

Fifth Sunday of Easter

FIRST READING – Acts 8:26-40

26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south[d] to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. **27** And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship **28** and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. **29** And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” **30** So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” **31** And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. **32** Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. **33** In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” **34** And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” **35** Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. **36** And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” **38** And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. **39** And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. **40** But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

8:26-40 The Gospel is spreading—from Jerusalem to Samaria to Africa (through the Ethiopian), and then, in subsequent chapters, to Saul (and we know what happens through him!) and Cornelius. From Samaritan to persecutor to centurion to eunuch, the Gospel spreads not only to nations but also to people who previously had been shut out of a place among God’s people. The death and resurrection of Christ means that all barriers to a life with God are broken down. Forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and a share of his Spirit are God’s gifts to everyone. “What is to prevent my being baptized?” asks the eunuch (v 36 RSV). Nothing at all! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

Philip had been elected a deacon in Acts 6. In 8:4–25, Philip preaches Christ in a Samaritan city, having left Jerusalem as a result of persecution, no longer being needed there. As a result, one Samaritan, Simon the Sorcerer, believes and is baptized by Philip. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

The various conversion accounts that Luke reports in Acts show the Gospel’s widening scope, as anticipated by Jesus in 1:8. After taking the Gospel to the Samaritans, Philip delivers it to an Ethiopian eunuch. As with the Samaritans, the Ethiopian is one still connected to Israel, for he is returning from worship in Jerusalem. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

8:26-29 The evangelism effort is God’s idea. The church is a bit slow to grasp the implications of the Gospel, and God is busy in rather direct ways to get his servants on the right track—or, to be more specific, on the right road. The Ethiopian (ancient usage) is God’s choice. As a eunuch, he would have been a second-class citizen, even as a proselyte (Deut 23:1). But as an educated man, an official of the Candace (a title, not a name), he must have wondered about his status and the tension between the Torah and Isaiah 56. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

8:26 *an angel of the Lord*. Or, “uninhabited.” The Lord moves Philip from the exciting, expanding work in Samaria to a place with no people. (TLSB)

go toward the south – mesēmbrian. In the LXX it is translated both as “noon” and as “south.” If it means “noon,” this unlikely time to depart could have been part of God’s plan to arrive at the right moment to intercept the Ethiopian. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

from Jerusalem to Gaza. A distance of about 50 miles. (CSB)

Does *erēmos*, “desert,” modify “road” or “Gaza”? The road is not deserted until after Gaza. Commentators point to two cities, an old and a new. Old Gaza was destroyed by Alexander and deserted. New Gaza, according to Josephus, was a Hellenistic town along the coast destroyed in AD 66. (See Yehudah Rapuano, “Did Philip Baptize the Eunuch at Ein Yael?” *Biblical Archeology Review* 16, no. 6 [November–December 1990], 45–49, for some excellent pictures of possible baptismal sites and a route map.) It matters little. The point is that Philip was being directed to what looked like an unlikely spot to preach. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

8:27 *rose and went* - The NIV’s translation might imply the two were traveling in opposite directions. The Greek says nothing about a meeting. Most likely, Philip caught up with the man. This was not a hard thing to do, considering that the eunuch’s vehicle had to be traveling slowly enough for him to be reading. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

an Ethiopian. Ethiopia corresponded in this period to Nubia, from the upper Nile region at the first cataract (Aswan) to Khartoum. (CSB)

OT “Cushite,” known to Israelites through contacts with Egypt and Sheba. Judeans fled into Egypt during the Babylonian exile and settled on the island of Elephantine in Upper Egypt (near modern Aswan). They likely spread the faith southward into Nubia (Sudan) and Ethiopia. The Falasha religion of Ethiopia likely had ancient Jewish roots. (TLSB)

The Ethiopian was not from the area we know as Ethiopia today. “Ethiopian” simple means that he was a black man. He was from the kingdom of Nubia, which was located on the upper Nile River between Aswan (in modern Egypt) and Khartoum (in the Sudan). (PBC)

eunuch – A eunuch could not be a full-fledged convert to the faith of Israel (see Deuteronomy 23:1), but this man was a God-fearing Gentile believer. (PBC)

It was not uncommon for castrated males to hold positions of importance in oriental courts. It seems certain that Luke intends us to see this man as sexually mutilated. Such a condition precluded full participation in the assembly. The eunuch may be marginal within the Pharisaic definition of the people of God, but he is a mighty person in his own land (over all the queen’s treasury!). His chariot is capacious enough for himself and the scrolls and a guest. He speaks elegant Greek. He has a driver. Whoever the “historical Ethiopian” might have been, therefore, Luke clearly wants his readers to see him as a part of the “ingathering of the scattered people” of Israel. (Sacra)

Candace. The traditional title of the queen mother, responsible for performing the secular duties of the reigning king—who was thought to be too sacred for such activities. (CSB)

Likely Amantitere (c AD 25–41; called Kandake in inscriptions), who ruled at Meroë and is mentioned by Roman authors. (TLSB)

Candace: not a name, but a title like Pharaoh, given to the queen mother, who was the real head of state. Her husband, the king, was unimportant because the ruling king, her son, was considered the son of the Sun. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

had come to Jerusalem to worship. If not a full-fledged proselyte (Dt 23:1), the Ethiopian was a Gentile God-fearer. (CSB)

A convert to Judaism likely returning from an annual festival. Cf Ex 34:23. (TLSB)

proskunēsōn is a future active participle indicating purpose: “to worship.” The Ethiopian was one of the so-called “God-fearers,” who was attracted to Israel’s God and worshiped him but had not become a Jew by circumcision. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

8:28 reading ... Isaiah. A man of considerable means (affording a large scroll) and education. (TLSB)

Most likely the Ethiopian was reading from the Septuagint, not only because Luke quotes it in the following verses, but because he wouldn’t have had access to Hebrew scrolls nor would he have been able to understand the Hebrew language. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

8:29 join this chariot. The Spirit may have given Philip the swiftness to catch the chariot (cf 1Ki 18:46), or the Ethiopian travelers may have been resting. (TLSB)

Philip did not choose to approach the chariot under his own intuition. The Spirit was guiding the entire meeting. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

8:30-33 Philip seizes the moment. One could hardly have asked for a more appropriate biblical text for the two men’s consideration. It helps that the eunuch is keen to understand the message of the Word. Remember, however, the role his own self-interest has played. He has a personal reason to want to understand; the Law is driving him to the cross (something he doesn’t understand quite yet). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

The quotation is direct from the LXX, Is 53:7–8. It is remarkable that Isaiah 52–53 appears so sparingly in the New Testament in connection with Jesus. This is the first explicit identification of the Servant with Jesus in Acts. Yet the messianic connection was abandoned by Jews, so much so that this section of Isaiah was omitted from their public reading, though the sections before and after were read. No doubt this was because the Christians had applied it to Jesus successfully. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

8:30 heard the man reading. It was customary practice to read aloud. (CSB)

In ancient times, people typically read aloud. Luther: “It pleased God not to give the Spirit without the Word... He could, of course, do this apart from the Word; but He does not want to do it that way” (WLS § 2050). (TLSB)

