you would say, what you would might want them to know about how you feel about them. Maybe even some life lessons you've learned that you want to impart to them before you are gone, Right?
This is the context in which we see Jesus say, "I am the vine, you are the branches, if you remain in me and I in you, you'll bear much fruit. But a part from me you can do nothing." Very, very important. Why is being connected to the vine so important? I
I'm going to illustrate it very simply if I can. If you take a look at this tree here, like let this represent Jesus. When you see this you see, it's in soil, it's got some fertilizer down there. It's got some water which in turn what we have is what we have, which you can look at this tree and say, "You know what, its so healthy it'd bear fruit, looks good, looks like it should."
Us on the other hand look a little bit like this. We're a branch. This, not such a good thing – its not what we mean when we say Living as branches. This si the way not to live. I don't believe a lot of fruit's going to be coming off this branch, would you agree? Yep, so the question then becomes do we like this, or do we like this? Option A or option B? This is starting to sound like an optometrist visit, is this one better or this one here? Is this one clearer now or now? We don't want this do we? Dead, not connected to anything No. We want to be connected to the true vine because when we do so we will bear much fruit.

Jesus said in John 15:1, "I am the true vine." Which would imply that there are false vines that we can connect ourselves to.
Sometimes we take ourselves and connect us to other things. like, i this little glass over here with water in it, this would be a false vine, okay. What we do is we take ourselves and go like this, "Now I'm going to produce some fruit." Now I'm pretty sure this is not going to help this poor little branch. It's not going to produce anymore fruit. What happens is we attach ourselves to false vines. Let me just bring it to our understanding - It sounds like this, "if I make more money next year and I can climb one rung in the company ladder, that's fruit." Jesus would say, Mmm, not so much," or it's "you know what if I could just attain a certain social status."
In other words, "I wear the right things, I got the right technology in my pocket, I have the latest greatest Iphone or purse. I got the new thing and you know if I get re-tweeted by the right person then I'll re-tweet who re-tweeted me just to let everybody know that I'm being tweeted by this great person over here. I'll look cool and if I get a certain number of friends on Facebook, or all those likes Boom! I'm there." Jesus would say, "No, not so much." Or sometimes it even looks like the appearance of something good. We do this because we want people to think we've got it all together, so what we'll do is create this appearance of a perfect home, a perfect family dynamic, even though inside, the house is in shambles and that house is us.
It would like on the outside everybody will look at our little house and it's got the 2.5 kids, the white picket fence, the perfect yard, the manicured lawn and the dog that never barks. The bible on the coffee table. Yet on the inside it isn't anything like that. Jesus would say, "That's not fruit, that is a false vine, not a good thing." We must stay connected to the true vine, in doing so we will bear much fruit. Why is it so important to stay connected to the true vine?
Here are some thoughts: staying connected, produces fruit. You see it right there in John 15:5, and let me tell you, we're going to go over this verse, over and over again,. You will memorize it. Why are we going to talk about this verse over and over again?

Because I want this verse to stick inside of our minds and find it's way this week into our hearts as we walk out our lives. Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches, if you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. “Apart from me you can do nothing." The fruit is important, it's not just any kind of fruit we're talking about here. What kind of fruit are we talking about?

