



Message **Transcript**

The Path To True Joy

Josh Mackey

- Good morning BRAVE church. I can feel the joy of the Lord in here today, how about you guys? Yes. It is so fun. Hey, can we give a huge warm welcome to all our friends and family who are joining us online today? Thank you guys. So glad you're here with us. And as you can probably tell, this is a little unique of a service. So I decided to bring a couple hundred of my favorite people with us to join us to worship today so we have had a great weekend. We had a local camp called camp friends. We did a lot of fun things, but I'll be honest. There's a couple of things that were the most memorable for me. The number one is it was a beautiful thing to watch as we saw these students love and serve some families in need and give them bikes and backpacks, which so many of you guys helped provide, many of those things, which is incredible. But one of the biggest takeaways I have is that this floor of this church, we rated the 0.0 on the scale of readiness to sleep on. So in case you were wondering, it is not great to sleep here in this church, but I remember, you know, growing up when I would go to church with my family and my family grew up in West Michigan, it was a very religious area. And so it was kind of an expectation you just go to church, but I remember going and entering into these buildings and going to worship and my family's church that they grew up in was a pretty traditional church. So I was one of those that had, you know, like the wood seating, the benches, and I thought it was so uncomfortable, but I didn't want to be with the kids 'cause I was super shy back then and so I was like, I don't want to go in there. And I would kick and scream and be so mad that we had to go to this thing called church. And I had to put on a belt and tuck in my shirts. It was just rough. But the thing that got me is my parents finally said, "Hey,

Josh, it's okay. You can come and you can sit with us and you can play with your toys." And I was like, ooh, all right. And so I got my power ranger toys sitting in the benches, but things shifted when I learned that those benches were called pews because then I had my power ranger toys while the preacher was preaching to everyone, the beautiful word of God. I'd be sitting in the pews going, pew-pew, pew-pew, pew-pew, pew-pew, pew-pew. And my parents were mortified.

I'm pretty sure to this day, the reason that my parents stopped going to church was because of me. And I'd go back on this and, you know, it was fun in a lot of ways. But even when I was young, I was very perceptive. And when I look around at the church, when I would see people there, often what I would see is not the kind of life that we read about in scripture. Often when I would look at the Christians, what I would see is nothing really different than anyone else. In fact, what it looked like to me, it was people just putting on their Sunday best, showing up for a thing on the Sunday, doing some Christian karaoke, right, and going home. And it was very confusing to me because when I, I know that they believed in this God that they said was just all powerful, all present, all mighty, filled with everything you'd ever want in life. And yet some of the people that I interacted with were no different and if at best sometimes, less enjoyable to be around, more stressed out, more anxious. And it was one of those things that I just saw.

It made me wonder what in the world and why would anyone want to go to church? Why would anyone want to do this to themselves? And it wasn't until I met Jesus, that things started to shift for me. And I was in high school and I came to know

the Lord. And it was one of those things where God opened my eyes. But as I started to read this book, I started to see that this thing came alive. As I started to read these pages, this wasn't an ordinary book. God started to speak to me. And I started to see things in here that blew my mind. When you read about the lives, particularly in the New Testament of some of the believers that came to know Jesus, some of the things they got to see encounter and experience were just radical. They saw lepers being healed, paralyzed walking, thousands of people in one instant coming to know the Lord and choosing to follow Jesus.

And what I had saw most above everything else was a sense of joy and purpose. That no matter what life threw at them, they continue to press forward and to pursue the Lord. And I wanted that. And I looked around at our church and I saw that this is something that I don't know that many of us have experienced to the full of what Jesus has for us.

Why don't we see things in our world today? And in many of our lives, why don't we experience some of these things that we read about in scripture and why don't Christians seem alive as much today as they did then? What are we missing? And as I thought about this, it made me realize that so many Christians today are just as stressed out, just as anxious, just as lonely, depressed as anyone else around us. And I started to wonder why is it that there's so many teens who are in the church who battle so deeply with loneliness and anxiety and in this area in particular, in ways I've never encountered before depression? And it's one of those things that I wonder what in the world, how is it that kids are growing up inside the walls of the church, being

raised in these families in the moment they are sent out into the world, they walk away from their faith? What is going on that we are missing in scripture? What are we missing from the Lord?

See all weekend, we've been talking with the students about a character in the Old Testament, someone who had great purpose. He was literally born with more purpose than probably anyone else on the planet. He was to be a judge, to be a savior for God's people. And he was given power to be able to do so. But the truth is most of his life, he spent looking and searching for joy in all the wrong places. And at the end of his life, it's literally not until his eyes are gouged out. He's in shackles and he's walking around in circles, grilling or grinding grain for the Philistines that Samson finally realizes he missed out on most of his life on true life enjoy. And we see that Samson missed the source of his joy.

And so today I want to talk about what does it mean for us to live into the fullness of joy? Because what I believe is that God has a great amount of joy for his people. I believe that he made us to experience joy and to live life and life to the full. In fact, this is what I believe our church is our mission. Our mission is to come alongside one another, to encourage one another and to help one another experience, the fullness of Jesus Christ in our lives. This is our mission as a church.

