

Abide In Christ

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[0 : 00] I like how you've got the time in big red letters in front of me. You must have been warned already before I came here.

John chapter 15, and we're looking at the first 11 verses. And just as we go there, I want to just say that this is a chapter that, for me, is quite a personal passage of Scripture.

It's a place that I tend to come to time and time again. I'm found every few weeks back at John 15, thinking about the promise of Jesus and the call of Jesus to abide in him, and he will abide with us.

In ministry, as we are called to minister for Christ, wherever we are, whoever we are, if we are trusting him.

But sometimes it's very easy, and it's very easy to be busy. But sometimes it's very easy to be busy and find that we are in that place where it feels like we're doing nothing.

[1 : 22] We're doing everything, but we're not having any real effect. And when I often feel that, I find that I'm taken back to John chapter 15, where I hear Jesus saying, abide in me, I will abide in you, and you will be fruitful.

Apart from me, drift from me, and you can do nothing. You can be very busy, but you can end up doing nothing in terms of the work of the kingdom.

So this is a passage. Just as, you know, there are some places that we like to go to, the actual physical places, there are places that we like to go to, not once or twice, but over and over again.

The number of people in Harris that I hear and see going back to Lusk and Tower Beach over and over again. It's like a place where they go and they reset. And we all have our places like that, places that we like to maybe go and walk the dog or just go and sit for a while.

And when our heads are fried, we get perspective when we go to these places. John 15, from a biblical point of view, is a place that I find helpful to go to over and over and over and over again.

[2 : 43] Because it's a passage that deals with our relationship with God. And that's what being a Christian is. I should maybe have asked the young ones on the couch there at the back what they think a Christian is.

And there are a thousand answers that could be put forward. But the answer that very clearly comes through Scripture, what is a Christian? A Christian is somebody who is in relationship with God.

A Christian is somebody who knows Jesus in a saving way. and in a personal way. We know him as our Savior because he's taken our sin away.

And we know him as our friend. He says that in John 15. I haven't called you servants. I've called you friends. We know him in that intimate, personal way.

So this evening, I'd like to think just for a short time about our relationship with God. I want to think about abiding in Christ.

- [3 : 57] Four points just to give you the structure for the time. The first thing we see, the first two points give us the context really for the time and the place that we're reading into.
- We see anxious disciples, point number one. The second point is we see Jesus as he's approaching the cross. The third thing is we hear these words from Jesus to the disciples.
- Words for us. If we are disciples, he says to the disciples, you are already clean. So anxious disciples, Jesus is approaching the cross.
- He says to the disciples, those who are in him, you are already clean. Speaks that word of encouragement and assurance to them. A word that we need to hear often.
- And the final point that we come to and we end with is we hear that call of Jesus, that repeated call to abide in him, abide in Christ.
- [5 : 01] So point number one, we see, first of all, anxious disciples. And that gives us the context for John 15. It gives us the where.
- It gives us the what was going on. So where are the disciples and where is Jesus as he's with the disciples? Well, they're in a wee upper room. If you look from John chapter 13 through into John chapter 17, just to kind of give us the big picture, this is a dialogue.
- A dialogue. This is a set of teaching that Jesus gives his disciples as they're together in this little upper room. Jesus has gathered his disciples into that place and this was a special time for them because this was the last time that the disciples would be all together with Jesus.
- So we can visualize that. Disciples, they're they're huddled in together in this wee room with Jesus. He's closed the door and he says to them, if you look at John chapter 14, one of the things that Jesus says to these disciples, they're words that are precious to us.
- He says to them, let not your hearts be troubled. John chapter 14, verse 1. Picture the disciples in this wee room before he gets to the teaching and abide with me.
- [6 : 27] He says to his disciples, let not your hearts be troubled. Why does he say that? It's because their hearts were troubled.
- Jesus knows their hearts. He knows what's going through their minds. He knows them intimately and he knows their hearts are troubled. He can see that they are anxious disciples.
- Disciples. And as we think about what they were experiencing, the disciples, remember, they're called by Jesus to follow him.
- They are with him. That's what a disciple is, somebody who's with Jesus. And as they're with Jesus, the crowds start to come in. As Jesus preaches, as he heals, as he performs miracles, the crowds start to gather.
- And at first, the crowds are excited. The crowds can't get enough of what Jesus is saying. They're amazed by him. They're enthralled by him. They love Jesus when they first see what he's doing.
- [7 : 40] But the crowds that used to love Jesus and used to be amazed by Jesus, they were starting to change. There was an air of menace about this time.
- The crowds were beginning to turn against Jesus. And the religious and the political leaders, the most powerful men in that place, they were very much against Jesus.
- Which meant that they were very much against the disciples of Jesus. So it was no longer safe to be a disciple of Jesus.
- Jesus and the disciples were beginning to feel the hatred of the world against them. And Jesus speaks to them about that in the second half of John chapter 15.

