

## PREPARING AT HOME

April 23-29, 2018

*Focus reading:* John 15:1–8 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=385553174>)

*Other lectionary readings:* Acts 8:26–40 Psalm 22:25–31 1 John 4:7–21

*Theme:* Love Abides

The Gospel of John contains many statements by Jesus that begin with the words “I am.” In these statements, Jesus uses metaphors to reveal some truth about who he is and what he does. Many of those statements occur in Jesus’ “Farewell Discourse” to his disciples, found in John 14:1-16:3. Last week we reflected on the ways in which Jesus is the Good Shepherd. This week we hear Jesus say that he is the “true vine” (verse 1). In agricultural Israel, vineyards were an important part of life. Hard work went into preparing the soil to produce the vines, and much attention went into caring for the vineyard. High walls and watchtowers were built to protect the vines from animals and people. Most of the grapes were used to make wine, and a good harvest of grapes was seen as a sign of God’s pleasure. Isaiah and other Hebrew prophets spoke of Israel as the vine and God as the vinedresser, or one who cared for the vine. The metaphorical fruit of the vine in Hebrew Scriptures is justice. In this week’s reading, Jesus uses the metaphor of a vine to illustrate how we are all connected to Christ and gain our strength from him. God is the gardener. Dead branches must be cleared away. Pruning is required to produce new growth. Pruning does not hurt the plant, but rather makes it stronger and more productive. Our “fruit” is to carry out Christ’s work in the world, and we can only do that if we remain in Christ.

### VINES AND BRANCHES

Grapevines may not be familiar to our children, but this metaphor can be illustrated by other plants. Go outside with your child and look for examples of vines and branches. How does the growth at the outer extremes get its nourishment? What would happen if you cut the branches or vines off from the rest of the plant? Do you see dead growth that needs to be pruned? Is pruning a bad thing or a good thing for the plant? Does it hurt or help? If you can’t find examples in your own backyard, visit the church Memorial Garden! After looking at/pruning a plant, read the Scripture. What do you hear differently after spending some time in the garden?

### ABIDE IN CHRIST

To “abide in Christ” means to stay closely connected to him, intertwined even, as branches and vines are to one another. How can we stay connected to Christ? Draw pictures of ways that we can stay connected to Christ and ways that we can “bear fruit,” showing that connection by how we live and the things we do.

### PRAYER

Loving God,  
Help us to stay connected to you  
so that we may grow well and live fruitful lives.  
Amen.

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