And so if you guys are here with me and you want to learn the secret to the path of joy, we're going to be open up the words today. It's in John chapter 15, which is a passage. Many of you guys know well and true, but in reality, many of us have missed

putting this passage into practice and experiencing the kind of joy that God has for us. And so John chapter 15, we read in verse one, Jesus says this. He says, "I am the true vine. And my father is the vine dresser. 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. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 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. 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 for me, you can do nothing."

As we look at this scene, just imagine for a moment being one of the disciples that has been following Jesus. You were up in the upper room. You're with him. This is the last time you're really going to be with him. And He shares some crazy news. He's going to get betrayed. He's not going to be with them soon. And they leave this place and they're starting to walk and they're actually going towards the garden of Gethsemane. And as they're going towards the place that Jesus is going to be betrayed, I can imagine the anxiety, the stress, the fear of what's going to happen was just creeping in the hearts of the disciples. But Jesus was not in a rush to get to where He was going. He took his time and as they're strolling along the road, they come across a vineyard and Jesus pauses and He sees a teaching moment for his disciples to help them to understand the kind of life that He truly has for them.

And He says to them, if you abide in me, you will bear much fruit. And the word is not one that I'm guessing has been most of our vocabularies that we use very often,

right? Unless your favorite movie is the Big Lebowski and the Dude abides in your life, I don't know, but the truth is most of us don't use that word very often. And the word abide though, really simply what it means. It just means to remain, to just stay, to stay connected to, to stay put.

And Jesus gives this metaphor of these vines and branches, and then says, this is the key to understanding your joy and what life filled with power and purpose truly looks like. And honestly, I didn't really understand this imagery 'cause I didn't grow up in a super place where there's a lot of vineyards. I grew up in west Michigan. And so we had a lot of plans, but vineyards were not one of those. And so my perception of what a vine was and how it works was completely off. And it wasn't until I got to go visit with my family, Chris's wife, my wife's family out in California, that we went Northern California. There's vineyards everywhere. And this here's a picture from a vineyard called Barra, which is not too far from where Chris's family grew up. And as we got to see some of these vineyards, we got to walk through them. Literally our backyard is just filled with sprawling, beautiful leaves and fruit.

And I got to see some of the things that Jesus talked about fresh in my mind and I started to ask some more questions. What is He really saying here? And I realized that some of my perspective of what a vine was was just off. 'Cause when I thought of a vine, I just thought the whole thing's a vine, right? Like grapes grow on a vine, like vines just growing all over your guys' backyard, right? It's on your fences, just vines. Everything's a vine, but that's not true. Grapes don't grow on vines. They grow on branches.

See the vine is a very particular part of this plant that is the source of life. It is the stem, it's the trunk. It's the thing that's rooted into the ground it's stable. And it's the thing that allows the nutrients in the water to come up in and through and out through the branches to produce fruit. And so as you start to think of this, there's two different things, branches and vines. And Jesus says, I am the vine, you are the branches. And He puts this into a perspective where He says, we derive our power, our source of life and our joy when we understand something and it's this, if you guys are taking notes, it's that true life and joy. It comes through abiding in the true vine.

True life and joy comes through abiding, remaining connected to the true vine. And Jesus says, I am the true vine. Which if you hear that, what He's implying is there's probably some false vines out there. There's probably some vines that are out there that are promising you joy, that are promising you happiness, that are promising you life to the full. But Jesus says, I am the true vine. None of those are true. There's cheap imitators out there. And all of us know this because all of us have had experience with cheap imitators, right? Like think of the chicken sandwich and just bear with me, okay? But think of the chicken sandwich for a second. I'm passionate about this, all right. So there's clearly one true chicken sandwich. There's a lot of imitators out there, right? Popeyes came along and they got this big slogan. They're all about trying to be the best chicken sandwich. Burger king now is all at their proclaiming they have the new best sandwich, but the truth is we all know. I don't have to say you guys know what I'm going to say, right? There's only one Christian chicken sandwich. Straight forward, right? This isn't.

You guys would think I just preached the gospel in this place, what is happening? But we understand that there are imitators things, that are just not as good as the true thing. And Jesus has been talking about chicken here, right? There's higher things at stake here than what we eat. He's talking about life. He's talking about joy. He's talking about purpose.

And we live in a society that is constantly extracting from us. That's constantly draining us, pulling us, distracting us and promising here's things that if you just connect to this thing, that's going to bring you the joy that you're searching for. And as you think about this, all of us, whether we're a believer in this room or not, we are pulled to connect to sources of life that are not actually going to provide life, false vines.

As you think about your own journey, what is your source of life? Where are you deriving your sense of joy and purpose in life from? I know most of you guys said, well, Jesus course, right? But in reality, if we really were to take a step back and ask, where's the majority of my focus, my energy, my stress. Where is it connected to? What are the things that are devoting most of my attention in my time. Very few of us in this room would probably say it's actually Jesus. Most of us say, yeah, it's my career. It's my family, right? Or it's my GPA or sports or what have you, relationships, success.

All of us have different things that we, whether we recognize it or not are connecting ourselves to believing that once we get this thing, then we will be happy. And the world is fighting hard for your attention. The world is over promising and

constantly under-delivering because there is no source of life apart from the true vine. And yet so many Christians are filled with anxiety, loneliness, depression, stress. Why is that?