Ancient manuscripts were written in capital letters with no spacing or punctuation between words and sentences. One had to read out loud, sounding out the words. (Burgland)

Isaiah – He did something unprecedented – he bought a scroll of Scripture. Remember, there were no bookstores with scrolls just lying around to purchase. Also remember who he was – a black man and a eunuch. The purchase of this scroll must have cost him a pretty penny! But, more important, note the hand of God at work, for it was surely the Lord’s providence that had placed Isaiah, the evangelist of the Old Testament, into this searching man’s hands and caused him to be reading the choicest part of the book when Philip caught up to him. (LL)

8:31 *unless someone guides me.* The Ethiopian eagerly acknowledged that he did not understand the prophet. Luth: “We should hear God’s Word with fear and study in it with humility; we should not pounce upon it with our own notions of what is right” (WLS § 4758). Contrast the Ethiopian’s eager listening with the arrogance of the synagogue of the Freedmen (6:9–14). (TLSB)

odēgēsēi. The NIV’s “explains,” while adequate, misses wonderful connections to the travel imagery and the work of the Spirit that Jesus promises in Jn 16:13, better caught by “guide” or “lead.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

8:32-33 Prophecy regarding Jesus’ suffering and death for the sins of the world. (TLSB)

8:34 *whom...prophet this about ... ?* Beginning with Isa 53 (see v. 35), Philip may have identified the suffering servant with the Davidic Messiah of Isa 11 or with the Son of Man (Da 7:13).

Classic questions for interpreters of Is 53. (TLSB)

The eunuch understands the meaning of the passage, but does not know the identity of the Servant (the “fourth song” in Isaiah’s prophecy). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

The answer one gives to this question is like the answer one gives to Jesus’ “Who do you say the Son of Man is?” (see Mt 16:13–16). Some Jews believed that the Servant Messiah was being described; others believed Israel was meant. Philip uses the passage as the starting point to tell the eunuch the Good News about Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

8:35 Philip demonstrated that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy. Cf Mt 3:15. (TLSB)

good news. The way of salvation through Jesus Christ. (CSB)

8:36 Philip’s testimony about Christ likely included accounts of Baptism. Luther: “Whoever is baptized in Christ is baptized through His suffering and blood, or, to state it more clearly, through Baptism he is bathed in the blood of Christ and is cleansed from sins” (WLS § 127). Cf Is 56:3–4. (TLSB)

they came to some water. There were several possibilities: a brook in the Valley of Elah (which David crossed to meet Goliath, 1Sa 17:40); the Wadi el-Hasi just north of Gaza; water from a spring or one of the many pools in the area. (CSB)

Understanding what God has done for him in Christ, the eunuch is determined to receive the gifts of God. There is an urgency to the proclamation and promise of salvation that will admit no delay. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

As Luke describes the event, Philip's words make so much sense and are so obviously true that the eunuch is ready to be baptized. Had Philip been a Judaizer, he would have had an answer to the official's question, "What prevents me from being baptized?" (ESV). First, you are not a Hebrew; second, you are a eunuch. When the Ethiopian has been baptized, the promise of God in Is 56:5 concerning eunuchs comes to pass: "I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off." Surely the days of which Isaiah spoke have now come! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

8:38 As a convert to Judaism, the Ethiopian was already well-instructed in biblical teaching. Therefore, Philip did not hesitate to baptize him. (TLSB)

8:39 *the eunuch saw him no more* – The eunuch was no longer excluded from full-fellowship with the people of God. Another non-Jew was added to the company of believers. We do not know from Scripture or from history whether other believers were gathered by his testimony to the Savior after he returned home. (PBC)

The Lord provided both the resources and means to carry out the mission. (TLSB)

rejoicing. Joy is associated with salvation in Acts. (CSB)

The message of salvation through Christ goes out to all people, bringing forgiveness and blessing (Rm 1:5, 16). Ethiopian Christians trace their beginning to this man, though Ethiopian kings did not officially adopt Christianity until c AD 350. (TLSB)

The push toward mission, from God's perspective, continues. Philip is a means to the greater end of establishing relationships between God and people. His job with the Ethiopian is done, and he is off, in an aura of mystery and gravity, to another task. The Ethiopian seems not to miss him much; he is overwhelmed with happiness. In the resolution of the tension in his own life, he has in his Baptism a new life. No wonder there is rejoicing! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 7, Part 2)

8:40 *Azotus.* OT Ashdod (see 1Sa 5:1), one of the five Philistine cities. It was about 19 miles from Gaza and 60 miles from Caesarea. (CSB)

Identified with Ashdod. One of five chief cities of Philistia, between Gaza and Joppa, where Jews and Gentiles likely dwelt side by side. (TLSB)

Caesarea. Rebuilt by Herod and with an excellent harbor, it served as the headquarters of the Roman procurators. The account leaves Philip in Caesarea at this time; his next appearance is 20 years later, and he is still located in the same place (21:8). (CSB)

8:26–40 God leads Philip to bear witness to and baptize an important official from Ethiopia, ensuring that Jews in Africa and also Ethiopians would likewise receive the Gospel. The Holy Spirit brings the eunuch to faith through the Word and Baptism. Today, rejoice in the Word and Baptism you have received, through which the Holy Spirit continues to work in your life. •Father, through Your Holy Spirit, rekindle my desire to read and hear Your Word, acknowledge Your gifts in Baptism, and respond with joy and care for others. Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – 1 John 4:1-11

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

4:1 *spirit*. A person moved by a spirit, whether by the Holy Spirit or an evil one. (CSB)

“Spirit” here is not the Spirit of God, but the spirit of man, and even the spirit of errorists, teachers who pervert the Word of God. (Stoekhardt)

Cf 1Tm 4:1. A spirit is a creature without flesh and bones. There are faithful spirits (angels) that serve God and His elect, and there are rebellious spirits (demons) that Satan has disguised in his attempt to nullify the works of the Son of God in the lives of every person. Satan tried to stop Jesus but could not; now he is after those. Satan tried to stop Jesus but could not; now he is after those to whom Jesus would give eternal life. There is no neutral ground, and no mortal human being is independent – one either believes in and belongs to the Spirit of God or one believes in and belongs to Satan and speaks accordingly. (TLSB)

test the spirits. Cf. 1Th 5:21. (Mt 7:1 does not refer to such testing or judgment; it speaks of self-righteous moral judgment of others.) (CSB)

This means an examination of words and actions in light of the whole testimony of Scriptures. Luther: “The emphasis is on the words ‘test the spirits,’ for with these words he touches their boasting as with a needle. If it is as if he were saying ‘Those who boast of the Spirit will come to you. But test the spirits.’” (TLSB)

The spirit of the prophet becomes known by his words and teaching. Hence, Christians are called upon to test and examine these spirits and prophets. They need not judge hearts and thoughts. The nature of the prophet reveals itself plainly in his preaching and teaching. (Stoekhardt)