But as we think about the disciples and what's going through their minds, we can see and we can understand as we think about their experience, we can understand that they were anxious.

[8 : 54] Anxious disciples. That's how they were in this moment. And some of us this evening may feel at some degree of that same anxiety.

I don't know you well as a congregation. But I expect that even in a group this size, there will be some who, even at this point in time, are wrestling with feelings of anxiety.

As we step out into a new year, there can often be a sense of anxiety. We don't know what's up ahead.

And sometimes that can cause us to worry. We feel anxiety. We maybe as Christians, for those of us here this evening who are Christians, maybe with the disciples we have that sense that it's becoming harder and harder to be a Christian in Scotland.

And we have children or maybe we've got grandchildren. And we're thinking ahead and wondering what is it going to look like for our children to follow Jesus?

[10 : 21] What are they going to live through? What's their experience going to be? And as we think about these things, we struggle not to worry. Or it can just be the cares of this world.

Maybe in our experience, our work is just not going well just now. And it's causing stress. Or maybe our health or the health of a loved one is failing.

or maybe we're struggling in a relationship with a friend or even a spouse. It feels like it's breaking down.

Or maybe just post-Christmas. Money is tight and bills are coming in and it's getting just a bit scary.

There are many things from the huge things to the day-by-day, more mundane things that can cause us to become anxious. So what do we do when we're anxious?

[11 : 31] Well, we do what the disciples did. We get in a wee room, we close the door, and we spend time with Jesus.

Such a simple thing. But such a necessary thing for us to be reminded of continuously. How do we deal with anxiety?

We take it to Jesus. We could have sung that hymn, What a Friend We Have in Jesus. And it's got a line in there that speaks about bringing our anxieties to him.

And it's gone straight out of my head just now. But this is what we do. We, like the disciples back then, we can wrestle with anxiety.

And when we are wrestling with anxiety, we should get in a wee room, close the door, spend time with Jesus, or get together with other believers. Encourage each other as we spend time in the presence of Jesus.

[12 : 44] Anxious disciples, point number one. The second point is we see, we see Jesus and he's approaching the cross. So we thought a little about the disciples and what they were feeling as they huddled together in that wee room.

But what about Jesus? What was going through his mind? What was in his experience as he's sitting in this room? Well, what's going through the mind of Jesus very clearly is the cross.

I expect that you in Carloway, like we in Harris, spent much of the month of December thinking about the birth of Jesus, the birth that was foretold by the prophets, the birth that was announced to the shepherds, the news of the, as the hymn puts it, the child in the manger.

But the child in the manger that we thought about who was born into this world through the month of December, he was the child who came on a mission.

And in that same hymn, Child in the Manger, it says, he was the child who inherits all our transgressions, all our demerits on him fall.

[14 : 16] And in this wee upper room, Jesus knows in these moments as he speaks to the disciples, Jesus knows that he's only hours away from the cross.

At John 15, this was Thursday night. This was the night before the crucifixion.

And Jesus knows that he is approaching the cross. He was never distracted from the cross. I remember I had a teacher in school in Sky who was a lovely man.

He was a good teacher, but he was very easily distracted. And when the lesson was a bit dry and when we were wanting just to have a little bit of relaxed time, it was so easy to distract him.

You just needed to say, we were in Sky, jets were flying overhead often. And all you would need to say is, is that a jet? And he would charge off from the board, off to the window, searching the skies for the jet.

[15 : 34] And then three minutes later, he'd be talking about F-16s, 20 minutes later, he's in the wars, he's telling you stories of all these dog fights. And then the bell rang and the lesson was over and there's no homework set.