If Jesus says here that He is the true vine and through him we get to experience fullness of life, how is it that so many Christians are not actually fully satisfied in him? It's because we've been connecting and believing and attaching to vines that were never meant to fill us. And the truth is no person or thing was ever meant to do that for you, including you. You cannot and were not meant to be the vine. You're not meant to be the source of joy in your own life. You're not supposed to be the person I'm going to, what self-help books are going to tell you, you are not the source of your own happiness. You don't even know you best.

The Lord knows you better than you know yourself. And yet we've been told only you know what's best for you. Just follow your heart. Why do you think so many people are not actually fulfilled with that promise? Because it's a lie. Because it's not the true vine and the early disciples, when they would have heard this, this was a little more revolutionary than it is for us. Because when I hear this vine imagery, it's not just that they grew up in an agricultural society and they understood vineyards better than us. It was because in the Old Testament, there was some promises about the identity of the Israelites of who they were meant to be. And God called them the vine. God said you are the vine who's meant to be the source of life ,to be the blessing to the world that when people see you, you are the one who are going to point them to me, you are the vine.

And Jesus, the rabbi turns to his disciples and He says, guess what? You're not the vine, I am the vine. You're the branches. This would have flipped their world upside down because the truth is when we look at the Old Testament, we look at the scriptures. God's people constantly we're exhausted. Constantly we're falling back into the same things. And we see that they were not a vine that was producing healthy fruit. Scripture says that they were wild and corrupt and growing all over the place, but not producing life.

And so Jesus comes in and He lifts that burden off their shoulders. And He says, you are not the source of life, I am. I am the vine, you are the branches. Abide in me and you will bear much fruit. This is a freeing identity shift. That I think most of us haven't truly lived in. That we believe there's something I must do or I have to achieve or it's in my power to experience joy and it's up me to do that. But Jesus invites us to something different where we see that true life and joy it comes through resting in our identity as branches.

God didn't make you to be a vine. He made you to be a branch. Check out what He says down and we'll skipped down to verse four. He says, "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. 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."

Jesus says, apart from him, we can do nothing. I don't know about you, but when I hear that, there's a part of me that goes, ouch, like really? Like nothing, I'm pretty

sure I got out of bed. I did some things today. Like I didn't do nothing today Jesus. And so, you know, the MDiv in me, the scholar, the guy who studied a little bit of Greek. I'm like, I'm going to go on the Greek because I think this is a mistranslation. Something's off here and so I went into the Greek and I'm like, we got to see what he's actually saying here. And I looked it up, do you know what it says in the Greek?

- Nothing.

- Nothing. And this blew my mind. Jesus says we can do nothing. We don't have the power in us. We don't have the ability to produce the kind of life that Jesus desires for us.

And really, if you were to look at a branch and to actually break it down, a branch is really nothing more than a hollow tube. It's like a PVC pipe. There's nothing in a branch. Like you got see it all the time. You walk outside, there's sticks on the ground. Do you see sticks just bursting with fruit, right? When they're not attached to any source, the trunk, the vine, we know naturally that there's nothing that they're going to do to be able to bear any fruit.

And Jesus says, it's the same with us spiritually. But if we try to bear the kind of fruit that He offers spiritually on our own, we're going to produce nothing. And we're going to end up withered and dried and exhausted. He says, this isn't my path for you, He says desires that we will bear much fruit. But what does that mean exactly? What does that mean that we're going to bear fruit? Like, does that mean that like all of a sudden we're going to start having apples, like popping out of our crevices and be like,

hey dude, how about them apples? Like, is this our reality, right? Where all of a sudden you've got the pineapple guy and, you know, no, clearly no that that's not true.

He's talking about spiritual fruit, which again, if you've been raised in the church, you've been around long enough, you know there's a thing called spiritual fruit. And yet we misunderstand what spiritual fruit actually is. If you'll turn with me to Galatians chapter five, we see something so beautiful and freeing about what Paul says about the kind of fruits that we're going to experience. He says in Galatians chapter five, verse 22. He says, "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such things, there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. And if we live by the spirit, let us also keep step with the spirit."

Paul says here that as followers of the way of Jesus, as disciples of Christ, we are offered the opportunity to be free. For freedom sake you've been set free. And a mark of freedom is that you are going to bear fruit, that you're going to see fruit in your lives, a spiritual harvest of things that we cannot produce on our own. Joy, peace, love, patience, kindness.

Just think of this lifts for a second. And ask the question, when we think of these words here, are these things that we see much in our culture today? Are these things we see much in our world and what's actually people are experiencing. It's promised all the time, right? This is your path to peace. This is your path to joy. This is your path to X, in learning how to be self controlled and right in control of your own destiny, whatever. We see it promised all the time but do we see anyone living in this being a

mark of what our world likes it? No.

See the way of Jesus is so counter-cultural to our world today. It's revolutionary. It's incredibly different because there are not words that you could use to describe our culture. These are not ones that you would use at all. And we read this list and we see Jesus is saying, listen I want to give you love in a world that promotes hate. I want you to experience joy in a time where most people are despairing. Peace in an anxiety written culture. Patience in the time of stress and go, go, go, go. Kindness in a world of selfishness. Goodness in a world of brokenness. Faithfulness in a world of compromise. Gentleness in a world of harsh words. Self-control in a world focused on self fulfillment.

