

June 1

"I am the vine" — John 15:5.

Ministers are not to preach themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. But he was his own subject; He preached himself. How could he have done otherwise, concerned as he was to be useful? For, "None but Jesus, none but Jesus Can do helpless sinners good."

And he knew this far better than we do. And who was able to declare what he truly was so well as himself?

Here he calls himself the vine, a very easy and natural image; and natural images are the most preferable in divine things. Many writers and preachers love those allusions which show their learning, and which the uneducated cannot understand. Our Saviour never takes his comparisons from the sciences, and seldom from the arts, but from natural scenery, which is obvious and intelligible to all.

A vine is not so remarkable in its appearance as many other trees. In loftiness, it yields to the cedar; in strength, to the oak; in sightliness, to the palm tree and the fir. The greatness of Jesus was spiritual. He had no earthly pomp and riches. Like his kingdom, he was not of this world. Hence it was said, "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him."

The vine is renowned for its fertility. One single vine, planted by the Empress Lavinia, yielded one hundred and eight gallons of wine in one year. Many grapes grow on one cluster, many clusters on one branch, and many branches on one tree. How many have been saved by the Lord Jesus! In him all fullness dwells. In him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings. What clusters were brought from Eshcol, to show Israel the goodliness and fruitfulness of Canaan! And what specimens of heaven, what earnest of the inheritance, what first-fruits of the Spirit, do faith and hope bring believers from him, even while they are in the Wilderness!

The nature of the produce of the vine is delightful and profitable. The fruit is sweet to the taste. The juice it yields cheers and makes glad the heart of man. Give wine to those that be of heavy hearts. It was sometimes used medicinally. The good Samaritan poured oil and wine into the wounds of the bleeding traveller. And he brings us health, and cure, and comfort, and delight, and more than angels' food; for "Never did angels taste, above, Redeeming grace and dying love."

The vine also yields shade, and it was valued for this purpose in the East. Hence we so often read in the Scripture of sitting under the vine and the fig-tree. They had walks and bowers made of these; and while the fruit refreshed them, the shelter screened them from the sun. And he is a shadow from the heat, and rescues us from the evil of every annoyance to which we are exposed. I sat, says the Church, under his shadow with delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

The image, therefore, is pleasing and striking, and aids us in our conceptions of him, and communion with him. Yet it teaches us as much by contrast as by comparison. A vine is not always green. It does not always bear. It never bears twelve manner of fruits. It does not endure for ever. But all this is true of him.

The fruit of the vine, if taken too largely, will injure the partaker; but there is no danger here: while we are forbidden to be drunk with wine, wherein is excess, we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. The produce of the vine is only for the body, and for time; but his benefits are for the soul, and eternity. Many cannot obtain the advantages of the vine; but none, however poor and mean, are excluded from the participations of Christ. The image, therefore, is but a humble one, and falls far short of his glory. So does every thing that is employed to show forth his worth, his glory, or his grace. "Nor earth, nor seas, nor sun, nor stars,
Nor heaven, his full resemblance bears:
His beauties we can never trace
Till we behold him face to face"

Morning Exercises For Everyday In The Year
By Rev. William Jay