I am Jesus - Part 3

# I Am the Vine

# (John 15:5)

This morning we are wrapping up our series entitled, “I am Jesus,” taking a look at a few of the “I Am” statements that Jesus made. If you remember, the first week we talked about “the Good Shepherd” and how he is the Shepherd who will leave the 99 to go after the one. And then last week we talked about Jesus saying, “I Am the Light of the world” and that we like that water flowing from the temple in Ezekiel would influence our world like salt and light.

Today we’re going to talk about what I think is one of the most important “I Am” statements that Jesus made. I want to talk to you about the benefits of intimacy with the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in John chapter 15, verse five,

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).*

Jesus statement here in John chapter 15 is rather dramatic, and yet when we consider the context in which it was made, it takes on a whole new level of significance. Because these words were recorded in what is known as the Last Supper when Jesus gathered together with his closest followers just before he was arrested and crucified. And so, these words are very important, he is saying these things because he knows that he’s about to die. These are things that they would need to know, last minute lessons that he would want to impart to them before he left this world and so he says to them,

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).*

In other words, being connected to the vine is very important, because the Lord Jesus is talking about our purpose, he’s talking about our calling and our destiny.

I want to talk to you today about the benefits of intimacy with the Holy Spirit, about being connected to the vine, because we were created to be in relationship with the Holy Spirit. And yet, the reality is that for many people they have a very distant, fearful, or cautious relationship with the Holy Spirit. And so, my prayer today is that you would get to know the Holy Spirit better, that you would trust him and desire to know him more and more.

You see, the truth is that God the Father is in heaven, our Lord Jesus is in heaven at his right hand, and God the Holy Spirit is now on earth desiring to have a relationship with each of us. In fact, in John chapter 16, Jesus said that it is for your good that I am going away, because when I go I will send the Counselor to you (John 16:7).

And so, the Holy Spirit as our Counselor, teaches, guides, comforts, empowers and intercedes for us. He is always described in terms of personal relationship, possessing emotions, intellect, and all the attributes of God such as omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. In other words, the Holy Spirit is all-knowing, all-present, and all-powerful; but he’s not just a feeling or a force, he is a divine being with thoughts and feelings, and who desires intimacy with us. Therefore, the Bible tells us in Galatians chapter 5, verse 25,

*“Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives” (Galatians 5:25, NLT).*

And so, we must learn to walk in the Spirit, living in him, remaining in him, so that we discover the fruitfulness of intimacy with God the Holy Spirit.

This is what Jesus was trying to communicate with his disciples, that God is the vine and we are the branches, and therefore we want to remain connected to him; because he has a purpose for each one of us far beyond what we have planned or even imagined. And so, even now, as you seek him, he will begin to reveal things to you. Even now he is shifting some things, he is setting us up geographically, socially, and economically setting the stage for what may happen years from now. But even now, the Bible says in Acts chapter 17, that God has been personally involved in all the details of your life.

*“God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27).*

And so, God the Father is in heaven, God the Son is seated at his right hand, and God the Holy Spirit is with us, not far from each of us, never leaving us nor forsaking us.

I want you to recognize that God is always working, the Spirit of God is still hovering over the earth, but he has rested on the Church, he has rested on those who have trusted in Jesus Christ. And so, wherever you are and whatever you are struggling with in this season of COVID-19 and social distancing God is still working. He may have moved you for a reason, shifted you for a season, because he is setting you up, he is moving things according to his divine purpose so that you would reach out and find him, that you would remain in him, and that you would produce much fruit.

In the remainder of our time together I want to focus on the benefits of intimacy with the Holy Spirit because this is what we were created for. We were created to have fellowship and to live in relationship with the Holy Spirit. In first Samuel, chapter 11, it tells us about when King Saul, the first king of Israel was ordained. You could say, it was the good old days of King Saul, because this was when he was doing good, he was walking with God and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, the remainder of his reign as king did not go well, spiritually everything went south, but here at first the Holy Spirit came upon him and the Holy Spirit was with him.

As Christians, we must understand that the Holy Spirit lives in us, the moment we put our trust in Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us. He comes as a gift, a seal, a mark, or a deposit at salvation, but intimacy with the Holy Spirit only comes at surrender. In other words, you can have a relationship but never have intimacy. In marriage you can have relationship but not have intimacy. But there is a gift that the Holy Spirit wants to give to us, it’s not just the gift of speaking in tongues or prophecy or the working of miracles, but the Holy Spirit wants to give us himself, he wants to have fellowship with each one of us. God wants to have daily communion with you and so he gave himself and he dwells within us, within the Church, the body of Christ.

