

## PRUNING

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit... Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me ... I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I am them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing . . . You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. John 15*

*Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit. John 12:24*

These teachings of Jesus have always had a great deal of meaning for me because I have always been a grower and a planter as well as a pruner. I'm remembering, with a twinkle in my eye, of the times my daughters and I spent in our garden and in the flower beds around our home. I taught them how to prune, teaching them how to take off the dead blossoms, and cut the roses and the mums down in the Fall among other pruning activities in the spring and summer. They would worry that by doing that it would hurt the plant. As we worked together, I carefully explained that by taking off the dead part of the plant, it would put its energy into strengthening itself so it would continue to grow strong and produce even more flowers and fruit. We would prune carrots in the garden as they began to poke their heads out of the soil so that the ones we left would grow into big delicious vegetables. I'm remembering thinking as I worked how much this was like "tough love" that I had sometimes to do with these precious little girls who were entrusted to my care

This is dying in order to live! We just pruned the trees because Spring is coming. Just in time this year because the sap is flowing and buds are arriving. We're anticipating Easter and new life. So is there something to make a step toward letting go of, to let die in preparation for Easter? So that you might bud and bloom and bear much fruit? So that you might live? Sure there is stuff to let go. But how does one do that? Even the knowing, the awareness of need, is a part of God already at work in us. We can't prune ourselves. Letting go is more than we can do on our own. . . . Take a risk and be attentive to Divine help.

As you awaken to the voice deep within as to what should be pruned, risk acting. As you do, notice Jesus, the master gardener, has already come alongside with perceptive, loving eyes and pruning shears in hand so that you may live and bear much fruit.

--Br. Luke Ditewig

by God. Sometimes there was a need to prune the beginning of a bad habit for example. I wanted them to grow into strong young women and bear much fruit and flowers with their lives as God had intended.

And these verses promise me that God is pruning me. He asks me to abide with him so that I could bear much fruit if I stay close. Jesus is teaching us to die to ourselves so that we can bear much fruit. Dying, like the seed in the ground, means for me "letting go" of all the unnecessary things in my life. Like a plant being pruned, my letting go will bring more life and health and fruit. However, it is so hard to let go. I need to cut back all those things that distract me from what is really important in my life; things that take my attention away. The good news is that I don't need to do it by myself. God is already at work in me. This is far more than we can do by ourselves. And God is ready to give each one of us new life. As my friend Luke, writes, "Jesus, the master gardener, has already come alongside with perceptive, loving eyes and pruning shears in hand so that you may live and bear much fruit."

What compelling and peaceful words to reflect on during these weeks of spring and in the days of coronavirus. God is pruning us for new life!

I will come to you in the silence, I will lift you from all your fear, you will hear my voice, I claim you as my choice. Be still and know I am here.

Do not be afraid, I am with you. I have called you each by name. Come and follow me, I will bring you home. I love you and you are mine.

I am hope for all who are hopeless, I am eyes for all who long to see. In the shadows of the night, I will be your light. Come and rest in me.

Do not be afraid, I am with you. I have called you each by name. Come and follow me, I will bring you home. I love you and you are mine.

I am the Word that leads all to freedom, I am the peace the world cannot give. I will call your name, embracing all your pain, stand up, now walk and live!

Do not be afraid, I am with you. I have called you each by name. Come and follow me, I will bring you home. I love you and you are mine.

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