This is so radically different than what most of us, even in the church experience daily. Very few of us experienced this list in our lives daily. But what if Christians were marked by this list? What if the church was known for the fruit of the spirit? Not for how big our buildings are, what we do, or even the ministry that we do, but more by the joy that people see in us. How might that speak to our culture that's seeking and searching desperately for joy? What would happen if the world started to see there's something about the church, the body of Christ that cannot be explained apart from a God? That may be their source of life isn't found in this world. Maybe they're made for a different life and they have access to it. And I want that thing.

And the truth is we can trick ourselves and we read this passage into thinking, these are things we just need to do better at. Right, as Christians we just gotta be

more patient. Right, how's that work out for you when you just start to tell your signing to be more patient? Right, I was single once and I remember complaining with God, I'm like, God, I just want to be married, right? And if I would just start telling myself, Josh, it's okay, just be patient, just be patient, right? I'm like, oh, sweet, good self-talk. I'm good to go, right? I'm patient now. I got no stress, right? No, that's not how it works.

Or try to tell yourself to be more self-controlled like that word in itself to me is just so odd, right? Because here it says, this is a spiritual gift, like a spiritual fruit, a fruit of the spirit and yet we call it self control and I see this and I'm like, yeah, there are some things I do have some decent self control over. Like you put me in some environments, it's pretty easy for me to say no. If you throw me in a bar, I have zero temptation. It's not something I'm worried about. You throw me in Home Depot, that's a whole other story. Like Chris has seen it time and time again. I come home with tools that I already have things for. And I'm like, what is my problem? I don't have the ability to have any self-control.

So self-control is a terrible word because it has nothing to do with us when we see this offer, it's a fruit of the spirit. And it's the same with joy. Joy, we have believed that it's on us. Right, the idea being, yeah, if we just start to look at our lives with like the glass half full. I'm a glass half empty kind of guy. I got the spiritual gift of pessimism, sarcasm, cynicism. I don't know whatever it is, but I just see things, not half glass full. So I can't trick myself into being happy. But even if we do which isn't a bad thing, it's not bad to say, yeah, I need to just see things more positively. That's not

joy. That's not fullness of life that Jesus offers. That's just self-talk and self-help and trying to see our world a little bit better.

I think God offers something more than that. See when you read these passages, you read, especially in Galatians five. These aren't a list of things to do better at or to work harder at. In fact, there's no command in any of this. It's an invitation. The only directive from Paul that he says is two things. At the beginning at the end, he says this. He says, keep in step with the spirit. Just follow, keeping step with the spirit. Walk in the spirit. In other words, abide, remain, stay connected to the Lord. You want your source of life. Enjoy abide in the vine, abide in Jesus. Do you want more fruit in your life? Do you want more self-control? Do you want more joy? Do you want more peace? Do you want more of the Lord? It doesn't come from you striving. It comes from receiving and reminding yourself who you are in Christ.

I mean, when's the last time you saw an apple tree working its butt off and stressing to produce apples, right? I grew up in Michigan. So our orchard were way better than out here. Colorado is terrible with apples. But even here, you don't walk through the orchard and just hear groaning coming from the trees like I got to produce the apple, right? You don't see those things happening. There's no stress. It just happens. The branches being connected to the vine, connected to the trunk, apples are produced. And it's the same with us. It's an imitation to abide.

This is what Christianity is meant to look like. We're meant to be conduits. PVC pipes of the holy spirits. That we connect to the vine. The Lord spirit would flow through us. Not just for the works of ministry, but for the fruit of the spirit in our own

lives, which is the work of ministry that people desperately need. See true life and joy comes through resting and our identity has branches.

Well, here's the challenge. We all know this to be true. Like if you've been in the church again, you know this to be true. So why is it so hard for us to spend time with Jesus? If we know that this is the truth, that if we connect to Jesus, that's where joy and peace and all these things come through. Why is it so challenging? I think it's because we have turned connecting into Jesus as just another activity on a list of all these other activities that we have to do and accomplish. That the idea of spending time with Jesus is something about I have to do this and plan this and make this time. And we make it a list of things that we have to do. And if it's not productive in the way that I thought that it was a waste of time, because it's just another task on a list. And I think the real reason we struggle this is because the only way we spend time with them, as we think is if we're doing something productive. And we make spending time with him a task.

And so when we look at the business of our day to fit Jesus in, it just doesn't work. I don't know if I'm alone in this, but I struggle with this. I see this all the time. And most of us have learned to fill our schedules with a lot of activity. Not all bad, not all the things we do are bad or sinful. Some of the things are great. Some of the things we fill our schedule with his ministry and doing things for the glory of the Lord. And yet even those things can become activities where we are more dependent on our abilities and our strength to produce our own joy and help other people experience joy without ever

actually understanding the source of joy for ourselves. And we miss out.

