THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

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Category: Observations

I am thoroughly enjoying reading Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John (The Didsbury Lecture Series)Â which is much more enjoyable than the title would appear to suggest. I love this comment on the vine and branches discourse in John 15 (the emphasis is mine)

> *Jesus is not the vine apart from the disciples. This is not in any way to detract from the person or role of Jesus, but it is to think through the metaphor: there is no such thing as a fruit-bearing vine without branches. In that sense, the vine, Jesus, depends on the branches, the disciplesâ€"us. To be related to Christ is to be part of someone who exists in this world only by including within his identity a community of people related to him, to one another (the other branches), and to the world in which the community exists and to which it offers its fruit. This does not mean that the branches have caused the vine to exist or give it life; precisely the opposite is clearly the case. Â And the fruit that is produced is always due to the vine, the source of the branchesâ€™ life and thus of their bounty.* ***But the vine metaphor does mean that Jesus has chosen to convey his life to the world by means of the branches.***

The implications of this for the church and its role in the world are huge.

However, just in case it makes you feel slightly uncomfortable...

> *Second, however, and simultaneously, Jesus is distinct from and greater than the disciples. He is the chooser, the sender (15:16); the disciples are the chosen, the sent. Participation in Christ does not blur the distinction between him and his disciples.*

I'll have a fuller review sometime in the not too distant future. For the record, I think this is essential reading for anyone interested in Johannine literature or in a missional hermeneutic.