And Christian are here exhorted not to believe every spirit, every prophet who may come to them, but they should first put their teaching to a test. They are to consider carefully the nature of the spirit that dwells in them and that speaks out of them. “Spirit” (pneuma) is what we may call the intellectual and spiritual tendency of a teacher. Upon that they should have eye. They are to consider whether the spirit that speaks out of the prophet is God-directed or man-directed, whether his teaching meets with God’s approval, or whether it is merely designed to please men, whether the wisdom of God or the wisdom of men is proclaimed. All depends on the question, “Is the teaching of the teacher in agreement with divine truth?” (Stoekhardt)

false prophets. A true prophet speaks from God, being “carried along” by the Holy Spirit (2Pe 1:21). False prophets, such as the Gnostics of John’s day, speak under the influence of spirits alienated from God. Christ warned against false prophets (Mt 7:15; 24:11), as did Paul (1Ti 4:1) and Peter (2Pe 2:1). (CSB)

These are those who speak by the spirit of the Antichrist and are doing the work of the jealous devil, who always tries to deceive man by counterfeiting the wonderful works of God. (TLSB)

This particular caution to Christians is necessary, “because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” These proclaim their own word. They are prophets, but false prophets who preach falsehood and lies, however in such a manner that they couch them in Biblical words and phraseology. They spice their preaching with Bible verses, and always try to give their teaching a Biblical flavor. But while they feign great piety, both in speech and behavior, they spread false doctrine and mislead their hearers to a false belief. (Stoekhardt)

One who propagates lies and false belief without seeking cover under the disguise of God’s Word, and one who openly disavows Bible teaching is called, not a false prophet, but a scoffer. A false prophet always pretends to teach what the Bible teaches and cloaks his error in Biblical phraseology. (Stoekhardt)

4:2 *confesses.* Not only knows intellectually—for demons know, and shudder (Jas 2:19; cf. Mk 1:24)—but also confesses publicly. (CSB)

No one can sincerely confess, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. The triune God Himself provides the confession that this man, Jesus, is God Almighty (Mt. 16:16-17; Jn. 6:44). (TLSB)

Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Thus John excludes the Gnostics, especially the Cerinthians, who taught that the divine Christ came upon the human Jesus at his baptism and then left him at the cross, so that it was only the man Jesus who died. (CSB)

To confess the man Jesus Christ as Lord and God in the flesh is the confession of all apostolic eyewitnesses. The apostles saw, heard, and touched the resurrected Christ. (TLSB)

4:3 *does not confess Jesus.* The incarnate Jesus Christ of 1:2. (CSB)

The thoughts and words of such a person are contrary to divine truth. What such a teacher thinks and says is not of God. Faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God makes the difference between a Christian and an unchristian person, as well as between a true prophet and a false prophet. Such false prophets have appeared in Arianism and Rationalism. They deny the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, namely that the Son of God appeared in the flesh, and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (Stoeckhardt)

SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST – We should have an eye to this especially as to what position teacher takes regarding the article of the person of Christ, what he teaches and confesses concerning His person and office, and perhaps also as to which points he remains silent. Also those are marked as false prophets who fail to confess that Christ is come in the flesh, who withhold a clear statement concerning the divinity of Christ, and who try to pass over this whole matter in silence. Also that is the spirit of Antichrist. And if one does not stand right toward the article of the divinity of Christ, then also everything else that he teaches is antichristian error. (Stoeckhardt)

Satan would draw us away from our true Savior, who suffered, bled, and died and still has scars to prove it. All false christs have this in common: none of them come as God in the flesh of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 John 7-11). Hus: “Here the spirit is subtle and heretical, denying Jesus to be very God and very man” (The Church, p. 91). (TLSB)

4:4 *from God.* An abbreviated form of the expression “born of God” (2:29; 3:9–10). (CSB)

Christian who are born of God have already overcome all ungodliness and are in fellowship with God. God is in them, and God is greater than he that is in the world, that is the devil. In the power of God they can overcome all the assaults of the devil, and have overcome them. And so they are also enabled to withstand false doctrine which the false prophets seek to destroy them. (Stoeckhardt)

them. The false prophets (v. 1), who were inspired by the spirit of the antichrist (v. 3). (CSB)

he who is in the world. The devil (Jn 12:31; 16:11). In v. 3 “world” means the inhabited earth; in vv. 4–5 it means the community, or system, of those not born of God—including the antichrists (see note on Jn 1:10). (CSB)

Satan usurped the dominion over earth that God had entrusted to Adam in the beginning. But Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection decisively overturned the dominion Satan usurped. He is very angry because he knows his time is short (Rv. 12:12). But Satan cannot harm those who have Christ dwelling in them through faith in Him (1Jn 5:18). Luther: “‘Christ is stronger; He has overcome, is overcoming, and will overcome that strong man in us (Lk 11:21-22).’ Still the devil does sometimes overcome us in the flesh, in order that even in this way we may experience the power of the Stronger against that strong man and say with Paul (2 Cor 12:10): ‘When I am weak, then I am strong’” (AE 26:193). (TLSB)

4:5 They have a worldly character. They have a worldly nature and mind, “and therefore they speak of the world.” All their teachings, however Christian they may appear, are nothing but worldly wisdom. “World” (kosmos) is here again the body of ungodly people, who oppose Christ. Hence, what these false prophets say and teach is all designed to overthrow Christ and to destroy those who follow Him. They are (out) of the world, are really children of this world, and therefore the best they can offer is worldly wisdom. (Stoekhardt)

Unbelievers speak and do only what comes from unbelief (cf Jn 3:6). (TLSB)

4:6 *we* – Here the Apostle introduces the antithesis. “We” is set against “they,” the false prophets. Those who, like the Apostle, present sound teaching are of God. They have their nature from God; they receive their teaching from God. It is God who directs their spirit and determines their doctrine. What they proclaim is divine truth. (Stoekhardt)

listens to us – The Apostle here speaks to the hearers. Whoever recognizes God as his personal God, and so has fellowship with God listens to us and recognizes what we say as divine truth. The godly character of the hearer is attracted by the godly message of the preacher who is of God, and they give credence to the words of the preacher and follow him. (Stoekhardt)

All who are in fellowship with God recognize and listen to the true teaching of Christ when they hear it. (TLSB)

not from God – If unregenerate people are mingled with Christians in the congregation so that they outwardly also hear the divine message, they do not hear aright. The godly preacher may preach what he will; such hearers will not understand him and will not open their hearts to his message, because they lack the proper organ for profitable hearing, namely, a godly nature. (Stoekhardt)

Spirit of truth. The true teacher is moved by the spirit of truth, who is permeated by divine truth and so confesses and proclaims the truth which God reveals. (Stoekhardt)

spirit of error. Behind every false teaching and empty idol is a very real demon (cf 1Co 10:20). (TLSB)

4:1–6 Whenever a teacher speaks of a “Christ” or a “Jesus” or a “God” who comes to us without human flesh, know this: it is a demon speaking through a man, a demon who is seeking to destroy both your faith and your soul everlastingly. “Whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works” (2Jn 11). Faith in the heart cannot be seen; it can only be shown through acts of love. The greatest testimony is the true flesh-and-blood testimony of God’s love manifest in Jesus. • Lord, enable me to test all spirits for what they are and remain forever faithful in Him, the only God-man and Savior of the world. Amen. (TLSB)

God is Love

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

4:7–5:12 Final appeal for the congregations to examine their faith and practice. (TLSB)