In Galatians chapter 5, the Bible says, "that the fruit of the Spirit is love, is joy, peace, patience." As these words come out of my mouth don't you just think, " I want those." You just want them. "Kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self control." As we here these words, I don't know about you, but I'm like "I want all of it! That's good stuff. That's the kind of fruit that Jesus says that we will bear. It looks something like this in my life, years ago in our marriage, it seemed like anytime I got the opportunity to go out with a friend for coffee or dinner, or I had a meeting at school or took the girls somewhere for extra curricular activities or anytime I was gone and came home and Mike had been home with Jake or even by himself even before Jake was born, I would walk into a mess – dishes in the sick, stuff not picked up and I reacted horribly every time that I remember. “It’s not worth going anywhere when I have to come home to this”, Can’t you at least do the dishes ? Did you not trip over all those toys? Whatever – ugliness spewing. And God began to deal with me and I offered God all my excuses.
I'm offering God all these excuses. It’s him Lord, not me. I do everything around here. God would wisper – be kind, be gentle…..Uggh. But don’t you know Lord how much I do? Don’t you see how hard I work and keep this house and family going? And I realized God wasn’t up there surprised by all this, like "Oh, my bad, I didn't realize, you were doing all those things Kathy. Let me rethink what I asked you to do. Hmm – yah, no reason for you to be kind and gentle afterall. You reminded me of all your doings. I was paying attention – sleeping on the job when I spoke to you. You snuck some stuff by me.
No - He said I know what's going on, of course I know this. Be kind, be gentle.
What happened is this little bitty blossom of fruit called gentleness began to appear in my life. Just a little one, I wouldn't have called it fruit by any means, but I would say it was the start of something God was doing supernaturally and special. Maybe you find yourself there, sometimes we find ourselves staying connected but man it just doesn't seem like there's fruit. It's that friend or child you've been praying for for a long time and it's just that you want them to come to know Jesus. Just simply not happening, in fact they seem to be going the other way and you're like, "What is happening? God what's going on?"
Maybe it's that sense of anger that you're easily angered and it's just driving you crazy, "Why can't I just get over this?" It's that selfishness inside of you you're sick of. It's that lust problem that you just want gone, but you can't seem to get over it. You're like, I'm trying to stay connected but where's the fruit? Here's the deal, Jesus said, "If you remain in me and I in you you will bear much fruit." It’s not like the weater forecast - If we're looking at a fruit forecast there's a 100% chance of fruit on this deal. He didn't say you may bear fruit. He said you will bear, not just fruit, but much fruit. Here's the key though. We have to remain. We have to abide
In the midst of that time when our friends or children walk away we continue to pray for them. When we find ourselves like, "Oh I cannot believe I'm doing this God." Now it's continue to pray, continue to remain in Him. When we remain in Him and He in us, then we bear much fruit. We have to stay connected to the vine, it is critical for us to be able to bear much fruit.
Staying connected produces fruit. Then the second thing is the opposite, which is obviously true, that being disconnected produces nothing. Remember Jesus said, "Apart from me you can do nothing."

Not only that, in John 15:6 He says this, "if you do not remain in me, you're like this. Right here, this little branch, and you know what that's is going to be thrown away and it withers. " He says, "such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned." Not a good thing to be a branch that’s not connected. When we are not connected, we don’t produce anything and what can happen, when we disconnect, we can begin to look on other people and almost find ourselves in this judgmental state. Now I do this many, many different ways. And I bet you do too. One of the things I have fasted is social media and I never miss it when I take a break, but I waste too much time with it when I am on it, looking at what people post – their pictures, their food, where they went on vacation – oh wow I didn’t realize they could afford that kind of trip? Wonder if they had the money or they put it on credit cards, but I do it sometimes,
but we can look on and make judgments about something. Then find ourselves right in the midst of it.
For instance we say, "Oh, When I get married, I'm never going to talk to my husband like Kathy said she talked to Mike. That's terrible," and then boom. You find yourself right in the midst of one. It was like, "Whoa what happened? How did I get here?" Or you say, "You know what my kid's never going to act like that." Yeah, every parent is like mm-hmm (affirmative). Or we say, "I'm never going to put my job before my family like so and so does. I can’t believe he does that or she does that." The next thing you know, you've missed so many sports games you cannot remember the name of the team your kid plays for and you're like, " what is going on? What did I do? How did I get here?"
Let me tell you something, I've been in ministry for 15 years and what I'll tell you is this, one of the things I've learned is that anybody is capable of anything when you're disconnected from the vine. Mike and I, the elders, the person to your left and your right, everybody. You're capable of anything when you're disconnected from the vine. You've got to stay connected, it's important, but we get that right? We say, "Yeah, okay that's important, I agree." The big question is this, and we're going to talk about this for a second is the how. How do we stay connected?

