



The Gardener

When it comes to pruning there is a right way to do it and a wrong way. One independent review of my pruning technique leans heavily towards the wrong way of doing things. In my defense, it was a big tree. I figured big tree, big tool, a chainsaw. In the end the tree survived, as I did when my reviewer returned from work that day.

The opening words of John chapter 15 record the words of Jesus as he shares one of his last “I am” statements, giving us a glimpse of not only who he is but his Father in heaven.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful... I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing”. (John 15:1-2,5)

Much can be said about these words regarding the relationship between the Father (the gardener, or farmer), the vine (Jesus), and the branches (you and I as disciples of Christ). These relationships are foundational to understanding our place and purpose within the kingdom of God.

As I seek to know God better through the names given to him in scripture, I could not help but focus on the role of God as the gardener or more definitively translated “farmer”. A true gardener or vinedresser has the necessary skills to tend to a vine in a way that yields the most fruit possible. For me, to hear and think about God from this perspective draws me into understanding how much he cares for his people.

The illustration of the vine used in these verses from John has a long history and connection with the people of God. Throughout the Old Testament the vine and gardener illustrations depict God’s commitment and care for the people of Israel (at that time, the vine).

Isaiah writes the words of a song about the deliverance of Israel in chapter 27 that speak to the characteristics of his love and care for his people. *“Sing about a fruitful vineyard: I, the Lord, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it... In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit.” (Is 27:1,6)*

Under the new covenant (New Testament) Jesus becomes the life-giving vine that connects us to our Father in heaven. As the gardener of our lives, I am thankful that God in his grace and mercy “prunes” and cares for us in a caring and loving way. Unlike my ill-fated chainsaw approach to pruning, God has an incredible plan for our lives.

With great care and purpose, even before our branch began to grow on the vine God knew what was to come, he knows what kind of fruit will be produced and continually works to prune or shape the lives of his people today.

God’s word to us proves that he cares. John 3:16 says he cares (loves) us so much that he gave his one and only Son for us, Philippians 4:9 states that God will supply our every need. What an incredible loving and caring God we serve.

It is my hope and prayer that the fruit we produce through the vine (Christ), and the loving care of our Heavenly Father will inspire and bear witness to others the goodness of God.