

Following from the imagery of Jesus as the vine, the Gospel presents us with a call to serene belonging to the Lord. It is a peaceful inhering to the Saviour, which perfectly mirrors the calm abiding of Jesus in his Father, which was the true place of his rest during his life on earth.

We can easily see how the words of Jesus are vital to us:

No-one can come to me unless the Father draw him

This taking-up of our place in Christ involves the Father's total acceptance as well. This is what any Israelite would be taught at his mother's knee, that he was a member of the Chosen People of God. Again and again the Israelites, as also the Jews they later became, have found themselves impaled on this concept, taking it to mean that they must have been inherently superior to others. Even amongst humans it becomes those who are loved not to triumph over those less favoured. What the first apostles discovered was expressed in the words:

I have come to realise that God does not have favourites

The people were "chosen" to perform a duty for God on behalf of all the peoples of the world. In their treatment of the Prophets, in their not listening to the Law, in their reception of the Son of God they showed their inability to respond well; and God did not change. The abiding of Jesus in the Father was sufficiently demonstrated by his obedient suffering of all that we gave him. God can perfectly display his holiness to us in dividing light from darkness, in dividing the sea, or in hanging upon a Cross. God is always God. What is different in these situations is the attitude of human beings, and human beings are always judged when they encounter the work of God. If we find our meaning and our life in him, we are chosen and loved, and God will make his home in us.

The surprising words with which our Gospel ends today must not be allowed to fall. Remember that Jesus speaks on the threshold of the Passion.

*I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you,
and your joy be complete*

Even at this awesome moment before his death, the heart of Jesus is held in joy, which he is about to communicate to the ones the Father has drawn to him. When he yields up the spirit half a day later, they will receive what they need to enter in to the joy of their Lord.