Easily distracted. Jesus was never distracted from the reason that he came into this world.

Jesus never drifted off mission. He never lost sight of the cross. and as he is sitting with the disciples in that upper room, he can see he is focused, he knows that he is approaching the cross.

And for us, as disciples of Jesus, if we are disciples of Jesus, if we have trusted him, if we are Christians, we must never be sight of the cross.

Yes, we come to the cross when we are first saved. We see our sin. We come to the cross, we seek forgiveness. But it's not a case of we go there and then we move on from there.

[17 : 04] No, we must come back time and time again to the cross. We must survey continuously all that Jesus did for his disciples back then and for us still today.

We must always be approaching the cross. If we want to know the extent of God's love for us, we need to go back to the cross.

Sometimes we lose that sense of how much God loves us. We lose the feeling and if we want to know again the extent of God's love for us, we need to go back to the cross.

We could have sang the hymn, hear his love vast as the ocean, love and kindness as the flood, when the prince of life, our ransom, shed for us his precious blood.

How deep the father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure, that he should give his only son to make a wretch his treasure.

[18 : 33] This is where we see the extent of God's love for us. It's as we once more come back to the cross. And if we find in our own walk with God that our love for God is cooling, we need to come back to the cross.

if we're here this evening and we're finding that actually it's becoming easier and easier to sin.

And it's becoming harder and harder to find the motivation to open the Bible. And it's becoming more and more of a chore to have to come out to a prayer meeting.

Then where do we go for that? We need to go back to the cross so that we will see our sin, so that we'll see what our sin did to Jesus, so that we will hate our sin and repent again and again and again.

and we'll rejoice in the fact that at the cross Jesus opened up the way so that sinners like me and you can enter the presence of God through the blood that was shed to cleanse us.

[20 : 09] All that we rediscover at the cross. If we find this evening that pride is creeping into our lives and we're starting to feel a bit self righteous, if we're feeling a bit judgy, if we're looking at other people and we're placing ourselves a little above them, if we need our pride dealt with, we need to go back to the cross to be humbled.

Forbid it Lord that I should boast, saving the blood of Christ my Lord. And maybe we're in the other extreme just now.

Maybe we're all too conscious of our sin. Maybe we're being tempted by Satan to despair and we're losing the joy of our salvation.

Where do we need to go? We need to go back to the cross where we see that Jesus made an end to all our sin and secured our salvation.

So anxious disciples and then we see Jesus the Saviour who knows that he is approaching the cross. The third thing here is we hear the words of Jesus to his disciples and what he says to his disciples point number three is you are already clean.

[21 : 49] Verse three already says Jesus you are clean because of the word I have spoken to you. And that's an immense promise.

He says to these disciples flawed and failing as they were he says to them already you are clean. Hendrickson the commentator says by faith in the word of Christ the eleven had become clean.

We could rewind to John chapter 13 and verse 10 and in John chapter 13 we see Jesus he's washing the disciples feet and as he uses water to wash their feet he's pointing forward to his blood that would wash their hearts.

And Jesus as he as he washes the feet of Peter he says to Peter and to the disciples plural in verse 10 of John 13 you are clean but not every one of you.

Eleven disciples were clean because they were in Christ because they were as Jesus says in verse 2 of chapter 15 you are in me but one of the unsettling things in this chapter is the presence of Judas Iscariot.

[23 : 24] He was in the upper room. He was at the services. He was present at the feet washer.

He was even served bread and wine at the first communion meal. But he was not clean. One of the twelve was not clean.

And there's a warning there for for us. It's possible to be in the room. It's possible to be on the roll.

It's possible to take even the bread and the wine. It's possible even to be a preacher like Judas was clean.

Because Judas was not in Christ. But the eleven disciples, and this is where the emphasis is, the eleven disciples, those who were with him to the end, those who believed in his word, those who were connected to Jesus divine by faith, they were already clean.

[24 : 53] How could they be so sure? Well, they could be so sure because of the word that Jesus spoke to them. He said it. And they could be sure that they were clean because of the blood that Jesus would soon shed for them.

That's how they could be clean. And at the beginning of a new year, it's an encouraging truth to meditate upon.

If we have repented of our sin, if we are still this evening repenting of the sin that we struggle with, if we have believed in Jesus, then we are already clean.

