

Flourishing: John 15v7-17

In this description of the living vine and its healthy, fruitful branches, Jesus is explaining what the place of spiritual flourishing is like. *What do you think are the most important things for us to flourish spiritually?*

We saw, last week, that the place of spiritual life and flourishing is “You in Him, Him in you” relationship with Jesus, an intimate oneness with the Lord. In these verses we see this is:

1) The place of asking (15v7-8)

It’s a place of utter dependence on Jesus (v4-5, “apart from me you can do nothing”). There’s a tremendous promise in these verses for those people/ branches who are trusting in Jesus personally and so are already clean (v3): “Ask...and it will be done for you” (v7). Prayerful dependence leads to us bearing abundant fruit, and people will then be able to see what God is like (v8).

Jesus emphasises prayer both at the start and the end (v16) of these verses—flourishing requires prayer. It is prayer that comes out of that place and heart of friendship with Jesus (“If you remain in me,” v7) and out of understanding what he values (“and if my words remain in you,” v7). Then what we wish and long for comes into line with what he longs to do in and through his church. He wants to paint a beautiful canvas among us to his Father’s glory. *If we long to see this become more and more of a reality, are we praying like this out of the place of friendship with Jesus?*

2) The place to be centred (15v9-11)

The place of flourishing, where we will find ourselves desiring to pray, is the place where we know the astonishing love of Jesus—the same kind of love the Father has for the Son (v9), eternal and completely secure. This is the place to centre our lives (“Now remain in my love,” Jesus says in v9), caring about and valuing what he cares about and values (v10), and working towards the same beautiful canvas and joy (v11). If our friendship with him is central, Jesus promises here that we *will* flourish spiritually.

3) The place of friendship (15v12-17)

We’re to be a community of friends characterised by a real, genuine love from the heart that lays down its life for one another and doesn’t hold back (v12-14). We’re to love each other with the kind of love that Jesus loves us with (v12). That’s the fruit Jesus is talking about here.

Verse 15 is moving: Jesus calls each one of us his friend and his partner in what he is doing (his “business”, v15a). The Father and the Son, all through the gospel, are revealing who they are and drawing people into their life-giving love, rescuing people from darkness (v15b). Jesus has chosen us to “go and bear fruit” (v16): to ask for hearts of Christ-like love which the Father will give us (v16); to love one another that way (v17); and so to share that love, continuing Jesus’ mission to the world and community around us (see also 14v35, 17v23).

What joy, flourishing and spiritual power (even in felt weakness) we discover when we *live and pray and minister out of this place of friendship*, intimate love, dependence upon and partnership with Jesus himself.