There's a lot of ways to stay connected. My little illustration about talking ugly to Mike and God whispering to be kind and gentle really came from reading Gods word in a ladies bible study. Is that a way to stay connected? Absolutely, absolutely it is, everybody say that. Prayer, is that a way? Yeah, absolutely. How worship? Yes, absolutely. How about a coffee with a friend when they speak truth in your life right when you need it? Yep, absolutely. How about a sunrise breaking over the mountains in the distance is that a way? Yeah, absolutely. How about holding that new born baby of yours in the middle of the night and you look down at a baby sleeping and you're just thanking God that He blessed your family with this new little life? Yes. Thankfulness
There's a lot of different ways, a lot of different ways to stay connected. The problem is that many times we lack the motivation to do so. What we're going to talk about is a little bit about what does God say fundamentally to get us to stay connected and it looks something like this. It's this, first thing, is you've got to do what Jesus says. You have to do what Jesus says. In John 15:10 He says, "Hey, if you'll keep my commands, you will remain in my love. You keep my commands you will remain in my love."
I love the way that Francis Chan illustrates this, when he talks about it's like a parent who asks their kid to go clean their room. Kid leaves and comes back, "Did you clean your room?" " I memorized what you said about cleaning the room." Now you see where this is going. "Well that's great, but did you clean your room?" "I got it tattooed right here on my arm in Hebrew what you said for me to go clean my room, so I could be reminded and everybody know that I should clean my room." "Yeah but did you clean your room?" "I got 4 friends together and we went to a coffee shop and we talked about what you meant when you said clean your room, and we studied the word clean in the Greek and it's Clean-io which means to like clean in haste and clean with much fortitude." Yeah did you clean your room?"
"Oh we went to a conference and we talked about what it meant to clean your room and then somebody told us how to clean more effectively." "Did you clean your room?" God may say, seriously, "Did you clean your room Kathy?" That's what I'm talking about. Many of us just simply need to go clean our room. God's been telling us to do something for a long time, He's been confirming it through His word. People have been telling you over and over, "You should do this, you should do this," and you're like, " I can't do this." God's saying, "Clean your room, come on, quit talking about it, quit praying about it. How many times do you need me to confirm this thing to you? Clean your room."
You're like, I don't know, how many times has your Pastor maybe asked you, "Hey life group leaders, we need more life groups, you need to step up and do something. You're like, "Oh I don't know what I'm going to do ." God's saying, "Clean your room." Maybe it's you need to spend more time with your kids and invest in them, before they're gone. Because you're going to blink and they're gone, and God's saying, "Hey, clean your room. Invest in these kids that I've given you." Maybe God's put on your heart to be just to be a little selfless and outside of yourself and God says, "Clean your room, you can do this. Come on." We've got to do what Jesus says. You want to stay connected to this vine, do what Jesus says. He says, "If you keep my commands, you'll remain in my love."
The second thing, it's simple but we're going to raise it up a notch, this is where Jesus kicks it up a little bit. You've got to love like Jesus loves. Jesus said this, John 15:12 "My command is this, that you would love each other as I have loved you." So, here's the deal, when He added that "as I love you" thing, that's where it just kicked it up. Because if He just said, "Hey, I just want you to love each other." That's kind of like subjective because it's just a matter of how I feel like I should love you and how you should love your neighbor and whatever and it's just kind of whatever we think. He didn't say that. He said, do it as I loved you. See Jesus had a problem, His disciples for years have been wondering who was going to be the greatest.
They've been talking about it over and over again, on the way to Jerusalem, for the Passover meal they were arguing about who's going to be the greatest and Jesus is like, "Guys, hey listen, the greatest among you is the one who serves." In other words, it's the one who loves. Then when they get to dinner, Jesus puts a towel around his waist and washes their feet. He actually shows them what it looks like. Then in dramatic fashion over dinner He says, "Guys, I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you'll bear much fruit, but apart from me, you can do nothing. You want to remain in my love then keep my commands." In other words, "do what I say, what I'm going to tell you is love each other as I've loved you."
You want to know what the very next scripture is? He said, "Greater love has no man than this, that he would lay down his life for his friends." Now He raised that standard way on up there didn't he? "Love each other as I have loved you." Here's the reason He did that, and He didn't give some long list of things you've got to do. He just said you do this, why? Because we can't do that. You're incapable, I'm incapable of loving like Jesus loved apart from being connected to the Vine. It's not in our nature and we cannot do it, but when we stay connected, all of a sudden fruit starts to happen. And we can begin to love each other as He loved us and as we do that it drives us back to the vine. Then it happens again, and He says to love someone a little deeper and then boom, it goes back to the vine and this cycle completes itself.
As it does, little blossoms become fruit , STORY
He's saying love each other and the cycle began and God produced something perfect, fruit. A little bit of love here a little bit of joy, a little bit of patience, some kindness. Lord knows we need patience and kindness, and self control and faithfulness and genteelness. All these things begin to produce themselves as we stayed connected to the vine.