In some of you in this room, I know you hear a message like this and you think, well, Josh, you don't know my schedule. You're just a youth pastor. Like what do you do? You show up on Sundays and you hang out with high schoolers. How hard is that, right? And I get a lot of pizza. So I know there's some privileges to it. But I know there's some of you in this room, you say, you don't even know, you don't understand what I have to do. I own a business. I got a lot of things on my plate. Some of you in this room and like, I'm a stay at home. I got to stay here and take care of these crazy. I mean, I'm in love with kids, right? That I want to spend time with, right? I don't have time. You don't understand. And I agree, I don't. Where is there time to abide in our schedules? For real where is their time in our schedule to buy?

'Cause sometimes I think, man, God, it'd be really cool. If you just go back to the beginning, you know, we did this whole series from Genesis to Revelation. Why don't we go back and change 24 hour, days to 30? I mean, I don't know what God was thinking of 24, but 30 sounds more round. Got a little more time. Six hours of leisure. That sounds pretty good. I would totally rest if I just had six more hours. I'd sleep, I'd have no, we wouldn't. You fill it with more sports, more school. More things you can accomplish because this is what we do.

And the truth is 24 hours is the grace of God to not give us more. Is his mercy and kindness that He doesn't allow there to be more minutes and hours and seconds in a day. See we wear, busy-ness like a badge of honor. We believe that there's something about us that when we're busy, it says something about who I am. Like, we

don't even know how to respond anymore to the question of how you're doing. I bet if we were to go around the room and ask everyone before you heard this message, we would have said, I'm tired. I'm busy. I'm exhausted. Just waiting for the weekend. Just hoping for, you know, next, whatever. I kid you not. This is not a joke.

Okay, this blew my mind. High five. Not that long ago it was amazing time. There's little kids in there like four years old. Little girls walking in the room and she looks at me. I said, hey, how you doing honey? She's like, I'm so tired. I'm like, why are you tired? It's day one. Like, what are you tired from? I'm just so busy. And I'm like. What is happening in our world that our four year olds are so busy? But kids and students, they learn by osmosis. They're picking up on things that they see around us as adults and older students that they're learning whether you say it or not. And what they're learning is that it's normal to be stressed. It's normal to be busy. It's normal to not have time to sit and rest around the dinner table. It's normal to go, go, go, go.

And Jesus says to us, that's not the life I've offered to you. In fact, He using this analogy of a vine and branches. If we were to really look at most of our lives, what a life of busy-ness looks like, this is what it really looks like right here. This is what a busy vine and branches looks like. It looks kind of cool because it's like, they're all over the place. When I first moved in our new home, this was everywhere. And I thought these things were dead. And in my backyard, 'cause I was like, this doesn't look very good, but there's so much going on, so much activity. They're growing super long, super dense.

And what often happens is we think that doing all these things is what being productive really means. Is to be successful. I got all this stuff going on. And if you understand branches and vines, if you just let vines go, what's going to happen is they're going to do this. They're going to conquer the world, go as far as they possibly can at the expense of growing fruit. See if they're left to go to themselves, there will be normal no fruit. At best what will happen is they'll go flowers. And we'll look at those flowers and be like, wow, that's so pretty. Like, look at those flowers, what they produced, right? Look at me, I got flowers all over me, right?

And we think, look at my accomplishments, the things I'm doing, look how activity and busy I am. It's so great, but there's no fruit. In fact, most gardeners would say that those flowers are suckers. That's what they're called. Because they suck the life of what could have been fruit. In that, this is what we've learned to be normal. And we don't realize in the schedule of our busy-ness and activity and all the good things we're doing we're not bearing any fruit. We're not experiencing the hope, and the joy and the love.

And the truth is most Christians have mistaken busy-ness for fruitfulness. We've learned to believe that being busy is being fruitful. And yet it's not. That is not the way that God has made us. He did not create us to be busy, He created us to be filled with joy. To be filled with his power and his presence. He didn't create us to have a life that has no margin or no rest. He created for joy. This is who you are.

Now I've been reading this book by a guy named John Mark Comer who's a

pastor. And if I could have any spirit animal it'd be him. And he wrote this book that literally the title in itself convicted me. And I wept in my office called the ruthless elimination of hurry. And I read that title. And I'm like, what in the world? And I read this. And his main point is this is that hurry is the greatest enemy of our spiritual lives in our world today. Hurry in busy-ness if the devil can't get you to sin, he's going to distract you and keep you busy. Because that is just sorry, I thought that was my phone. What's up, Rebecca. That'd be bad. Sorry, Jeff. I'm a busy guy. I got a lot going on. You never know, right?

But we think being busy as good. And we can be so distracted. And this is the greatest tool of the enemy in our culture. He knows if he can get you to sin, he's just going to keep you occupied. Filling your schedule with things that are not even bad, but it's not the fullness of life that Jesus offers. But here's the deal. A life of busy-ness and stress are not compatible to the way of Jesus. Do you know that?

Like do you know that in God's kingdom, we've been talking about the book of Revelation. We're not going to be stressed when we're there. Like we're not going to feel the worry and the busy-ness and the things we've got to do for God or the schedule we've got to keep, we're going to be fully at peace, fully at rest. And what Jesus says is we're called to live into that kingdom now. Not wait until then but right now we get to taste and see that kingdom. Right now we get to be people who bear a mark of what that kingdom looks like for the rest of the world. And we get to be a people who are flowing with joy. Jesus says my yoke is easy and my burden is light. The idea of a stressed out Jesus just does not compute. Make you think about what a

stressed out Jesus would look like.

