**John 15:5-15**

I. Comparing the story of our nation to the story of humanity

A. The story of our nation

Sum: On Fourth of July we celebrate our nation’s declaration of independence that has led to great freedoms in this country

B. The story of humanity

1. Sum: We made a declaration of independence from God that has led to slavery and bondage

2. God is a heavenly father who gave us all things for our life, liberty, and happiness. He had one condition: Depending on him for our knowledge of what is good and evil

3. Satan got humanity to think that our loving heavenly father was actually a distant tyrant imposing unfair laws on his subjects

4. Eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was a declaration of independence saying we will decide for ourselves what is good and evil, what is healthy for us and what is bad for us

5. Every act of sin is a declaration of independence

6. The result of this independence was not greater freedom but rather bondage and slavery to the very sins we pursue (Jn 8:34: “Everyone who sins is a slave to sin”)

1. Consider the example of the sexual revolution of the 60’s which promised freedom but has led to tons of sexual bondage and addiction)

2. The current redefinition of marriage that has been taking place over the past 40 years also promises freedom but will ultimately result in a lot of pain and disappointment (especially for children)

II. Jesus’ perspective in John 15

A. He introduces us to what God is really like

 1. v. 14-15: “Friend”

In Jesus Christ, God is not a distant power out there; rather he is our friend who has drawn near and become one of us

2. v. 13: lays down his life

In Jesus Christ, God is not out to impose laws that keep us from life, liberty, and happiness; rather he has sacrificed his own life to bring us eternal life, liberty, and happiness

3. Because of Jesus, our suspicion and distrust of God melts away as we see him as someone who is willing to do anything for our good

B. Introduces us to a new paradigm of life: Radical Dependence

1. The vine and the branches: a branch is utterly dependent on the vine for life and health. The moment a branch cuts itself off from the vine, it begins to die.

2. The central command is to “remain/abide” in Jesus

 a. This means maintaining a close and trusting relationship with him

b. It means hearing, studying, and meditating on his words and teachings (v. 7)

 c. It means obeying his words and teachings (v. 10)

C. He introduces us to what true Freedom is: Fruitfulness

1. Fruit is a picture of a life that is flourishing, thriving, and growing (life, liberty and happiness)

2. This is not freedom from all external constraints to live however we want. Rather, it is freedom to live as we were designed to life in all its fullness and fruitfulness

3. Consider the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. Imagine what a free and fulfilling life we would have if that fruit was being produced in us

Conclusion

I. Consider this week: where am I declaring independence from God?

Every time you decide to do something you know disobeys God, hear that voice reminding you: that decision will not produce the freedom, life, and happiness you think it will.

II. Consider this week: How can I declare and live out my my dependence on Jesus?

**Discussion Questions**

1. What struck you most about Sunday’s message?

2. Consider the statement made on Sunday: “Every act of sin we perform is a declaration of independence from God.” Is that an accurate statement? Talk through the actual dynamics of what happens in your mind when you sin (consider some specific sins that people often fall into).

3. On Sunday, several different definitions of freedom were given including that of dictionary.com: “exemption from external control, interference, or regulation.” How would you define true freedom?

4. John 15 is a very familiar passage for many people. How did reading it in the context of Sunday’s discussion add to or clarify your understanding and appreciation for that passage?