

Wesley United Methodist Church

May 3, 2015

"What Are You Tied To?"

John 15:1-8

Two men, walking through the woods, come across a big deep hole. "Wow...that looks deep," says one. "Sure does," says the other. "Toss a few pebbles in there and see how deep it is," They pick up a few pebbles and throw them in and wait...no noise. "Hey, that is really deep," says the first man. "Here, throw one of these great big rocks down there. That should make a noise." They pick up a couple of football-sized rocks and toss them into the hole and wait...and wait. Nothing. They look at each other in amazement. One gets a determined look on his face and says, "Hey...over there in the weeds, there's a railroad tie. Help me carry it over here. When we toss that in, it's gotta make some noise." the two drag the heavy tie over to the hole and heave it in. Not a sound comes from the hole. Suddenly, out of the nearby woods, a goat appears, running like the wind. It rushes toward the two men, then right past them, running as fast as its legs will carry it. Suddenly it leaps in the air and into the hole. The two men are astonished with what they've just seen... Then out of the woods comes a farmer who spots the men and ambles over. "Hey...you two guys seen my goat out here?" One of the men says, "You bet we did! Craziest thing I ever seen. It came running like crazy and just jumped into this hole!" "Nah," says the farmer, "That couldn't have been my goat. My goat was tied to a railroad tie."

That poor goat--tied to something that pulled him down, way down. What are you tied to? It's one of the most relevant questions that can be asked of us. Everyone has something pulling on him. Are you tied to your company? Are you tied to a comfortable lifestyle? Are you tied to alcohol or drugs? Or are you tied to Christ?

Jesus says in John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches." What is Jesus saying? Isn't he saying "You are tied to me...Here is where you draw your strength. Here is what sustains you when life is tough. You are connected to me. I am the vine; you are the branches."

Now what is the purpose of being tied to Christ? It is to live a productive life. Jesus says, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by himself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. If a person remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." In other words, the purpose of our being connected to Christ is that we live productive lives. Last week in John 10, Jesus talked about abundant life and now he is talking about productive life and being connected to him. What is the formula of staying connected to him? Too many Christians miss this formula and it is a day to day struggle to stay connected.

A newspaper reporter went to interview a successful entrepreneur. "How did you do it?" he asked. "How did you make all this money?" "I'm glad you asked," the entrepreneur replied. "Actually, it's a rather wonderful story. You see, when my wife and I married, we started out with a roof over our heads, some food in the pantry, and five cents between us. I took that nickel, went down to the grocery store, bought an apple, and shined it up. Then I sold it for ten cents" "What did you do then?" "Well," he said, "then I bought two more apples, shined them up, and sold them for twenty cents." The reporter thought this would be a great human interest story. "Then what?" "Then my father-in-law died and left us \$20 million." That entrepreneur was connected.

Successful people are connected to Christ. Notice I did not say that successful people are connected to the church. Church is important, of course. Most successful people are quite active in church and at times they are connected across many miles.

Julius Little of Greenville, N.C was hospitalized for congestive heart failure. The doctor warned him his recovery would be slow. His daughter Judy told him not to worry. "Everybody in my church is praying for you," she said. Still, he said, he was fearful. In a matter of days, though, he began to rally. In fact, in practically no time he felt like himself again. Even his doctor was amazed at the progress. He saw no reason why Julius and his wife, LaRue, couldn't go through with their travel plans to visit Opryland, in Nashville, Tenn., on their way to visit their daughter in Blue Springs, MO. And so they made their way to Opryland. It was hot and crowded in the theme park, LaRue rested on a shady bench while Julius went to find a cold drink. LaRue struck up a conversation with two friendly ladies sitting beside her on the bench. They couldn't believe it when LaRue told them she and her husband were on their way to Blue Springs, MO to visit their daughter. "Why, I'm from Blue Springs!" said one of the women. "What's your daughter's name?" Julius

walked up just as this friendly woman said that she was a member of Judy's prayer chain. Then she exclaimed to Julius, "I've been praying for you. I thought you were really sick... What in the world are you doing standing here?" Julius smiled and said, "I'm standing here because of you." Julius was convinced he was standing there because he was connected. He was connected to the ultimate source of power and healing.

Being connected also means we have a presence. We have a presence in our lives. We are not alone. Someone is there for us and walks with us every step of the way.

When you really love someone, a part of them lives in you. You see the world through their eyes. You absorb some of their values and attitudes. Even when you are away from them, you carry a piece of them in your heart. Your life bears the imprint of their influence. If you love Jesus, you will experience all these things. You want to be fruitful. And that is what Christ's Spirit does for those who are connected to him today. The Holy Spirit gives us an inner energy to be fruitful.

Jesus put it this way: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit...If you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you."

Here is the great secret of life. Here is the secret of having part in the things that matter most. It is to be connected, to be tied to the One who is the ultimate source of power, to the One who will never forsake us, to the One who will help us live productive lives, meaningful lives.

Vineyard owners tell us that the strongest point on any vine is the base where the vine and branch are joined together. If you pull on a branch that goes into a tree it will always break at the trunk of the tree. In a tree that is the weakest place. But in a grapevine that is the strongest point.

That should not surprise us. Christ says to us: I have the strength to provide all your needs. I have the strength to hold you in your time of testing. I will never let you go. When we are tied to him, we have a source of power, presence, and purpose. We live productive lives. So, what are you tied to?