Like imagine if we're reading to the New Testament, we get into the book of Mark, which is the like, go, go, go, go, go gospel. We were reading through this and you get to a story where Jesus just got done teaching in the town point. He starts to walk out, pulls out his iPhone and he starts looking at it and all his, I count all the things he's got to do that day. And a young girl walks up to him and he's just looking down and she says, hey Jesus, as teacher, would you pray for me? I'm sick. And Jesus doesn't even look up from his phone. He just glances at her and He says, you know what? Sorry, I got to go somewhere but guess what? Here's this guy Barnabas. He's pretty cool. He's 11th disciple. He's not as bad as Judas so you can take him. I know a lot of people don't know him, but he can pray for you. I got to go.

No, you don't see that. You don't see Jesus in a hurry ever. Even when he knew that one of his close friends was going to die, you don't see him rushing. Because he knew there was a girl that needed him behind. He knew that she was going to come and needed healing. So he wasn't worried about the things in front of him. See, Jesus is the embodiment of peace, the embodiment of joy. And this is why he is the source of life. That apart from the vine, we cannot bear fruit.

And yet most of us, we fill our schedules going from one activity to another, looking to our future in the hopes of once I get to this place, once I'm 75 and I retire and I've got this thing all paid off, then I can be happy. And yet the truth is we don't realize that who we're becoming is not someone we're going to like. 'Cause we're never learning even the moment right now to be at peace. And we're rushing so fast

and hard to reach that goal. And we're not even going to like ourselves when we get there. We're not going to like who we've become. And yet so many churches and church leaders have fallen prey to this culture of busy-ness. Adding more and more activities, more and more ministries in the church. More and more things to do. All the while not realizing that the state of the heart of the pastors and the leader is compromised. That despite looking on the outside and seeing this mega church with 20,000 people and it's amazing, every week, if you're paying attention, you're hearing about another pastor who's failed. Another pastor who's compromised. Another pastor who forsake his first love for something else.

But what's more sad to me isn't these pastors falling. It's the amount of the flock that connected themselves to this pastor, that use that as an opportunity to walk away from the faith. Revealing that they had their whole source of life wrong. That they thought because of this leader, I'm close to Jesus. That because of this church, because of the ministry going on. Because of the great activity here, I'm close to Jesus.

Friends that is not the vine. That is not the vine we want to clean ourselves too. We want to be a people who abide, who experienced fullness of peace and joy in life. And what I believe as Christians in 2021, we have conformed to the patterns of this world. We would say we haven't because I can name all these sins outside these walls that we don't do. And we'd say, because I don't do X, Y, and Z, I have not conformed to the ways of this world. And yet we are so sorely mistaken. Because the culture, the

mindset, the pattern of busy-ness and stress and anxiety are not parts of the kingdom. And so when we call those normal in our lives and don't expect anything more, we have conformed to the patterns of this world. And we have settled for a life that is not the life that Jesus promises us.

And there's this professor from Charleston University who did a study at 20,000 Christians, because he was wondering what in the world is going on. There's zero joy in the church today. And he does this study and this is what he found. He says, one, Christians are assimilating a culture of busy-ness hurry and overload, which leads to two becoming more marginalized in Christian's lives which leads to three, a deteriorating relationship with God, which leads to four Christians becoming even more vulnerable to adopting secular assumptions about how to live. Which leads to five more conformity to a culture of busy-ness hurry and overload. And then the cycle begins again.

We have fallen prey to a vicious cycle in our world, in the church of conforming to the culture of busy-ness in hurry. Instead of the invitation to walk into the freedom of Christ's kingdom here on earth.

Just this week, I experienced this to a whole new level. Contrary to popular belief, it takes a little bit of work to put on what we did this weekend is a lot and it's stressful. And I was looking to this weekend, I'm thinking I got to write a sermon. I got to write multiple sermons. I got to get these things done. I've got to get buses. I've got to secure water world. I've got to make sure nobody dies. Right, all these things that are constantly going through my mind. And you know what happened this week? I got

called into jury duty. And I'm not gonna lie I was not very happy with my Lord, Jesus Christ, because I'm sitting here thinking my God of all the weeks, of all the times. Why don't you wait until next Wednesday? Why today? Why now? And I'm frustrated and I'm talking to God, I'm going to the jury and I'm sitting there and I'm fuming. I'm saying, God, why am I here right now? And in that moment, I hear a still small voice. Where God said, listen, I just want to spend time with you. You've been so focused on all these things you got to do for me, you haven't even talked to me. You desperately want these kids to know Jesus and to experience the fullness of life. And you're going to do it in your strength when you're not even filled with joy. When you don't know what peace is, how are you going to offer that to them? He says, I want to connect to you. And I realized how much Jesus wants to spend time with us. How much he wants to connect to us.