4:7–5:3 The word “love” in its various forms is used 43 times in the letter, 32 times in this short section. (CSB)

The world continually falls for many flavors of phony loves. Note true love’s three characteristics. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

First, love’s eye (cognitive): Divine love is clear-sighted. The triune God does not in blind love “fall for” sinners. He sees the sad fact that we are sick to death with sin, hate, guilt, and fear. God’s eye weeps. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

Second, love’s heart (emotive): Divine love is determined. The triune God loves with purpose. His love plans to transform us into his own image. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

Third, love’s hand (behavioral): Divine love is action, fearlessly self-sacrificial. “It is primarily an attitude toward another that moves the will to act in helping to meet the need of the one loved” (Donald W. Burdick, *The Letters of John the Apostle* [Chicago: Moody, 1985] 351). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

4:7-8 The little Greek word *ek* in v 7 identifies the source of love: God. He is the giver of love and the one who shows us what unconditional love is all about. For a fourth time, John exhorts his readers to love each other (3:11, 18, 23; cf. also 4:11, 21; 2 John 5). Further, John places love in a divine dimension: when one loves, one shows that he or she has been born of God and knows God. Love involves knowledge, comprehension, and understanding. Thus ours is a love that knows God, but a lack of love indicates not knowing God, because God is love (v 8). In all this, John is not discussing just any type of love humanly understood. In the preceding chapters of his epistle he has carefully defined *agapē*, “love,” as the love of God in Jesus Christ which is reflected in the lives of those who believe in him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

John consistently uses the definite article with God in this pericope, and usually elsewhere in his writings. He is directing the reader’s attention to the one true God, the one who has loved us in his Son, Jesus Christ. It is this particular God that needs to be revealed to a loveless world through the love of his children. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

4:7 *love is from God* – What the world considers love is actually selfish and self-centered, but all true love is from God. Love of sinful pleasures is misplaced affection, which corrupts what is good. E.g., it is natural to want to have a spouse and a family. But to steal someone else’s spouse or family would be a perversion of a God-given desire. (TLSB)

born of God – Only God can make Christians (cf. Jn. 1:12-13). One way this happens is through Baptism. Another way is through the preaching of the Word of Christ. (TLSB)

knows God – A sinner can know God only through faith in Jesus Christ. (TLSB)

4:8 *does not know God*. Only those who are to some degree like him truly know him. (CSB)

Such a person has not learned to know God as his own God. He is yet a total stranger to Him. (Stoeckhardt)

God is love. In his essential nature and in all his actions, God is loving. John similarly affirms that God is spirit (Jn 4:24) and light (1:5), as well as holy, powerful, faithful, true and just. (CSB)

God’s nature is turned toward and bound up in seeking, working, and being for the welfare and benefit of others – namely mankind. Love fittingly describes the nature of God; His love is revealed in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. (TLSB)

4:9 *only Son*. God sent His Son into the world that we sinful men, who deserve death, should have life through Him. God is Love, and He has manifested His love particularly in this that He gave us His Son.

That is the highest evidence of God's love: He sent His Son into the world which by nature was hostile to Him, so that we might not die, but live. (Stoekhardt)

God went to the ultimate extreme to show just how much he loves us: he sent his only, unique Son (*monogenēs*). This is the same word John used in his gospel to describe Jesus as the only-begotten of the Father (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

live through him – Believers live through Jesus Christ, who died, rose, and ascended into heaven so that He might fill all heaven and earth (Eph 4:10). He is present with all believers through His chosen means of grace: His Word, Holy Baptism, in the Lord's Supper. The Word made flesh is our source of life, our mediator; we live only because of Him, as Jesus Himself taught (Jn. 6:57). (TLSB)

4:10 *loved us* – Not man, but God has originated love. He was the first One to love. All efforts of men to love would have failed, had God not loved them first. Love began when God loved us. So not we, but God is the originator of love. (Stoekhardt)

John goes on to clarify that love did not originate with us; we did not love God or others first. God loved us first and defined true love by sending his Son for the purpose of removing our sins. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

We are saved not by our love for God but by the love of God for us in sending Christ to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Luther: "Provide yourselves with armor from Scripture concerning justification, which takes place through faith. Collect, I say, a number of Scripture passages that ascribe righteousness to God. Then, if you put your reliance on these passages, you will be able to stand even after a fall, for example, after the acts of fornication, murder, and other sins" (AE 30:295). (TLSB)

propitiation for our sins. God showed men what love is, when He sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. In chapter 2:2 the Apostle used the same expression. We are reconciled to God by the blood of the Son of God, by the suffering and death of Christ. But what gives worth and value to that blood, suffering, and death is the person, who brought this sacrifice, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is Himself the propitiation for our sins. His propitiation was the prerequisite to our life. (Stoekhardt)

4:11 *love one another* – God Himself has made the beginning with love, with love toward us and has set the pattern for our love toward others. At the same time He has obligated us to thank Him and to return such love toward our brothers. So the Apostle uses God's own deed of love toward us as a most potent means to make his exhortation effective. (Stoekhardt)

If this is how God has loved us, it follows that we should love one another. John does not identify who these others are that we are to love, but Christ answered that very question (Luke 10:25–37). We live in a world characterized by humanism—the belief that man is basically good, and can solve his problems through his own efforts and achievements. The solution, according to humanism, is education and

philanthropy—a love of other human beings for their own sake. Man has become the center of the universe through superhuman feats that years before were only dreams. Now that the moon has been conquered, space exploration has become routine, and medical science is hot on the trail of a cure for cancer, it is no wonder that many see man as the source of goodness and love. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Listen to the lyrics of the love songs in the media today—it is ironic that when people are described as possessing so much (hedonistic) love without any reference to God, the divorce rate is soaring over 50% and so many human relationships are unstable. The type of love that abounds in the world today is fickle, unreliable, and unsatisfying. But the love that comes from God is unconditional, deep, satisfying, and eternal. It is this kind of love that Christians are called to reflect in their lives. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

GOSPEL – John 15:1-8

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

15:1-8 We don't know whether this text was spoken in the upper room or on the way to Gethsemane. (Buls)

Fahling: Just what the occasion was that prompted the Lord to continue His discourse by presenting Himself as the true Vine, whether it was the fruit of the vine in the paschal meal or a vine growing in the courtyard or the symbol of the vine on one of the Temple gates, we do not know. (Buls)

But when negative critics make the claim that John has used the figure of Vine and Branches to replace the words of institution, found in the Synoptics, that is something else. Furthermore, Reformed theology is known for its denial of the true presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. For example, Hendriksen: (Buls)

Jesus now bids these men to look away from the symbols of merely physical bread and wine and to see in Him the reality, the fulfillment, the great Antitype. . . Not the wine from which the communion-wine had been derived, nor even Israel, but Christ himself, present with the disciples that memorable night, was the REAL vine. (Buls)

Hendriksen is trying his best to make the words of institution figurative. And, in trying to do so, he makes the figurative language of John 15:1-8 literal. In this way Reformed theology falls victim to what negative critics have said, though conservative Reformed theologians do not want to be identified with form and redaction critics. (Buls)

