



## Just a Grape

Mum's on tea and coffee again this morning. That means I'll be sitting here in the porch for ages. It was her turn last week but Mrs. Bradley's in hospital so she's doing her turn today. She's on with Miss Letch so that means she'll have to stay and polish every cup till it shines. I should have got a good shine on this grape by then. Mrs. Reverend gave it to me. *It's only very little, and a bit grubby*, she said. *It's the last one on the stalk, but it'll be as sweet as all the others*. Mrs. Reverend Roberts is sweet really - not lollipop sweet - just nice and caring. I like it when she comes to take the service. She's fun and always talks to everybody in a way I can understand. Not like Mr. Evans. He uses words so long you can't remember the beginning by the time he's got to the end.

Mrs. Roberts was talking to us about grapes and grapevines this morning. She brought a whole bunch of grapes and when the service was over she handed them round for everyone to share. Of course, old Mr. Simpson got in first and took the biggest. I could see because I was sitting just behind him. He was sitting next to Miss Jenny Eldridge. She doesn't like him sitting so close and gets right to end of the pew. She's so fussy. She took the grape stalk in her fingers as though it was poisonous and whispered ever so politely, *No thank you. I don't eat unwashed fruit!* Then when they'd all grabbed the best, Mrs. Roberts picked the other grapes off and gave them out one by one. All except this little grubby one. She was just going to throw it in the bin with the stalk when she passed me and thought of giving it to me. I don't mind. I've been thinking about it while I've been sitting here polishing it. It looks even better than greedy Mr. Simpson's grape. I bet he had three biscuits with his coffee! Though from what Mum says, he would have preferred the grapes to have turned into wine. He says his red face is from the tablets he takes!

Mrs. Reverend was telling us about Jesus saying he was like a vine tree. No, it's not really a tree, more like a long creeping bush with lots of branches. Jesus said that everyone who follows his way is like one of the branches and we all have to stay stuck to him so we can grow and make lots of grapes which are all the good, kind things we do. That's why I haven't eaten this grape – yet. It doesn't seem right to eat a gift straight away. It's like a little ball of love I suppose. It may be small, and it was grubby, but I've cleaned it up so it's just as good as the bigger ones.

Mrs. Roberts talked about *cleaning up* the vine. She had lots to say about the grapes and the grapevine. She said if we're going to stay close to Jesus so we can have lots of love grapes, we branches have to be cleaned up. It sounds painful. She said we have to be pruned. Mr. Watson next door is always pruning things in his garden. He gets told off by Mrs. Watson. We hear her saying, *You'll kill it, cutting it like that!* He doesn't take any notice and the plants grow again and climb over into our garden. There's a rose he cut back which has climbed all the way up our apple tree – its beautiful when the roses come out. Mr. Watson's got a grapevine in his greenhouse. The grapes are mostly green. I went to see them with Dad. He thought he could grow grapes in his greenhouse and make wine from them. Mum said it would be a messy job and she didn't want the bottle exploding all over the kitchen, so we haven't got a grapevine. Wine must be powerful stuff if it explodes. I suppose it's a bit like when those racing car drivers win and shower themselves in champagne. Mum says it's a terrible waste.

Mrs. Roberts said grapevines have to be pruned and if Jesus is the vine and we are his branches, we have to be pruned too. Pruning is so that the vine grows better and has bigger and better grapes. So it's worth being tidied up. I won't let Mum hear me say that. She's always on about me being untidy.

I wonder if it hurts to be pruned. Does the vine say, *ouch*, when it's cut with the shears? The grapes all have to be crushed to get the wine out of them. That must hurt too. Like being pinched. Kim, in my class at school, is a pincher – at least she was until I did it back to her. Mrs. Roberts talked about that too. She said sometimes we have to have painful things happen to us, like the grape being pressed, so that the good comes out – that's the wine – to help other people. I like that. Even just this little grape of mine has the same sort of love juice in it. I was going to keep polishing it and take it home, but dinner's going to be late and I only had one biscuit. It's just a little grape. Here goes. I can think when I chew it all its juice is inside me, like Jesus' love helping me to be a branch. Oh dear, I've got that all muddled up, but I know what I mean.