

5th Sunday of Easter
John 15:1-:8

In our Gospel reading today we heard Jesus say “Without me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

To make this point he uses the image of a vine and a branch. Of course all of us have seen dead trees, dead branches, dead leaves. Once a tree is uprooted, once a branch is broken off, once a leaf has fallen there is no life left in it.

It might maintain the appearance of life for awhile, but it is never going to grow, it is never going to develop, it is never going to change.

This is what we are like apart from Christ, and this is why Jesus speaks of the necessity of us being connected to him the same way a branch is connected to a vine.

Those who are never rooted in Christ, and those who were but have fallen away, are in the same situation as a branch that has been broken off of the vine.

Anyone, and if we are not careful this can happen to any of us, anyone who is truly cut off from Christ is lifeless and incapable of anything of significance.

Now we need to be clear about what Jesus meant by nothing. Those who don't have Christ's life within them can perform well at a job, can do well in school, can keep up the appearance that all is well in life, can make money, and can be physically healthy. Without Christ we can live up to the world's standards of success.

But by themselves these things don't matter at all. If we have all of that, and don't have Christ, then we have nothing. This is why Christ says that without him we can do nothing.

Without him we can go through the motions of a life, but anything that really matters, anything that really serves a purpose, anything that will truly prepare us for the reality that we will live for ever is not going to happen, is not going to be there, without him.

Apart from him we have nothing, and apart from him we are nothing.

These are shocking claims, outrageous claims, even offensive claims.

But if we don't understand Jesus Christ in this way, then we don't understand him at all.

The exclusivity of the claims made by Jesus Christ is absolute, total, and uncompromising.

We cannot find life in anyone or anything else. The desperation of our situation apart from him cannot be overstated. So if we are going to have, if we are going to receive, what Christ has to give us, then we must recognize the emptiness of what there is to be had apart from him

Recognizing this, recognizing the foolishness of thinking there is real life apart from Jesus Christ, we can then have the wisdom to turn to the one who is our life.

May we find life, may we find the one who has something of value to give us.

May all of us be sharers in the grace, and the mercy, and the life that is to be found, in, and only in, Jesus Christ.