

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 3/11/18

Prayer - Use the Wesleyan Covenant Prayer to begin your time with God each day.

O Lord, You have created me to bear fruits of ministry in my life. Give me a heart to serve You and to share Your Love with a hurting world. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and work through me to do your will and to bear fruit. I pray in the name of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Monday – Read John 15:1-8. **Pruning the Vine.** In a grape vineyard the vines are the main section of the plant and are the source of sustenance and life for the branches. Branches are regularly pruned and trimmed in order to maximize the production of fruit. Jesus claimed that he is the vine and you are the branches. Have you ever felt like God was pruning you when you experienced something that seemed painful at the time but that was preparing you to bear fruit? Notice that the branches simply remain or abide in the vine; they surrender to do what they were created to do. God is the Gardener and you are in his vineyard. Ask God to help you grow in God's will when you experience pruning.

Tuesday – Read John 15:9-17. **Life in the Vine.** Verse 11 describes the life we have when we *remain in* Christ. Jesus became friends with both men and women. He shared God's love with all of his friends, and he called his followers to share God's love with each other. Through his life and death, Jesus showed us that no one has greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. Jesus is our Lord, and he is also our Friend. How does it make you feel to know that the Lord of the universe has chosen you to be his friend? If you are in a small group or Sunday school class, how is your group intentionally cultivating this kind of love? Invite God to give you a heart of love for others so that you may bear much fruit.

Wednesday – Read Isaiah 5:1-7. **Created to Produce Fruit.** God's people are God's vineyard. The vineyard is supposed to produce grapes, but what happens if the vineyard produces wild grapes? When God's people fail to live in God's ways and to produce the fruit of the kingdom, God passes judgment on God's people. In what ways is our church producing fruits in the kingdom of God? In what ways do we need to repent and seek God's forgiveness? Pray for God to help you see the spiritual fruit in your life and to help you work to nourish this spiritual fruit during Lent.

Thursday – Read Matthew 21:33-46. **The Parable of the Vineyard.** Jesus told another story about a vineyard. It is the story of God's people in the Old Testament through the time in which Jesus lived. What happens when God's people ignore God's teachings? Jesus was symbolically telling the story of how God's people had beaten and killed God's prophets. Jesus was also foreshadowing his own death at the very hands of the people he came to save. Are we being good tenants of God's vineyard? Ask God to help you use the spiritual gifts God has given you to build up the kingdom of God and produce spiritual fruits that are pleasing to God.

Friday – Read Luke 13:6-9 and Matthew 21:18-22. **The Patient Gardener.** Both of these scriptures help us understand that Jesus expects his followers to produce fruits in the kingdom of God. In Luke, notice that the gardener asked the owner of the vineyard to be patient so that he could nurture the growth of fruit on the tree. God is patient with us so that we can nurture the growth of spiritual fruit in our lives. However, in Matthew, Jesus is showing us that nothing that stands in the way of God's salvation will stand; only that which is good and fruitful, saving and merciful will endure. Jesus taught his disciples to pray with great faith. How are you producing fruits in the kingdom? Pray for God to help you bear fruits that will endure.

Saturday – Read I Corinthians 13:1-13. **Fruits of the Vine: Faith, Hope, and Love.** Our stained-glass window depicts Faith, Hope, and Charity (Love) as the fruits of the vine. Just as Jesus calls us to abide or live in him, the Apostle Paul tells us to abide or live out the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love. Of course, Paul is insistent that *the greatest of these is love.*

He describes love this way: ⁴Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.⁸ Love never ends. Without love, our spiritual gifts will not produce fruit on the vine. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you grow in the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love and to help you share God's love with the people in your life.

Lectionary Readings: Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21.

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