

The 2023 PEACE ON EARTH Series

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Abide in me as I in you.”

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Abide in my love.”

John 15:4–6, and 9 (CEB)

Peace on Earth Being one with the Christ

In the summer of 1974, Sandy, I, and twelve young men and women from Casselberry UMC in Florida traveled to Haiti on a Mission project to build a schoolhouse and help paint and clean the missionary compound. The compound was supplied with electricity with small generators throughout the facilities. Our missionary told the teens and us about some Haitian natives from an outlying mission that visited the United Methodist mission. They noticed the electric light hanging from the ceiling of his living room. He said they observed wide-eyed as he turned the little switch and there was light.

One of the visitors asked if he could have one of the bulbs. The missionary gave him an extra bulb thinking he would use it as a charm. He told us he visited the outlying mission and stopped at the hut of the man who had asked for the bulb. He told us he was shocked when he saw the bulb hanging in the center of the one room hut from a piece of weaved cord. He said he reminded the native about the loud generators and how they were required to have electricity and a wire to produce current for the bulb.

We may laugh at the innocence of our Haitian native, but we may not be much better. Sandy and I purchased a used ski boat from a friend when our sons, Brent and Kevin were pre-teen. We lived in Benbrook and were within ten minutes to the lake and went often for a ski outing for the family. Occasionally on those short trips I noticed the boat lights were not always working and flicker on and off when extracted from the water. Tim, our neighbor was a much savvier electrician and went with me to the lake to test the bulbs and the system.

Then he showed me how to attach the wires with metal tubes which were crimped tightly on the wires followed up by tubes of heat shrink rubber. When the torch applied the heat, hot glue melted the whole connection together in a way that was completely waterproof. I was amazed! Now that my connections are good, my trailer lights were great! I see that phenomenon to understand our connection to the Divine.

In our text for today, Jesus told a story about the importance of just such connections to the source of power. His analogy used the farm imagery of the vine and the branches. For those of us who did not grow up on the farm, we may be more familiar with the image of electricity and the bulb. Just as the electricity provides the power necessary for the bulb to burn, so the vine provides the life necessary for the branches to produce fruit. But we should never forget the great contrast between a living thing and an electro-mechanical thing.

Jesus is the vine, God the Father is the vine grower, and the true believers are the branches. Jesus wanted us to know that as branches humans are alive and humans can grow only if we

are connected to him, the true vine. If we are connected to Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit can keep us alive and thriving. If we are cut off from Jesus, we wither and die. For us to experience Peace on Earth, it is imperative that we understand our connection to our God.

I am using this text to connect three primary messages on which we can focus. First, the author John mentions “pruning,” then “fruit-bearing,” and finally he emphasizes “abiding”. I intend to use these three spiritual truths to connect us to God through the Christ over the final three weeks in January.

Peace Always,

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