

## ON THE VINE

By Kate Heichler (*Based on John 15:1-8*)

*(GRAPE is sitting next to a large grapevine, singing a hymn, praying.  
A RAISIN sits on a deck chair nearby, sun glasses on, catching some rays.)*

- RAISIN      You know, the sun's a lot better over here. You'll get a much better tan.
- GRAPE      That's okay – I don't need that much sun. (*Resumes song.*)
- RAISIN      I'm actually kind of bored. You want to go down to the store with me, get something to drink?
- GRAPE      No thanks – I'm getting all the water I need.
- RAISIN      I was thinking of something a little stronger than water...
- GRAPE      Oh – if I stay here, connected to the vine, I'm going to become something a little stronger than water.
- RAISIN      Are you, like, attached to that thing?
- GRAPE      Oh yeah. It's great. I'm getting all kinds of nutrients, ripening me up.
- RAISIN      Don't you want to move a little? See the world?
- GRAPE      I can move around if I want. (*Twists and sways a little.*)
- RAISIN      Aren't you bored, sitting in one place like that?
- GRAPE      No, I'm not bored. I'm abiding. I'm fruit-ening.
- RAISIN      Fruitening?
- GRAPE      Yeah. Fruitening. I made it up. I'm becoming good fruit. Getting nice and round and purple... full of vitamins and anti-oxidents. Fruitening.
- RAISIN      Frightening's more like it.
- GRAPE      Come on.

- RAISIN No, I mean it. I'd be scared stuck to that vine like that. It's not safe. You can't run.
- GRAPE Why would I want to run?
- RAISIN Haven't you heard about... (*lowers voice*) the pruning?
- GRAPE The pruning?
- RAISIN Yeah. This vine gets pruned, you know.
- GRAPE That's just so we'll be more fruitful.
- RAISIN That's what they say. All I know is, you see that blade coming, you better run. Oh, you can't. So sorry.
- GRAPE Is that how you became... you know, what you are... a...  
Is that how you became....
- RAISIN A raisin? You can say it! I'm not ashamed of it.
- GRAPE Well, it's just that....
- RAISIN I'm a little wrinkled? A little small? So? I'm still a grape, you know.
- GRAPE I'm not sure, technically.... I mean, you're not growing any more.
- RAISIN No, and I may be small, but I'm packed with flavor! And I'm free.  
I can see the world. I'm not all stuck and... parochial.
- GRAPE I'm not stuck! I'm abiding. This Vine I'm part of is really, really big. It goes all over the world. I'm connected to grapes in Europe and Africa and California—
- RAISIN California! They have a lot of raisins in California.
- GRAPE They have a lot of nuts in California, too. Doesn't mean I have to be one of them.
- RAISIN You look down on me for being a raisin, don't you?
- GRAPE No I don't. I know you're being you. And you get to choose – that's another thing I like about this Vine. Gives you a choice. You want to roll off and go your own way, you can. I just think you get a little shriveled that way. You've got some vitamins, but you're not taking in any more.
- RAISIN I'm still in the sun. I get nutrients from the sun.

- GRAPE Sure you do. But through this Vine, I get nutrients from the sun, the earth, the water, the other grapes. We hang out with each other, support each other, listen to each other's problems, laugh with each other. You should check us out at Night Prayers some time! And this Vine is growing.
- RAISIN How would you know if it's growing? You're just stuck on this one little part.
- GRAPE I hear things.... In fact, I heard it through—
- RAISIN Don't say it!
- GRAPE (*Sings*) I heard it through the grapevine.
- RAISIN I knew you were going to work that in somewhere....
- GRAPE But it's true. This Vine was dead once, you know? It actually got all the way pruned. But it didn't stay dead. It couldn't stay dead. And now, it just gets stronger and stronger. So when I stay attached to this Vine, I grow and grow and grow and become the best grape I could ever be. As long as I stay attached, I get all that good stuff the Vine promises – more faith, more joy, more peace, more patience... and more love. Lots, and lots of love coming through this Vine.
- RAISIN Well, what if someone comes along and picks you? You could end up trampled... or eaten!
- GRAPE Then I'll just go back into becoming part of the Vine. Fruit doesn't always get to pick how it gets used... sometimes it gets picked! Fruit just has to concentrate on being fruitful.
- RAISIN Well, I think that ship has sailed for me, my friend. Once a raisin, always a raisin.
- GRAPE I wouldn't be too sure about that. That's how the world thinks. But this Vine can make even a raisin a grape again.
- RAISIN I don't think so...
- GRAPE What do you have to lose?
- RAISIN My freedom. My independence.

GRAPE      How about using your freedom to hang out on the Vine? How about using your independence to become inter-dependent? I'm perfectly free, abiding, abiding, abiding. Come on, hang out with us. It's a blast.

RAISIN      Besides, how would I get attached? I don't have a stem anymore?

GRAPE      (*Extends the vine.*) Just hang on to me. We'll abide together. I'll be sure you get fed.

(*RAISIN hesitates a moment, then comes over and takes GRAPE's hand.* )

THE END.

So that is one way of reminding us that we need to stay connected,  
so that we have the nutrients we need to bear fruit as Christ-followers.  
What are the ways you stay connected to Jesus?

And this Vine we are connected to is a worldwide network, running everywhere. Grape vines have a tendency to spread and grow – so do healthy churches. The book of Acts tells the story of an early church so filled with the Spirit it couldn't help but spread and grow everywhere. And it really began to spread when the persecutions go intense – Philip is on that road because the apostles were forced to leave Jerusalem. And because the Spirit sends Philip to that road, he encounters an official high up in the government of Ethiopia who followed Judaism. As Philip explains that the promises of God were fulfilled in Jesus, His heart is touched by the Spirit too and he wants to be baptized. And from that conversion, the Vine spread further afield into Ethiopia where there has been a church for two millennia.

That is how the love of Jesus spreads from heart to heart,  
like a vine running amok.  
If we're not telling others of the love we've encountered here, we're atrophying. You can be sure other branches of this Vine are not so hesitant to speak and pray in the power of the Spirit.

We don't even have to make plans to do it –  
we just need to be alive to opportunities like Philip was. We need to be open.

Philip had an anointed appointment. We can too – as we pray for them,  
as we are open to talking about our spiritual lives.

Sometimes the best way is not to talk, but to offer to pray –

how often do we encounter people who are sick, or tired, or sad, or scared...  
Simply saying, “Would you like a prayer?” and then praying, aloud or silently,  
can open up all kinds of things.

We are connected to a powerful vine that nothing can kill.

Don't cut yourself off from the juice! That's what happens to raisins...

*Amen.*

**John 21:1-19**

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he showed himself in this way. Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, you have no fish, have you?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off. When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them; and though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."