It is well with our souls. I can't remember who wrote it, but my sin, it goes, my sin, with the bliss of this glorious thought, my sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more.

It is well, it is well with my soul. There's such encouragement in that. We have an enemy, and he loves to dredge back up the memory of all our failures and our falls, all these sins that we have confessed.

[26 : 44] He loves to take them and dig them back up and throw them in our faces. The accuser of the brethren, as he is called.

And we can so often listen and start to sink back down into despair. And yet, as we listen in to this conversation in the upper room, a conversation that was recorded so that we will hear it, Jesus says to us, as he said to them, you are already clean.

Past sins, the present sins that we are struggling with, the future sins that we cannot yet see.

If we are in Christ, because of the word that he has spoken to us, because of the blood that he has shed for us, he gives us the assurance that we are already clean.

What a blessing that is to walk out the door tonight and to know that we are cleansed, we are forgiven, our guilt is gone.

[28 : 13] Like Christian, as he came to the cross, remember the burden, the weight of all the crushing sin that he was carrying, it falls away.

And that's what Jesus is saying to us as we think about these words, you are already clean. So if tonight you are a Christian who is in danger of losing your salvation, not losing your salvation, but losing the joy of your salvation, we cannot lose our salvation, but we can lose the joy of our salvation.

And if that's where we are this evening, we need to come back to the cross. We need to listen again to the word of Jesus.

We need to see once more the blood of Jesus shed for us and rejoice in the assurance that we are already clean.

Final point. Abide in Christ. And I want to finish on this point.

[29 : 26] I'm not going to say a lot, but I want to finish on this point because this is the main repeated point running through these verses. If we're wanting to get some emphasis into something that we've written, we're out with the highlighter pens and we're out with the bold and the underline.

The Greek writers didn't have these formatting options. So to bring emphasis, they used repetition. So if you were to scan through verses 1 to verse 10, just in the text in front of you just now, then we can see in this section Jesus uses this word abide repeatedly.

Verse 4, he uses the word abide three times. Verse 5, he uses it one time. Verse 6, we have this word abide again one time. Verse 7, twice.

verse 9, one time. Verse 10, two times. So 10 times in nine verses, Jesus is saying to the disciples, abide.

Jesus says if you want to be fruitful in 2025, abide in me. Apart from me, you can do nothing.

[30 : 49] if you want to be effective in prayer, says Jesus, verse 7, abide in me. If you want to glorify the Father, verse 8, abide in me.

If you want to know the love of God, verse 9, abide in me. If you want fullness joy, verse 11, abide in me.

If you want assurance of salvation, abide in me. So if on the third week of a new year, we're still looking for a resolution to go forward with, a resolution that's far more significant than eating healthy and exercising regularly.

John, the gospel writer, says, well, here's a resolution for you. Resolve to abide in Christ.

J.C. Ryle, speaking on this phrase, abide in me, he says, cling to me, stick fast to me, live the life of close and intimate communion with me, get nearer and nearer to me, roll every burden on me, cast your whole weight on me, never let go your hold on me for a moment, be as it were rooted and planted in me, do this and I will never fail you.

[32 : 52] I will ever abide in you. That's Jesus' promise. But how do we do that as we finish? How do we abide?

what's not complicated? We just do what the disciples did. We take time to be with Jesus, which will almost certainly involve less screen time and more upper room time.

we listen to the word of Jesus until we abide, which means we're in our Bibles. We speak to Jesus, which means we pray and we resolve in God's strength to obey Jesus, to live lives that are holy, and pleasing to him.

That's what it means to abide. And there's no more joyful life. Weerspey says this abiding relationship is natural to the branch and the vine, but it must be cultivated in the Christian life.

it is not automatic. Abiding in Christ demands worship, meditation on God's word, prayer, sacrifice, and service.

[34 : 51] But what a joyful experience it is. Once you have begun to cultivate this deeper communion with Christ, you have no desire to return to the shallow life of the careless Christian.

And that's something that we often have to repent of. Me first. the times when we find that we have gone back to the shallow life of the careless Christian.

It's a miserable place to be. And Jesus calls us not to live there, but to abide in him, that we will be fruitful, that we will know joy as we take time in his presence.

We'll pray. Amen.