

THE PRUNING SEASON

Text: John 15:1-2

In the text we just read, Jesus likens himself and his followers to a vineyard. He called himself the “true vine” or we would say root. He is the life source for all of the saved. He called his followers “branches” because of our connection and dependence on him. Just after he says that he is the true vine, he says “and my Father is the husbandman”. That’s not a term we use today; we would call him the farmer or the gardener. The husbandman owns the land on which he labors, it all belongs to him.

There is one expectation for everything that God has made and that is for it to be fruitful. The command for everything after it was created was “to be fruitful and multiply”. The first thing Jesus said after that he was the true vine and his Father was the husbandman is, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away”. One thing that we see multiple times in scripture is that when something is supposed to bring forth fruit and it doesn’t, the Lord is displeased. **Matthew 21:18-20** Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw *it*, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! *Jesus cursed the fig tree because it gave the appearance of having fruit but had none! So, he cursed it and it dried up.*

The parable of the barren fig tree:

Luke 13:6-9 He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. *This parable is about the barren condition of the nation of Israel why Jesus was on earth. God had planted them in the promised land and looked for them to bring forth fruit through their worship and obedience to him, but they continually turned aside to worship other gods. This led to them being taken away from off the land.* That’s what Jesus meant when he said, “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away”. He’s not talking about a saved individual losing their salvation, he’s referring to them losing their place and opportunity to be productive.

Some examples:

- **Adam and Eve** – God put them in the garden that he had planted in Eden. Their task was to dress and keep it as well as have dominion over creation. When they sinned, they were immediately removed from their place and told to leave.
- **Saul** – Saul was chosen by God to be the first king of Israel. God intended to establish Saul's kingdom to be perpetual, but he wouldn't obey God so he was removed from his place and David took it.
- **Eli** – Eli was both the High Priest and a judge over Israel but because he wouldn't restrain his sons from their abominations, his family lost their place in the priesthood and Samuel took over as spiritual leader in Israel.

He then said "and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit". He explained later on in this chapter how a Christian brings forth fruit - **John 15:4-5** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. *A Christian brings forth fruit by his/her connection to Jesus Christ.* The word abide means to dwell or live in. The Lord wants to be the very center of our lives, not be compartmentalized to a small portion or worse, no portion. If Christ is the center of our lives, then that means there is no area that is off limits to him. A vine has a root planted in the ground, the branches are above ground and there is a nutrient-rich blood flowing from the root to the branches called sap. In the springtime, the root pressure pushes sap up to the vine, waking it up, producing new growth, and bringing forth grapes. In the late fall, that sap flows back down to the root and the vine is barren through the winter. It's during the wintertime that the vinedresser(husbandman), goes out and looks at the vine and does what is called pruning to the branches.

Pruning is the process of cutting back most of the previous year's growth to control its size, shape, and energy, resulting in fewer but larger, high-quality grape clusters and promoting vine health by improving air circulation and sunlight penetration for the new seasons growth.

Why is it done:

- **Plant health:** Removes dead or diseased wood and opens up the canopy for better airflow and sunlight
- **Better fruit** – Prevents the vine from producing too many small, poor-quality grapes by concentrating energy
- **Manageability** – Keeps the vine compact and easier to manage

The Spiritual truth taught here:

Jesus said every branch that produced fruit, the Father would prune that branch so that it could bring forth more fruit. Our Christian lives have seasons just like trees in the field or vines in a vineyard. There's a **planting season** – where God plants you where he wants you, there's a **preparation season** – where you grow into your purpose, there's a **producing season** – where it seems like God is doing a lot through you and those seasons are wonderful, but then there's the **pruning season** – where there isn't much going on and it feels strange or sometimes painful because God isn't working through you. He's working in you! BEFORE GOD CAN DO GREATER WORKS THROUGH US, HE MUST DO A GREAT WORK IN US. This message is about the pruning season.

Christ is the root, we are the branches and the Holy Spirit is the sap that flows from Christ to us producing the fruit. Galatians teaches us that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. These attributes are produced through us by the Holy Spirit and not us of ourselves. But there are times when some of these attributes are not easily spotted in our lives. Is it because the Spirit of God has left us? Absolutley not! It's because when we flow in the Spirit for an extended amount of time, we begin to take what Christ is doing through for granted as though we are doing it ourselves. *Don't think that's true?* It was God's power behind Moses's ministry, yet he scolded the Israelites and said "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock"...as though he was the one making a river burst forth from a rock. When Jesus fed the five thousand men with five loaves and two small fishes, the Bible records this about the disciples that passed it out **Mark 6:52** For they considered not *the miracle* of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

The pruning season happens in winter so it will be a cold time in your Christian life. The pruning season is a dormant time so there won't be a lot going on in terms of new spiritual revelations or great works. The pruning season happens when the sap is returned to the roots so it's a time when you don't sense the Holy Spirit doing much in your life. The Father looks us over in the pruning season and cuts off the things that are keeping us from producing more and better fruit. He turns light on some area of our heart that most of the time we know nothing about and he wants to cut it out. Remember pruning is about three things:

- **Plant health** – removing dead or diseased wood so that the canopy is open to more sunlight and better airflow. There are things in all of us that need cut out so that we can be exposed to more of the light and that the wind of the Spirit might move through us more easily

- **Better fruit** – when the dead and diseased wood is cut off that means more energy goes to what is healthy producing better, high-quality fruit. The more carnality God cuts off us, the more dominant the spiritual man will be.
- **Manageability** – the vine will become overgrown and cumbersome if its not pruned. There is always a danger of us becoming too stiff and unworkable. The Lord wants us to be soft and pliable in his hands. Pruning keeps us flexible