And this is why as we go back to verse two, we see the heart of the father in a unique way. It says in verse two. Sorry, it says, I'm the true vine. My father is the vine dresser verse one. 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. He says already you're clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Jesus, we see the heart of the father in this moment. He tells us, this is what God's heart is for you. His heart is that you would bear much fruit. And not only that, it's not even your responsibility to make it happen. He's going to do everything it takes to get you to bear more fruit. And we see that true life enjoy comes through embracing the promise of pruning.

This is where true joy in life and peace come from. It's embracing the promise of pruning. Jesus says the father is the vine dresser, the gardener, the one who's walking through his vineyard. And He's going to walk around and he's going to see the things that need to be tended to. And He's going to do what it takes to allow you to bear the most fruit for your joy. He's going to do what it takes. And He says, every branch in me that does not bear fruit He promises he's going to prune. But it's not a punishment. It's actually a reward.

Notice what He says, it says, as those who bear fruit, he's going to prune. If you're already bearing fruit, He's going to prune you. So that you can bear more fruit. It's actually a reward. That if you wanna experience more deeper joy, He's going to continue to prune you. He's going to continue to cut you back. This is what gardeners do. They're directing the sap and the energy and the nutrients into the most maximum places so that fruit is produced. Not flowers, not growth that looks cool on the surface, but misses fruit but fruit. This is what the father's heart is for us. And sometimes He does pruning in our lives that's small. It's just a little snippet here. And at first we can feel like it's punishment. Like God, why would you take that relationship from me? God, why would you cause me to lose my job? God, why would this thing happen to me? I don't understand. And we can say, God you're punishing me, but we miss and it actually might be a reward. It might be an invitation to more of him. And so sometimes it's a small thing that feels like a big thing and sometimes it's huge.

Sometimes there's seasons of pruning that God does to his church that is pretty

aggressive. And what I learned and I didn't realize this, but even in my backyard with the vines that had gone all over the place, I thought they were dead. I literally spent like 10 hours ripping these things out, cutting them down but there's so many I just left the rest. And what oftentimes look like a prune vines, this is what it looks like. It looks dead. It looks like there's nothing happening there. But the truth is what's left is the vine, fully free to grow and to produce maximally what needs to happen.

And there are seasons at times where God does pruning, just like the vines in my backyard. If you go in my backyard now there's full of lush. Vines that I did not anticipate seeing. Because when we prune back, we're able to actually produce life. And my guess is the Lord is pruning you because he's pruned all of us in a season many of us have gone through. And if you guys are aware of this or you remember this as a kind of a season in the past, right? Some of you guys maybe weren't even born yet. I don't know, is this thing called COVID. You guys have heard of that? Distant past, I know. But the truth is that was a season of pruning, was it not? That was a season where you did not have the choice, but God removed a lot of things from our schedule, right? He removed a lot of activity, even good activity. A lot of ministries in the church, a lot of sports, a lot of school, a lot of things that we had on our plate, he said, nope. And most of us were pretty upset. Most of us complained and we pointed the finger at God, whether literally or metaphorically and saying, God, why is this happening? God, why are you punishing us?

And most of us really didn't learn from the season of pruning because the truth is the moment things went back to normal, whatever that means. We went back to the

same normal spiritually as well. We went back to filling our schedules with a vengeance. And when I would talk to parents and students about their busy-ness level, I, it breaks my heart. But this summer has been one of the most painful for me to watch how stressed out the students are. Because they're doing their best to make up for what they missed out on. It's another doing double sports, double school, double family trips. People are stressed out to go on vacation 'cause you're trying to do two this summer. It's like, if you're stressed out to go on vacation, that's a wake-up call. Y'all right. But I know I've seen it. I've experienced it. This is our reality. We run right back to filling our time and schedules. And we don't learn from the beauty of the promise of what pruning could have done and can do for our lives. That, that season of time, the one valuable resource, we never have enough of. That God said, there you go. Most of us didn't use. Most of us didn't connect with the vine. We just stressed out about what we were missing out on.

Friends we've been conformed to the patterns of this world. We've been conformed to the idea and fallen prey to the idea that our identity is rooted in what we produce and what we do. And it shows in our schedules, it shows in our activity that we think if I just do this, if I just get here, if I just have a title behind my name, then I will be someone. Friends the most productive thing you can do for the Lord is just be present with him. It's just connect to him. You want to experience joy and life to the fullest. Simply be with him. Jesus continues and he says this. He says, if anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers. And the branches are gathered. They're thrown into the fire and they're burned. And if any, if you abide in me

and my words abide in, you ask what ever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my father is glorified that you bear much fruit. Which we can't even do on our own, but God gets glory from him doing work through us. And so proves to be my disciples. As the father has loved me so I have loved you with the same love that God, the father loves Jesus. He loves you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love just as I have kept my father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I've spoken to you and catch this. That my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. That Christ's joy. The most joyous human being who's ever walked the planet. That his joy would be in you. That that would be your joy. And in turn, your joy would be full or complete.

Friends I don't want you, my students, parents, myself to wake up one day and realize that we spent most of our time on things and we missed out on what was most important. That we are striving and attempting to find joy and in the process we missed it. That you started your business, but you lost your marriage. That you got kids into that dream school, but they walked away from the Lord. You got a title after your name, but you realize that wisdom and intelligence are not the same thing. Or maybe you're like me and you watched all 14. Or however many seasons there are parks and rec. Thinking it's going to make you happy. And it does. Thank you, Chris Pratt. But you never learned the beauty of listening to silence and solitude and waiting to hear from the Lord. Because you need a distraction and numbing every time you're at home.

