

- [Acts 8:26-40](#)
- [John 15:1-8](#)
- [Psalm 22:24-30](#)

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

God of community, Three in One,
You have made us in your image
to be fulfilled in relationship with one another.

Through our conflicts
we can be cut off

like dried up, withered branches
and find it difficult to reconnect again.

Jesus, abiding in us, lead us to recognize you within,
And seek you in those you have given us

To form a loving community of compassion and care.

Amen¹

Well, my friends.

Spring has finally arrived. Unlike the spring that sprang in Florida about 6 weeks ago- here we are enjoying the new greens of leaves on the trees, the daffodils in their cheerful yellows dot the flower beds and the winter birch sticks have

been replaced with tulips and joy filled hyacinths in the window boxes.

Green sprouts and New beginnings.

It's exciting to see what was dormant and comes back to life.

I also think "OH, should have already trimmed that back-whoops"

At the Moon Household, I am the one who brings home the green things.

Rob is the one who waters, prunes, and tends to the actual care of these green things.

In my garden, only things that can survive periodic care should be planted.

Succulents are probably my calling...

But miraculously, and with Rob's attention with watering, trimming and care, things come back in our wild garden space.

Despite my lack of attention.

I feel like there are those who care for gardens like those who tend to bonsai trees.

Minute care, water, conversation, and precision.

And then there are those say "that's pretty" and plant things like Kudzu, a vine that not only grows pervasively, once taken root, the vine is nearly impossible to remove.

Kudzu is expansive, flourishes, and at the same time that it flourishes, this vine chokes out everything that it grows upon.

Kudzu's leafy exterior hides everything beneath, extinguishing the light that is essential for growing.

Eclipsing all other life.

Not exactly beneficial for the larger ecosystem.

Regardless of if you grow vines, perennials, or annuals, we know that to grow certain elements are required: Time, Water, Light and the right quantities of these three.

While we might be in the agrarian season of Spring, we are in the liturgical season of Easter. While each day and every Sunday we celebrate the theology of Easter, during these 50 days after Easter Sunday we settle into scriptures of the early church, dwelling in the readings from the Acts of the Apostles that tell the story of an early church figuring out their way in this new experience of God's love. Within our Gospel readings we hear the story of Jesus counselling and preparing his disciples for this life of faith after his death.

These final weeks of the Easter season, we are firmly entrenched in the Gospel of John and Jesus farewell discourse. Last week, we heard the second to last "I am" statements with I am the Good Shepherd and today we hear

Jesus' seventh and final "I am statement" that "I am the vine, you are the branches"- familiar imagery.

From Fishing with the disciples to

Shepherding to

Getting dirty and growing vines together.

The imagery given to us is both daily life material for the disciples and also familiar from the Hebrew scripture.

Israel has been referred to over and over again through the prophets as the vine, vineyards, watch towers, bearing fruit.. (just wait until those summer parables come back into our Sunday mornings.)

Today, though, Today- Jesus is reminding this disciples that just like vines to grow fruit, there must be connection to the vine.

Care and intention must occur for flourishing and this is a relationship.

These words today from Jesus are not meant to invoke fear.

These words, like the entire farewell discourse, are to remind the people of God that even in the hardest of times (When Jesus would physically leave them)- that they were not going to be alone.

Comfort and consolation are found within these words stating that they would still be in connection with God despite the physical absence of Jesus.

Abide in me, I will Abide in you.

The word abide is used 10 times in this segment alone and 41 times in this gospel.

Dwell within God.

Be in relationship with God.

Like vines in the vineyard, be cared for, water, trimmed, and receive the light- and bear fruit.

Any good gardener will tell you that you have to prune things back to have new growth, to give direction to that new growth. To allow for the water, the sun and the development of good fruit.....

In Jesus' words, he says that the vine will have branches that are not bearing fruit and will be cut off and all branches will be pruned. His words are to remind that even in this pruning, you are still connected and part of the community. Life on the vine is not always easy but can always strive to be connected and connecting others.

Did you know that the world's oldest vine is over 250 years old?²

Planted for Queen Victoria, the vine is named Lancelot "Capability" Brown and resides on the grounds of Hampton Court. It came from just one cutting from a nearby estate in Essex and since then has grown to being 13' across at the base and the longest branch measuring in at 120' long. The average harvest of grapes is 600 lbs. A team of gardeners tend to the sheltering (a greenhouse that has been created and recreated to shelter the core) and pruning the new shoots after the flowering has occurred to ensure healthy growth.

Lancelot wanders and weaves its way across campus and the gardens.

From a lowly little cutting to this fixture, the fruit has been born because of the constant connection to the base of the vine and the care that is given on an ongoing basis.

God delights in our being created.

God desires for us to be in relationship with God and I think that while we may not begin as recognizable full grown plants, I do believe that as we begin, if we plant ourselves, we, too, will grow and flourish.

Today's Gospel are words of comfort invite us to re-connect with the vine-grower that God is. We are reminded that even as life changes, we too dwell in the heart of God.

In our reading from the Acts of the Apostles today we hear of Phillip jumping at the chance to speak about the good news to the Ethiopian Eunuch and in turn grafting this new branch into the household of God. Seizing the opportunity to use a simple puddle alongside the road to transform, water, and integrate this new child of God into a community, fully/completely.

Jesus speaks to the disciples today to give them affirmation that they, like he, are a part of the story, the household, the life and vineyard of the church. Regardless of if they are good at these things, have a green thumb at growing things or not, the disciples are connected and together, as a connected community, can weather suffering, fear, and the unknown.

On Jesus's last night, after supper, he went into the garden to pray. You will remember it was the garden of Gethsemane... or the "oil press"- where the olive vineyards bore fruit. For those who have visited that space where the garden is remembered you know there are today, vines in that garden....grafted from even those days.....

Grafting the faithful by story and by love into the longer story of God's people wandering, seeking and desiring to be known, to be loved, and to belong for who they are.

To those who have gone before us and to us today, the message is the same, come my beloveds, connect, be repaired, be restored, be loved and be beloved community.

This work in the vineyard is not always easy.
Forgiveness and loving each other is hard and not always easy work.

And yet.

Jesus says, Abide in Me
I will abide in you.

Let us abide, dwell, be with one another and behold the fruit that will come.

¹ <https://www.spiritualityofconflict.com/readings/309/fifth-sunday-of-easter>

² <https://www.hrp.org.uk/hampton-court-palace/whats-on/the-great-vine/#gs.7vivp7>