The 26th edition of Nestle Greek text, unlike the 25th, makes verses 9-17 a major paragraph. The 25th edition makes all of John 15 a major paragraph, with subparagraphs at verses 18 and 26. (Buls)

Jesus' discourses are teleological. He knows where his thought is going, and he goes by a direct route. Too much preaching, like human thinking and man-made religion, is cyclic. We go around in circles. How many sermons have you heard or preached which had less than three minutes of content in a 20-minute delivery? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

Many commentaries devote themselves to the contention or rebuttal that this is John's presentation of the institution of the Lord's Supper, but that is not the point of the text. Neither is it a comment on the architecture or infrastructure of the grape plant. Jesus' horticulture is correct, but enhancing viticulture is not his goal. Nor is this a veiled rebuttal of the temperance movement. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

Jesus' point is that as we remain in him, we branches glorify the Father by bearing much fruit. His presentation in this "object lesson" keeps his purpose foremost. We preachers will be most effective when we focus more on the "lesson" than on the "object." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

This text includes both Law and Gospel. Those who do not remain in Christ therefore are unfruitful and finally are burned. The Gospel message for those in Christ covers both justification and sanctification. The fruit is everything that results from the love of God in Christ. By justifying faith we remain in Christ, the true and genuine vine. The juice provided by the vine yields the fruit of good works done in faith. The Gardener Father evaluates us by whether the vine's juice produces fruit on us branches. He has a simple rule: either bear fruit, or burn. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

Only the true and genuine Word empowers true and genuine stewardship. True stewardship begins with Jesus' initiative in us. The setting in the upper room is significant not only because of the Passover meal, but because the Paschal Lamb is speaking within hours of his sacrificial cross and conquered tomb. His concern at this central point of human history is that we be empowered to give glory to his Father, even as he is about to do (Jn 17:1, 4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

Jesus spells out the methods through which he empowers us to bear God-pleasing fruit. His methods are abiding, pruning, and cleansing. Possible outlines for preaching come directly from the Lord's mouth. Near the end of the Easter season, anticipating Ascension and Pentecost, this is a welcome, comforting, and powerful Word for us and the people we serve. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

The 26th edition of the Nestle-Aland Greek text introduced for the first time a major paragraph division at the beginning of v 9. Those modern translations that use this division help us toward a more logical reading. The Series B Gospel readings for this and next week reflect this structure. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

Jesus refers to himself, often emphatically, 14 times in this text with forms of *egō*. Likewise, Jesus refers to his disciples (including us), often emphatically, 14 times in this text with forms of *humeis*. Thus we have one of the strongest "I-you" passages in the gospel of John. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

One of Jesus' many sayings in John are his "I AM" passages. In these our Lord describes not only himself, but us. Jesus, by saying "I AM," is giving us a vivid description of his role in our lives. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

As the saying goes, repetition is the mother of all learning. In these verses, there is much repetition, for the sake of learning and for emphasis. For example, Jesus refers to himself sixteen times in these verses. He also refers to "you" twelve times. This repetition shows that Christians, "the branches," live in Christ, "the vine." Another key word, repeated six times, is *ho karpos*, "fruit." Of course, the fruit cannot be spoken of apart from Christ, so he uses another key word, *menō*, "to remain," seven times in these verses. Such repetition serves to emphasize the personal union with Christ of all who are baptized into him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

It is the evening of Holy Thursday. This second farewell discourse takes place just before Jesus and his disciples go to the Garden of Gethsemane. Martin Franzmann notes that this discourse includes a "new emphasis on the fullness and strength of the disciples' union and communion with Jesus" (*Concordia Self-Study Commentary* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979], 99). To be a branch of the vine is to have life. Jesus invites the disciples to abide in him so that they will be comforted in the difficult hours to come. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

15:1 *I am*. Note emphatic "I am," right at the beginning. Forms of emphatic "I am" occur again in verse 4, twice in verse 5. In addition to the other obvious references, Christ refers to Himself no less than 14 times. Likewise, notice the obvious references to "you," a total of fourteen. It's one of the very personal "I-you" passages in the Gospel of John. (Buls)

the true vine. The vine is frequently used in the OT as a symbol of Israel (e.g., Ps 80:8–16; Isa 5:1–7; Jer 2:21). When this imagery is used, Israel is often shown as lacking in some way. Jesus, however, is "the true vine." (CSB)

As opposed to unbelieving Israel, the false vine (cf Is 5:1–7; Ezk 19:10–14). (TLSB)

egō eimi hē ampelos hē alēthinē, "I am the true vine." Our text begins with Jesus' emphatic "I am" statement. He is the true vine that gives life, as opposed to the spirit of the antichrist (1 Jn 4:1–3), which brings death by separating the branches from the vine. Such branches are burned in the fire. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

a[mpelo]"—vine, one who carries life to the branches.ajlhqinov"—true or genuine. There is NO substitute or replacement. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

The point of *alēthinē*, "true," is uniqueness. Only Jesus is the true vine who can provide to us branches the empowering juice, which is the truth of his Word (vv 3, 7).

Jesus is the "true vine" and his Father is the "vinedresser." Our first instinct is to think that John is using the example of a vine to teach us something about Jesus. John takes a different approach, however. We don't look at the world in order to learn about Jesus. John invites us to see Jesus as the "true vine." By looking at Jesus we learn what it truly is to be a vine. For two other clear examples of John running the comparison in this way, see 1:9 and 6:55. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

my Father – In this context, it is appropriate that Jesus refers only to “my Father,” never to “our Father.” His uniqueness is in His divine relationship to His Father. We, in turn, are His branches. We have access to the Father only through Jesus – His life, death and resurrection for us. In Baptism we are adopted as children of the heavenly Father, while Jesus is His true Son from eternity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Back to verse 1: "true" means "genuine, unique." It is used figuratively, of course, but the point is that Christ is our sole source of spiritual sustenance. Jesus always refers to the Father as MY Father, not OUR Father. His Father is the "gardener," the vine-dresser. What is meant by this becomes clear in verse 2. (Buls)

ho patēr mou ho geōrgos estin, “My Father is the vinedresser.” What is meant by Jesus’ designation of his Father as the vinedresser is clearly seen in the next verse. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

15:2 does not bear fruit – Not just holy deeds, but love and witness leading to new disciples. (TLSB)

pan klēma en emoi, literally, “every branch in me.” V 5 identifies the branches as those who abide in Christ (by faith). In this verse, however, there is an inconsistency between “every branch in me” and *mē pheron karpon*, “not bearing fruit.” With regard to *karpon*, “fruit,” be sure to read Gal 5:22–23; Eph 5:9; Heb 12:11 to see how “the fruit of the Spirit” is intimately tied to the atonement of Jesus Christ. This inconsistency is addressed in the remainder of the verse. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

The word "fruit" occurs 3 times in this verse, once in verses 4, 5, and 8 each. A key word in this pericope. This verse reminds one immediately of Galatians 5:22.23; Ephesians 5:9; Hebrews 12:11, which ought to be read. In Galatians 5 the term "the fruit of the Spirit" implies the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the genuine vine. Likewise with Ephesians 5:9 and Hebrews 12:11. (Buls)