So this isn't meant to be a guilt trip. This is a meant to be a do more, try harder, put more time in your schedule. This is about learning to be two places at once. Is to

be working and being in the presence of Jesus. Realizing He never leaves you. He's with you, He's for you. Yeah, and if the holy spirit is in us, the reality is we can be going through anything around us and experiencing the fruit of the spirit. Because it's not based on our circumstance, not based on what you are or aren't doing. It's based on being connected to the vine. So the imitation here is to orient our schedule differently. That as a church, as a body of Christ, that we would look at our schedule differently. As an opportunity to abide in Jesus. To ask the question is my schedule producing joy in my life? Are the things that I'm committed to that I think are supposed to produce joy. Am I actually filled with joy right now?

And if you really want to know, parents ask the question are the things that my kid, my student that they're doing and they're committed to, are they learning to abide and experience joy? Or are they learning what all of us have done for the last many generations since the industrial revolution to fill our time, with doing more, being great, learning to be independent as if that is what God invites you to.

God does not invite you to be independent. He invites you to be dependent. Fully dependent on the Lord. There is nothing good about being independent. In the kingdom of heaven, you will be fully dependent. And that is where joy will come. And the imitation isn't to wait until that moment. It's not to wait until you're in heaven. It's to experience the fullness of that joy now. This is the choice that we all have. And we have an opportunity to especially show the next generation what life to the full can look like.

See, I'm a student pastor not because I don't think I can be a pastor somewhere else. I don't view student ministry as less than. It breaks my heart when people ask me, are you, when are you gonna be real pastor one day? I'm like, oh, you miss it. You miss it. This is the church of today all. These people right here, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and in God's eyes are just as capable of every one of us in this room, including me. Probably more. But what we are teaching many of them is that you need to learn to be more strong on your own. That you need to figure out your life, know what you need to do, get a good job, be independent. And that's where happiness will come in. And it is totally missing the kingdom of joy that Jesus has for us.

I was meeting with a student who I've met with and mentored for last six years. And I loved death. And he's someone watch literally as freshman year being that punk freshman kid, like all of us were as freshmen. Wasn't walking with the Lord. Didn't want anything to do with them. I saw him get saved, give his life to Jesus. Start walking with him, feel called into ministry. Desire to go live is like, get a scholarship to play soccer in college and get a Bible degree. I mean, all these things, it's like, yes, it's going the way you think. But then things happen that were out of his control. He got sick. He wasn't able to be physically who he was. He had to stop playing soccer. He can't work. Can't go to school.

And we sit down and we sit over coffee and he's clearly struggling. And he said, he's hurting. And I said, what is it that you're hoping for? What do you want? And he says, I just want to know that I'm pleasing God. I just want to know that my life is pleasing to him, but I don't feel like I can do anything. I feel like I can do anything for

him. So what am I supposed to do? And that moment I realized the dilemma of what he's been learning. He'd been learning that we are productive for God, by what we do, instead of realizing that we are the most productive and we are simply present.

The most important thing you can do today, brothers and sisters is just be with Jesus. To connect with him. That's where He gets most joy in you. As the band comes up and gets ready to lead us in our last. Worship song here, we have got to realize that this is an invitation. And the early church called it a rule of life. That we need to learn to reorient our schedules differently. And they called it a rule of life. And that word rule sounds legalistic. But what it was was a trellis. It's the same word, using a vineyard of a trellis. This idea that there's this wire, this line, that's going to hold up the branches and keep them in the presence of the sun to get warmth, to hold them out of the dirt, to be able to maximally produce the most fruit. And it's the same with our schedules that we can either be ruled by them and become busy people who don't know fullness of the fruit that God offers. Or we can connect ourselves to a different rule, a different trellis that's centered around abiding. That's centered around being in the presence of Jesus. Not as a task or something to do, but because we know He is the source of joy. He's the source of life. You were made for joy. You were made to experience the fullness of life. This is why you are here, is to be a conduit of that kind of life to the world around you. And it's nothing you can do, but it's everything he wants to do in and through you.

My prayer for you today. And my prayer for myself is that we would learn the

beauty of the vine. That we had fixed guys on Jesus and see how much He loves to spend time with us. And then in, so doing, we would see the beauty of abiding and producing fruit. So you join me in prayer.

Father, we thank you. We thank you for your love. Yeah, we thank you that He was saying in your word, that we're already clean because of what you've done. All we need to do is just connect to you to abide in you, to remain in you. And Lord I pray for discernment and wisdom for all of us in this room that whatever activities are filling our schedules and are taking away from the joy that you offer us, God, would you open our eyes spiritually to see? And would you help us to see that you are our joy? You are our life. You are what we are searching for. And so God help us to create margin and space because we know your invitation to us is not a life that we miss out on joy, it's a life filled with joy. For your burden is light, your yoke is easy God. Let us see that. And there would we follow you and abide in you for your glory and for our joy in Jesus name.