

## SERMON ON THE SUNDAY OF JUBILATE

JOHN 15, 1-8

*1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.*

*2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.*

*4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

*5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not*

*remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*



When I was a child, growing plants was extremely fascinating to me. Back then, for example, we kids placed avocado kernels in a glass and every morning watched with great enthusiasm how the kernel takes root and were overjoyed when the tiniest shoots became visible. To be honest, I can still feel this enthusiasm today when I go to the balcony and see the new plants growing there! The tense expectation of spring and the sprouting of the plants is still a great source of pleasure!

In our sermon text today, Jesus tells us that God the Father is a gardener. As a gardener, God didn't spare any effort or expense.. He worked and cared for his garden; he suffered for it and cried for it; since the beginning of humanity He did this. In the end, He did not even spare His own Son for us. God did all of this for his garden! Jesus is the vine that God has placed in his garden. The Vine is a beautiful picture showing us that Jesus is completely there for us. And we should be the branches that can grow from Him and in Him. The time after Easter can be understood a little bit like the sprouting of plants in Spring. At first everything was as dark as the grave where Jesus was placed. Everything also went dark around the hearts of the disciples. Jesus was dead! It was like a vine that can be seen without leaves in winter. But, we know that a vine is not dead in winter! A vine is alive even if it looks like death itself! Jesus lives too! He is risen! And the time after Easter is a time when the first branches shoot out of the vine. These were the disciples who saw Jesus. And when they saw Jesus, they got the taste of eternal life through Him. They realized suddenly...You could grow! What a joy of faith! What joy in life! Eternal life! ...And what would happen now? ... I imagine God a little like the gardener, who longingly looks at the balcony crates. He wants to see, if something is already growing there. So God is now eagerly looking for the first signs of fruit! There can never be enough fruit. This is because the hunger in our world is so great. This is because the need is so great. The world is the opposite of life and growth! Only death reigns in our world! Oh, there is too much dying! Too much unnecessary death! People are being slaughtered senselessly. Others are destroyed spiritually and physically. In the world you can never experience the love that comes from God. And you cannot grow! There is indescribable suffering. And there is an indescribable hunger for life and

joy. Instead, people only reap hatred, jealousy, and mortality over and over again. It is precisely because of these reasons.... And it is precisely because of this great hunger that God needs a rich harvest. That is precisely why He tries so hard. That is precisely why he has been calling people over and over again for generations. He called them to live and to speak the truth. And even now God is looking carefully at his church plant. He is looking for the fruits that are so urgently needed. He looks after every Christian and every single church. And when he sees a young sprout emerge, He is overjoyed. And there is a beaming God who cheers together with the whole heavenly host! Oh, how disappointing it must be for our Heavenly Father if the fruits fail to appear. He knows the need and hunger of this world like no other. He knows what is needed like no one else. How great must his disappointment be when something stops at the interface between the vine and the Christian community...and the fruits simply don't come. In today's parable, Jesus tells us that God simply cuts off branches that do not bear fruit. Specifically, this means: where the church simply sits on its gifts .... where the church simply stays in its *as-is* state and does not lose a single word for the people of its time ... where the church stops praying with tears for its contemporaries... where the church no longer seeks the way to its fellow human beings and has no word left for these people ... Yes, the Father simply has to cut this branch off .... The picture that Jesus tells us is shocking. Those who do not propagate Christ by mission must ultimately atrophy themselves. God will cut down the vine that does not bear fruit and it must be cut out of God's love. It is true that we live solely on what God does to us and we cannot earn anything. But it is also true that the same God who gives us everything is eagerly waiting for our Christianity to bear living fruit.

No Christianity without fruit! These are the words that Jesus tells us. So what remains to be done? And where should we get the fruits from? Work and effort are no strangers to us. Since the beginning of time, people have solved countless problems through hard work! But with God it is different! Our efforts in particular are fundamentally wrong! When we make an effort, we look at ourselves. And we are either despondent because of our weak strength, or we compare ourselves to others and are angry with others who do less than we do! Our Action is often not the fruit that God is looking for. In the Church, too, we should not confuse human procreativity and effort with the blessed fruit that God is looking for in His Church. There were enough projects, mission initiatives, and donations that went nowhere because people relied on what they were doing. Or because they relied on this or that person. The picture that Jesus gives us is different. We shouldn't do more, just stay in Jesus! Stay in Jesus! The branch is connected to the vine. Naturally, it cannot make an effort to bear fruit. Jesus says it clearly. "Remain in me and I in you. Because without me you can't do anything!"

In everything we do, only one thing is important: we should be connected with and in Jesus. The picture of the vine makes it clear that it is not the branches that have formed themselves and in some meeting have decided to form a vine. ... No, the vine is there first! Jesus loved us and died for us when we were still sinners. We were baptized in Christ and grown together with Christ long before we could think of fruits. Through our baptism, Jesus speaks to us and tells us: You are already pure! There is nothing left to do or to take away. Jesus has already given us everything. Now it's all about staying in Him and staying in His words. These words are spoken to us again and again. The power that is only in Jesus should flow to us again and again uninhibited. Jesus' word from the vine is closely related to his words as he speaks about the sacrament in John 6: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood stays in me and I in him."

There is only one fruit that can please God. That is that we hide completely in Jesus and are dependent on him. Spoken in the picture. There is nothing in the branch that has not previously come from the vine. Jesus distracts our gaze from ourselves. We shouldn't look at ourselves, but at the whole picture! There is more to church than a branch. There is the whole vine. There is the whole

Jesus! With all the different branches attached to Him. Therefore there is no room at all to think of yourself without the vine. What Jesus tells us here is full of life and joy! And is completely against all human rules and laws that can be found elsewhere. The law dictates how we have to live. And if we don't live as the law dictates, we face punishment. How different life is in Jesus! Not a law, but a living plant! Where a plant grows, life and growth is natural. There is no need to say to the branch "Now bear fruit!" All of this happens on its own. The juice that is deep inside sprouts out of him. Just as the buds burst out of the branches in spring, so the joy about the gospel bursts out of us and just as the flowers shine brightly in spring, so we Christians shine brightly for the heavenly joy and forgiveness that we have received! And then it happens just as easily that people come by themselves. They want to taste and see what it means to live. They are really hungry for it. They are just waiting to live. Because living is better than dying!

Jesus tells us all of this so that our joy can be perfect. Amen.