The words "bears no fruit" do not mean that some Christians are actually fruitless, but indicates the deluded person who thinks he can be a Christian but produces no fruit. (Buls)

takes away. A reference to judgment. (CSB)

airei auto, “he takes it away.” The Father is the one who takes the fruitless branch away. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

prunes. Pruning produces fruitfulness. In the NT the figure of good fruit represents the product of a godly life (see Mt 3:8; 7:16–20) or virtues of character (see Gal 5:22–23; Eph 5:9; Php 1:11). (CSB)

The subject of "prunes" is "My Father." Hebrews 12:4-11 is an excellent parallel passage here. Just as a vine dresser prunes the branch to make it more productive, so the Father scourges every son whom He receives. The peaceable fruit of righteousness results. The source of the fruit is Jesus alone. The cause of greater yield is the Father who cleanses fruitlessness from the branch. (Buls)

Before we proceed, it is good to mention Wm. Hendriksen and R.C.H. Lenski with reference to their commentaries on this passage. Hendriksen is Reformed. The underlying differences between Reformed and Lutheran theology are very apparent here. Hendriksen sets "sovereign grace" aside "human responsibility." He mixes and confuses justification and sanctification. And though he condemns Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism, the word "synergism" is conspicuous by its absence in what he says. (Buls)

kathairei auto, "he cleanses it." Often translated "he prunes" (ESV, NKJV, NASB), it literally means "he cleanses" (as it is normally translated in v 3). Notice the phonetic echo in *airei* and *kathairei*. Although they do not share the same stem, the hearer is drawn to make a connection between the two by the similar sounds of these words. The Father "takes away" the branch bearing no fruit, and he cleanses/prunes the branch that does bear fruit, *hina karpon pleiona pherēi*, "in order that it might bear much fruit." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

gewrgov"—farmer or tiller of the soil. Refers in a specialized way to a vinedresser. Kretzman's *New Testament Commentary* says, "He [God] is actually concerned about the growth of the vine" (p 493). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

The Father's standard is fruitfulness. The repeated use of *karpos*, "fruit," sends us to Gal 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9; and Heb. 12:11, where it also is always singular, "fruit," not "fruits." "In me" does not mean that some Christians are actually fruitless. Rather, this is reference to deluded people who think they are connected to Christ but bear no fruit. It would apply, for example, to people who belong to a church but are not connected to Christ Himself through faith. 1 John 2:19 also speaks of those who at first appeared to be part of the church but who did not truly belong, as shown by their remaining in the church. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Jesus is describing the work of his Father. The Father takes away the branches that do not bear fruit and "prunes," *kathairei*, the branches that do, so that they can bear more fruit. The purpose (*hina*) clause is key in understanding what comes first. It is the pruning that makes the branch continue to bear fruit. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Literally, "cleanses" (cf. v. 3). Although Christians have already been cleansed by God's forgiveness, they are daily in need of repentance and spiritual growth. (TLSB)

Translations do not duplicate the similarity between *airō*, "cut off, remove" and *kathairō*, "prune, cleanse." See the parallel thought in Heb 12:4–11. The Father causes greater yield by cleansing away those things in our lives that are fruitless. As he prunes away our old nature, our old habits, and our pet sins, we may protest the pain, but the result is greater glory to God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

15:3 clean. "Already" clearly means "already," thus rendered by RSV, AAT and NASB. Note emphatic "you Christians." "Clean" is here a synonym for "justified." For "because" KJV has "through," RSV and NEB have "by," but NIV and NASB are best: "because." "The word" is plainly "the Gospel." The Gospel conveys the forgiveness of sins to the individual believers. On this thought cf. John 13:10 and 6:63. Also Acts 15:9. (Buls)

The point of the verse here is that the fruit, the good works, do not make a Christian better or cleaner. Christians are already clean, justified, pure because of the Gospel. Whenever Christians feel their sinfulness and sin they must flee to the Gospel which conveys to them the forgiveness of sin because of what Christ suffered on the cross. The good works which a Christian does, though necessary and given to him by God (Ephesians 2:9.10), do not make the Christian better. (Buls)

Lenski: In ascribing this cleansing to the Word, Jesus takes all the credit and glory to himself and leaves none to us. The cleansing by the Word through faith (justification) does not exclude the cleansing which follows throughout life in the putting away of all the defilements of the flesh (sanctification). (Buls)

Ylvisaker: It is the pure He purifies. (Buls)

But Hendriksen teaches progressive sanctification:

Those who bear good fruit are cleansed more and more. Having been justified, they now receive the grace of daily renewal, until finally, completely sanctified, they reach the shores of heaven. . . The responsibility is wholly theirs. (Buls)

These notes are not saying that sanctification is not important. But read Ephesians 2:1-10 and Philippians 3:4-14 to keep justification and sanctification in their proper perspective. They are beautifully combined in Galatians 2:20. Read Article IV, Good Works, in the *Formula of Concord*. Good works are not optional but neither are they the cause of our salvation. Good works will surely follow from true faith as the fruits of a good tree. (Buls)

kaqaroiv—cleanse. Here the implication is pruning or cutting back that which seems to suck the needed nutrients from the branch. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

ēdē, “already.” *humeis*, “you,” is emphatic. *katharoi*, “clean”; a synonym for being justified. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

the word. Sums up the message of Jesus. (CSB)

Jesus is the “Word,” *logos*, that has been given to us. Those who have received Jesus are “clean,” *katharoi*. “Clean” and “prune” are parallel and must be taken together. Acts 15:8–9 indicates that we receive this “cleansing,” *katharisas*, by faith when the Holy Spirit is received (Acts 2:38ff). Faith receives the Word, Jesus, and all that he has done for us on the cross. This cleansing gives us a pure mind (Titus 1:15). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

The means through which the cleansing takes place, since the Word’s content is Christ. (TLSB)

The best translation of *dia* is “because” (so NIV). The Word (*logos*) has already cleansed the disciples. In anticipation of what Jesus is about to do on the cross, justification is an accomplished fact. The eleven disciples will look back on this night and remember their fruitlessness and lack of faith. They also will remember that Jesus loved them in washing their feet, in hosting the Sacrament, and in speaking of his

death and resurrection. They could remember no worthiness in themselves, because there was none. Yet they would remember that Jesus had pronounced their forgiveness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

We too remember our sinfulness but rejoice that our forgiveness is not dependent on anything in us. We are justified for Jesus' sake, and due to his grace alone, we bear fruit. Review Article IV, Good Works, in the Formula of Concord. Fruitfulness is not the cause of salvation, but neither is it optional. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

dia ton logon hon lelalēka, “because of the word that I have spoken.” *dia* with the accusative is causal. They are clean *because* of the word that Jesus has spoken. The point of this verse is that the fruit (good works) does not make a Christian better or cleaner. “Already you are clean” is emphasized, and the cause of their justification is clearly Christ and his Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

15:4 *abide in me*. The believer has no fruitfulness apart from his union and fellowship with Christ. A branch out of contact with the vine is lifeless. (CSB)

"Remain" is another key word in this pericope. It occurs three times in this verse, once in 5, once in 6 and twice in 7, for a total of seven. Here "remain" is imperative. A person remains in Christ by faith. "And I will remain" means "and thus I will remain in you." Christ is telling us to remain in Him but He is not telling Himself to remain in us. He is assuring the individual believer that so long as he trusts in Christ he is cleansed and forgiven. That's always the starting point. (Buls)