When you discover the person of the Holy Spirit, a power is released into your life and your purpose becomes activated. This is what we see in King Saul’s life and I believe will start happening in your life when you stop treating the Holy Spirit as a doctrine and embrace them as a close personal friend. King Saul’s purpose was activated by the anointing of the Holy Spirit and I want you to see that the first benefit of this intimacy was that he no longer surrendered to the enemy.

## 1. Not Surrendering to the Enemy

What happened with King Saul is that no sooner did the Holy Spirit come upon him then did the enemy come against one of the cities of Israel. And the Bible says in verse one of first Samuel chapter 11,

*“Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh Gilead. And all the men of Jabesh said to him, "Make a treaty with us, and we will be subject to you."*

*But Nahash the Ammonite replied, "I will make a treaty with you only on the condition that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you and so bring disgrace on all Israel." The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Give us seven days so we can send messengers throughout Israel; if no one comes to rescue us, we will surrender to you" (1 Samuel 11:1-3).*

The Ammonites surrounded Jabesh Gilead, but instead of engaging in battle, they entered into negotiations. And so, Nahash demanded that they submit to a humiliating and crippling punishment of having their right eyes gouged out. With great wisdom, the elders asked for seven days before making that decision and verse four says,

*“When the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and reported these terms to the people, they all wept aloud. Just then Saul was returning from the fields, behind his oxen, and he asked, "What is wrong with the people? Why are they weeping?" Then they repeated to him what the men of Jabesh had said” (1 Samuel 11:4-5).*

The people were distraught, but what they didn’t realize is that the enemy only negotiates with people that he knows he can’t overcome. Fortunately, they had a week to make their decision and when Saul returned from the fields he asked, “What is wrong?” Verse six says,

*“When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he burned with anger…” (1 Samuel 11:6).*

King Saul wasn’t about to negotiate with the enemy, he’s like we’re not going to surrender, but we’re going to fight. And this is the first sign of a relationship with the Holy Spirit, you no longer surrender to the enemy, you don’t buy into his lies, you don’t make deals with him, because you have been anointed to conquer him.

And so, when the Holy Spirit came upon Saul with power, he refused to make deals with the enemy, he refused to submit, surrendering to the terms of the enemy, but instead he resisted the enemy. In the same way, when you and I have intimacy with the Holy Spirit we don’t surrender to the past, we don’t surrender to temptation, we don’t surrender to whatever struggle there may be, because we are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus.

## 2. You Will Be Strong and Courageous

Number two, having intimacy with the Holy Spirit, you will become courageous and I want you to see this transformation in King Saul. In the previous chapter, chapter 10, when Samuel called the people of Israel together to anoint their king, they went to look for Saul, but they couldn’t find him anywhere. The Bible says that Samuel prayed,

*“And the Lord said, "He’s hidden himself among the baggage" (1 Samuel 10:22).*

You see, prior to the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Saul was a coward, but when the Holy Spirit came upon him, he became strong and courageous.

God said to Joshua in chapter 1, verse nine,

*“Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).*

He said, just be courageous, because I’m going with you. In other words, whatever I ask you to do, wherever I ask you to go, it’s not going to be easy, it won’t always make sense, but you’ve got to be strong and courageous because you’re about to see the power of God in action. When the Holy Spirit came upon Saul, he wasn’t speaking in tongues now, he wasn’t prophesying now, but he rose up with courage and verse six says,

*“The Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he burned with anger. He took a pair of oxen, cut them into pieces, and sent the pieces by messengers throughout Israel, proclaiming, "This is what will be done to the oxen of anyone who does not follow Saul and Samuel." Then the terror of the Lord fell on the people, and they turned out as one man” (1 Samuel 11:6-7).*

When the Holy Spirit came upon Saul, the fear of God came upon all the people, and I believe that when Samuel saw this he knew that God was moving. He knew that God was about to do something big, because this wasn’t Saul the coward, this was the Holy Spirit. And as we remain connected to the vine, as we remain in him, we’re going to see breakthrough in our lives, in our families, and in our community, because as we seek the Holy Spirit we’re going to be strong and courageous.