My question is this, what fruit is being evidenced in your life? Love, joy Peace, patience? Because as Jesus said when we remain in Him and He in us we will bear fruit, much fruit. As we do that and we love each other what happens is God takes our loneliness and He replaces it with His comfort. He takes our desires and He replaces it with His desires. As we love each other and we remain connected, we find ourselves one day in the middle of a miracle. God is doing something in us and producing fruit. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you'll bear much fruit, but apart from me you can do nothing.
let's all pray. Father we just thank you for your word that does not return void and I pray now that your Spirit would reside here with us in this moment. As we pray to day there are those of you who would say, "you know what, I'm a follower of Christ and I just need God's help to be able to stay connected." Maybe you're going through something difficult or maybe really difficult or maybe it's a really good time. In all times what you think is "You know what I need to stay connected because in doing that I'm going to produce fruit." Some of you just pray that God would give me that strength to stay connected. All of you who would say that, just lift up your hands at in the room and Online.
Let me pray for us.

Father, I just pray today that we by your power and your strength that we would walk out staying connected to you. I pray that no matter what methodology is, that you would burn in our hearts the motivation to do what you say and love like you love so that we can bear much fruit and remain in you. I pray that your Spirit will convict us when we're not and that we would remain in you and you in us so that we may bear fruit. Still praying today, there are others of you, we talked about the false vines and the things that we can attach ourselves to to try and bear fruit. The problem is that they don't. No matter what it is that we do, no matter how many times we try to go back to these false vines they just simply don't bear fruit.

None of the love, the joy, the peace, the patience, the kindness, all of those things don't get born out of false vines. Jesus said, "I am the true vine." Today God has brought you here to let you hear the truth. Jesus says, "It's only in me that the fruit if forgiveness can be found, Jesus knew God, knew that we had a sin problem. We would try to take the true vine, the perfect vine and replace it with false things and that would bear sin in our lives. We would just find ourselves with a lack of meaning and purpose and drive and God said, "You know what? That's not good enough for my kids, I'm going to send my son Jesus Christ down to this earth to die in our place for the forgiveness of our sins so that we could bear much fruit to the Father's Glory.

Today God has brought you here to hear that truth that you need to say yes to a relationship with Christ and when you do you become forgiven. You become a new creation. God gives you a sense of purpose, a sense of meaning and you begin to walk out a life that bears much fruit. Today that say yes, that is why I am here, to say yes to a relationship with Jesus Christ. Lift up your hands right now, and say, "Yes!" Boldly declare, "I am going to live for the true vine."

Let's all pray together.
Heavenly Father.
Thank you for sending Jesus.
To be the true vine.
Jesus come into my life.
And forgive me.
Help me each day.
To walk in you.
To walk in your provision.
To walk in your love.
To walk in your purpose.
I give you my life.
In Jesus name we pray
Amen.