Here we have an axiomatic illustration, understandable even to a child. Everyone will readily admit that a detached branch cannot bear fruit. Nor is Jesus saying that a branch can bear fruit solely because of its attachment to the vine. Jesus is stressing the utter necessity of daily repentance and faith. When a Christian examines himself he should not be surprised to find much sin in his life because in his flesh there dwells no good thing. But by faith he clings to the many promises of God in Christ which inform him that by virtue of His suffering and death Christ has atoned for the sins of all men and therefore also of the individual. That's what it means to remain in Christ. (Buls)

meinate en emoi, “remain in me.” To remain in Jesus is imperative. A person remains in Christ by faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

Note from TLSB 6:56... This is a major theme in John, defining the relationship not only of persons in the Trinity (1:32-33; 14:10; 15:10), but also between believers and Christ (5:38; 8:31; 15:7, 9-10). St. Bernard of Clairvaux: “I wish to follow with all my strength the lowly Jesus; I wish Him, who loved me and gave Himself for me, to embrace me with the arms of His love, which suffered in my stead; but I must also feed on the Paschal Lamb, for unless I eat His flesh and drink His blood I have no life in me. It is one thing to follow Jesus, another to hold Him, another to feed on Him. To follow Him is a life-giving purpose; to hold and embrace Him a solemn joy; to feed on Him a blissful life” (SLSB, pp. 292-293).

Menō, “remain,” is used seven times in vv 4–7. In Baptism we are grafted into Christ. Our firm connection to him through Word and Sacrament must remain throughout life for us to keep bearing fruit. *Meinate*, “remain,” is imperative; the juice must keep flowing into us! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

bear much fruit – aph’ heautou is adverbial, “by itself” or “spontaneously.” It is obvious to everyone that a branch separated from the vine cannot bear fruit spontaneously. Neither can a branch attached to the vine bear fruit from itself. A branch bears fruit because of its attachment to the vine. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

neither – houtōs, “thus.” In the same way, neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in the vine. This is how the branch lives, in repentance and faith, united to Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

No branch can survive unless it is in the vine. The vine is not dependent on the branch. Jesus is the place to be. Only in him do we bear fruit. Being in the vine also means that the vine is in us. The life Jesus gave for us on the cross flows into his branches so that they might bear fruit. To be in Jesus is to be in the place where his voice is heard. We learned this in last week’s Gospel (10:16). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

15:5 *I am the vine.* The repetition gives emphasis. (CSB)

you are – humeis ta klēmata. Jesus begins this verse with the plural *humeis*, “you,” but then goes on to address the individual (the one who remains in me). With such grammar, Jesus applies his promises to the hearer personally. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

abides in me and I in him. A living union with Christ is absolutely necessary; without it there is nothing. (CSB)

meivnate—to remain, to be a part of. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

bear much fruit – This is a general assurance. But in the next sentence Jesus individualizes: “The one who remains in Me and thus I in him.” This is a personal assurance and open invitation to every repentant sinner. “If a man” is a demonstrative pronoun pointing back to the individual repentant sinner who believes in Christ. (Buls)

Jesus does not say “some fruit” but “much fruit.” This is a very comforting word because Christians very often, in their dissatisfaction with themselves, say to themselves as did Paul: “the good which I’d like to do, I do not and the evil which I don’t want to do, I do.” Read on at Romans 7:20ff. Then Paul cries: “Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this sinful body? Thanks be to God though our Lord Jesus Christ.” Such an individual is clinging to Christ, the Vine. And such a person should be assured that he is bearing *much* fruit, though he is often not aware of it. Then follows a causal clause: “Because apart from Me you (plural again) can be doing absolutely nothing.” (Buls)

The Christian attributes everything, both his justification and his sanctification, to his gracious Savior Who died for him and Who now lives in Him by faith. (Buls)

Jesus commands us to remain in him and promises that he will remain in us. The “lesson” that goes with Jesus’ “object” is driven home. A detached branch cannot bear fruit. Even an attached branch does not bear fruit by itself. Occasional or intermittent attachment also is not sufficient for a steady yield of fruit. We need daily repentance and renewal of faith. The world, surrounds us daily. We need Christ in us continually. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 2)

Jesus goes from “you” (plural in Greek) to “a man” (singular), and then back to “you” plural). Here is a good example for the preacher. The people need to hear comforting and encouraging words as the church gathered around Word and Sacrament, and also individually. In particular, the individual needs to be assured that, by virtue of faith, he is bearing much fruit. Especially when we join Paul’s lament in Rom. 7:14-24, we need to hear that we are bearing much fruit in the kingdom. The double negative *ou...ouden* is emphatic, literally, “you are not able to do nothing.” We attribute all, justification and sanctification, to our gracious Savior. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

apart from me – “We cannot keep the Law without Christ’s aid....So, before we keep the Law, our hearts must be born again through faith” (Ap V 194). “Without faith human nature does not call upon God, nor expect anything from Him, nor bear the cross (Mt. 16:24). Instead, human nature seeks and trusts in human help. So when there is no faith and trust in God, all kinds of lusts and human intentions rule in the heart (Gen. 6:5)” (AC XX 37-38). (TLSB)

ou . . . ouden, “not . . . nothing.” A double negative is used here for emphasis. The Christian attributes everything, his justification and sanctification, to Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

Jesus says plainly here what he has been implying so far. We are the branches. The last clause of this verse makes it clear that Jesus is discussing the fruit of faith. While we may, apart from Christ, do works that will be regarded well in the world, these are not pleasing in God’s sight. Apart from Jesus, we, literally and emphatically in the Greek, “cannot do nothing,” *ou dunasthe poiein ouden*, that is good in the sight of God. Attached to the vine, all that we produce is “fruit.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

15:6 if anyone does not – Now comes the opposite side of the coin. Jesus is speaking of the individual who refuses or ceases to acknowledge Jesus for what He is. We again have illustration. What do people do with branches that fall from a vine or tree? Everybody knows. They carry them away from the vine or tree, let them become completely dry, pile them up and burn them. The verbs are examples of what is called the gnomic aorist, that which customarily happens. Look at the verbs found at James 1:11, good examples of the gnomic aorist. John 15:6 is starkest law picturing the fruitless person who has fallen from Christ. (Buls)

thrown into the fire and burned. Judged. In light of such passages as 6:39; 10:27–28, these branches probably do not represent true believers. Genuine salvation is evidenced by a life of fruitfulness. (CSB)

ejxhravnqh—to dry out; kai vetai—to burn. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 13, Part 2)

eblēthē, “to be thrown,” and *exēranthē*, “to be dried out, withered” are gnomic aorists, signifying that which normally happens. Along with *kai etai*, “to be burned,” this verse is the preaching of the Law to its fullest. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