## 3. You Will Serve Other People

Number three, not only will the Holy Spirit make you courageous, but intimacy with the Holy Spirit will empower you to serve other people instead of fearing people. No longer was Saul hiding, but when the Holy Spirit came upon Saul, verse eight says that he gathered an army together.

*“Saul mustered them at (Beh’-zak), the men of Israel numbered three hundred thousand and the men of Judah thirty thousand. They told the messengers who had come, "Say to the men of* *Jabesh Gilead, 'By the time the sun is hot tomorrow, you will be delivered.'" When the messengers went and reported this to the men of Jabesh, they were elated. They said to the Ammonites, "Tomorrow we will surrender to you and you can do to us whatever seems good to you” (1 Samuel 11:8-10).*

Saul served the nation of Israel, he gathered his troops, and the sent messengers to the men of Jabesh Gilead that help was on the way. No longer was Saul a coward, no longer was he fearful of people, because he was filled with the Holy Spirit and he was bearing fruit for the kingdom of God.

In the same way, we want to stay connected to the vine. Jesus said,

*"If a man (or woman) remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).*

This is so important; we need to get this into our hearts and into our heads so that we can live it out in our lives. We want to bear much fruit and there are many ways that we can bear fruit, but the Bible says that there is a fruit of the Spirit. Galatians chapter 5 says that it’s a certain kind of fruit.

*“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).*

And even as you hear those words, they just sound like good fruit, because it’s all good stuff.

As we serve people this is the kind of fruit that you need, this is the kind of fruit that will keep you from getting burned out in ministry. The same thing that keeps me serving people is the same thing that will keep you serving people. It’s not that you found the perfect church, it’s not that we are all perfect people, but we are all in process, we are being perfected, and we are here because of the Holy Spirit. We’re not here because of people, we here because of God and we live for him and we love him. That’s why the apostle Paul encouraged the church in Corinth,

*“My dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58).*

You see, if God is the reason why you serve people, your love for people will grow, your compassion will grow, and your grace will grow. You will enjoy them and when they mess up, you will forgive them and move forward, because it’s all about serving God.

## 4. You Will Be Set Apart for God

Number four, you will be set apart for God when you walk with the Holy Spirit. The next day, the Bible says in verse 11,

*“Saul separated his men into three divisions; during the last watch of the night they broke into the camp of the Ammonites and slaughtered them until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together” (1 Samuel 11:11).*

I am sure that Saul was familiar with the story of Gideon and his defeat of the Midianites, because he used the same strategy, dividing his army into three groups and attacking at night. During the last watch of the night he surprised the enemy and in the same way, as you are set apart for God, there are things that you will slaughter, you will put to death your pride and your rebellion. As we spend time in the presence of the Holy Spirit he sets us apart and lead us to victory.

King Saul won this great victory, but no sooner was it over did people come to Samuel and start whispering in verse 12,

*“The people then said to Samuel, "Who was it that asked, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring these men to us and we will put them to death” (1 Samuel 11:12).*

In other words, when Saul was chosen to be king some people started to list all the reasons why he was not fit to be king. There were haters around, people who were against him, and so those who were for him wanted to clean up the kingdom. They were like, we have their names, we know where they live, but when Saul heard that he said,

*“No one shall be put to death today, for this day the Lord has rescued Israel” (1 Samuel 11:13).*

And so, intimacy with the Holy Spirit will set you apart from the others, you will be merciful and gracious. The Holy Spirit will keep us from being distracted by the drama, by the gossip, by the naysayers, and the haters. You see, we can’t lose our focus on the mission and our assignment on this earth. The Holy Spirit has set us apart to reach the world, saving the loss, and impacting the world for Jesus.

*He said, "If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit” (Jon 15:5).*

It’s not in our nature, we can’t do it, but as we return to the vine again and again, remaining in the vine, being connected to the vine, loving the vine. As we remain in him, little blossoms begin to grow and they become fruit. God begins to produce something perfect in us, the fruit of the Spirit. First there is a little bit of love, and then some joy, some peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. All of these things begin to reproduce themselves, multiplying as we stay connected to the vine. As we love each other and remain in him, we will find ourselves living out a miracle, God is doing something in us and producing good fruit.

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