The “object” is directly applied to the “lesson.” (The gnomic aorists describe that which customarily happens.) The stark law of this verse reminds us that Jesus, more than any other biblical personality, speaks of hell. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Jesus here uses the same “withering” imagery, *exēranthē*, as in the parable of the sower (Mt 13:6) and the cursing of the fig tree (Mt 21:18–21; Mk 11:20–24). A branch that does not bear fruit is not receiving life from the vine. It is good for nothing except to serve as kindling. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Fire is the symbol of judgment and destruction (cf. Ezk 15:18; Mt. 3:10). (TLSB)

15:7 *my words remain in you.* It is impossible to pray correctly apart from knowing and believing the teachings of Christ. (CSB)

Jesus has used the verb "remain" three times in verse 4, once in verse 5 and once in verse 6. Now He uses it again but amplifies its meaning. "If" is epexegetical, meaning "namely." Remaining in Christ and having His words remain in us are not two individual things but the same thing. John 8:31 and 32 is an excellent parallel passage here. Christ is where His Word is. Where two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is. (Buls)

Now follows a command. Implicit in the command is the fact that Christ is our Savior. "Whatever you wish" means "no matter what." Christ is closer to the believer than is husband, wife, child, parent or friend. Our inmost thoughts are known to Him and He wants us to bring Him our most personal requests. "And it shall be to you," is a grand promise. (Buls)

It hardly need be said that Christ is not including ridiculous or godless requests. Faith does not make such requests. Furthermore, faith is always saying, as did He "Not my will but Thine be done." The point of verse 7 is the same made by Paul at Romans 8:31.32. In view of the fact that Christ has already vicariously supplied me with the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life, won't He now give me all needed good for this life? Of course He will. (Buls)

kai ta hrēmata mou en humin meinēi, “and [if] my words remain in you.” To remain in Christ is to have his Word remain in you. Remember, Christ is the Word (Jn 1:1, 14) who remains in you (Gal 2:20). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

ask whatever you wish. The first *kai* is epexegetical; we could translate it as “namely.” It is one and the same thing for us to remain in Christ and for his words to remain in us. See Jn 8:31–32. Implicit in our asking is acknowledgment that Jesus is our Savior. Ridiculous or godless requests—which faith, relying on his words, would not make anyway—are not included in the promise. cf. Rom 8:31–32. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

Jesus makes a promise to us about the prayer offered in faith: “Ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” The one who is in Christ wants only those things that Christ wants. This is the result of his words abiding in us. In the case of a branch who is in Christ, to ask “whatever you wish” means to pray, “Thy will be done.” Jesus’ words here are again similar to his discourse regarding the withered fig tree in Mk 11:22–24. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

aitēsasthe, “[you yourself,] ask.” This imperative denotes the request of an inferior to a superior. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

15:8 *Father is glorified.* The Father is glorified in the work of the Son (13:31–32), and he is also glorified in the fruit-bearing of disciples (see Mt 7:20; Lk 6:43–45). (CSB)

This verse reminds us immediately of Matthew 5:16. Note that Jesus says *MY* Father, which denotes His personal relationship to the Father Who sent Jesus to redeem all men. Those who believe this, bear much fruit. (Note again that it's not merely *some* but *much*.) (Buls)

The good works of the Christian, caused by the fact that Jesus alone is the Vine, the Source, are pleasing to the heavenly Father and clothe Him in the splendor due Him. People should see these good works in us to glorify the Father, not ourselves. (Buls)

The last phrase could begin "and thus," if we read the Greek according to Nestle 25th edition. In this case we translate "prove to be." However, the 26th reads an aorist subjunctive, not future indicative. In this case the clause means: "that you bear much fruit and are My disciples." In neither case can the form of "showing" mean "become." None of our translations understand it in the sense of "become." Christians do not become Christians by bearing much fruit. That would be contrary to all of Scripture. (Buls)

Apparently all our translations, including KJV, read as does the 25th edition and these notes consider that correct. RSV, AAT and NASB read: "and so prove to be my disciples." That is surely correct. The much fruit in the life of the Christian glorifies Jesus' Father and proves that he is Jesus' disciple. (Buls)

Is "disciple" a nominative plural adjective or a dative singular pronoun? These notes prefer the former. But, in any case it means that they belong to Jesus in the sense that they have been persuaded as to His teaching. They are of the same school of thought as is Jesus. (Buls)

Jesus and Jesus alone is the source of that which is truly good. Read John 10:11-18. His highest good comes to us through the fact that He laid down His life for us. He who believes this is one of Jesus' sheep, justified, cleansed, forgiven. Now read Ephesians 2:9.10: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has prepared before in order that we might walk in them." From God's point of view the entire life of the Christian, by virtue of the fact that he is attached to Jesus, the Vine, is a good work. No wonder Jesus uses the expression "MUCH fruit" twice in our pericope. It's either *MUCH* fruit or none. (Buls)

The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article IV, Good Works, paragraph 14, reads:

It is evident that in discussing the question whether good works are necessary or free, both the *Augsburg Confession* and its *Apology* often employ formulas like these: 'Good works are necessary'; again, 'It is necessary to do good works because they necessarily follow faith and reconciliation' again: 'We should and must of necessity do good works that God has commanded.' Likewise, Holy Scripture itself uses words like 'necessity', 'necessary', 'needful', 'should', 'must' to indicate what we are bound to do because of God's ordinance, commandment, and will (Romans 13:5.6.9; 1 Corinthians 9:9; Acts 5:29; John 15:12; 1 John 4:11). (CC)

Likewise in *Article XI, Election* , paragraph 12 we read:

Furthermore, everything in the Word of God is written down for us, not for the purpose of thereby driving us to despair but in order that 'by steadfastness, by the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope' (Romans 15:4). From this it is beyond all doubt that the true understanding or the right use of the teaching of God's eternal foreknowledge will in no way cause or support either impenitence or despair. So, too, Scripture presents this doctrine in no other way than to direct us thereby to the Word (Ephesians 1:13.14; 1 Corinthians 1:21.30.31), to admonish us to repent (2 Timothy 3:16), to urge us to godliness (Ephesians 1:15ff; John 15:16.17.3.4.10.12), to strengthen our faith and to assure us of our salvation (Ephesians 1:9.13.14; John 10:27-30; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15). (CC)

This reminds us of what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, Mt. 5:16. Our good works honor the Father because they are empowered by His unique Son. In the 26th edition of the Nestle-Aland text, the aorist subjunctive *ganasthe*, "that you should become my disciples," replaces the future indicative of earlier editions, but the indicative is preferable, and is reflected in the NIV, RSV, and KJV. We do not bear fruit in order to become disciples (works-righteousness); by bearing fruit we demonstrate that, by His grace, we are His disciples. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)

The Father is glorified when those whom he has pruned and cleansed bear fruit. To be "disciples," *mathētai*, is to learn to say and do all that the master says and does. Those who are in the true vine receive their life and all things from Jesus, who nourishes them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

As Christ glorified the Father through His obedience, believers glorify God through their lives – and show that they are real disciples, attached to the vine. (TLSB)

en toutōi, "in this." "In this my Father is glorified." The direct reference to "this" is the branch bearing much fruit, but as has already been said, we cannot speak of the fruit apart from the vine. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 2)

my – The meaning of *emoi*, "my" is the same whether it is a nominative plural adjective or a dative singular pronoun. Either way, Jesus' disciples think as Jesus thinks. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 2)