

Sunday, April 28, 2024

Scripture Reading: John 15:1-8

Nothing is impossible. The word itself says "I'm possible!"

—Audrey Hepburn

I have a love/hate relationship with gardening. I love the *idea* of gardening, but I hate *doing* the gardening.

I enjoy walking through beautiful gardens like the ones you find in the great cities of the U.S. I have visited Butchart Gardens in Victoria, as well as some awesome gardens in Paris, London and Shanghai.

But there's a dark side to gardening I don't like to think about. Today's Bible reading reminds me that gardening is not all fun and games.

The reading is about vines and fruit. It opens with, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower" (v. 1). Ahhh. It's a nice image.

The reality, however, is that these eight verses are pretty grim. We could say "harsh." After the nice sentiment in verse 1, Jesus gets right to it: "He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit."

It gets worse. Even the fruitful branches get "pruned." Think about it. Two blades enclose some part of the branch and cut into it and snap it off.

It gets worse still: "Branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned" (v. 6). If a branch doesn't bear fruit, if it withers on the vine, it's removed and thrown into a smoldering fire.

And think of the plowing and digging of gardening. Think of the plucking, pulling, weeding, and all the work of planting, fertilizing and watering every day.

Yes, as I said, gardening is not all fun and games.

Jesus says that we are the branches. So, as the "branch" of this text, are we ready and willing to look at the dark-side message of this passage? The vinegrower has expectations. Are we willing to submit to the shears? Are we willing for some correction and rebukes? Some pruning? Will we make the most of the nutrients the VineGrower provides?

The Scottish divine, Andrew Murray, has a good perspective on the meaning of this text: "A machine can do work; only life can bear fruit. A law can compel work; only love can spontaneously bring forth fruit. Work implies effort and labor; the essential idea of fruit is that *it is the silent, natural, restful produce of our inner life*" (emphasis added).

Will we abide in Jesus?

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Lord Jesus, may I be willing to submit to the shears as necessary, so that my life will be laden with fruit that will bless others. Amen.

*Blessings,
Liz & Pastor Ben Mofe*



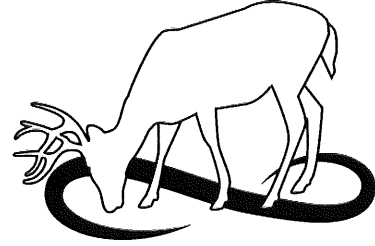
Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Luke 10-13
- Monday:** Judges 13-15
- Tuesday:** Judges 16-18
- Wednesday:** Judges 19-21
- Thursday:** Ruth 1-4
- Friday:** 1 Samuel 1-3
- Saturday:** Psalms 40-42

Verse to Remember

*“As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.”*

—Psalm 42:1



UNSCRAMBLE THE PROVERB!

Directions: Write in the missing word indicated by the ellipsis (...) in the blank provided. Unscramble the words you wrote in the blanks, to reveal another proverb.

When the going gets tough, the tough ... going. _____

People who live in glass houses should ... throw stones. _____

If the cap fits, ... it. _____

When you begin a journey of revenge,
start by digging two graves:
one for your enemy, and one for _____

One person pretends to be ..., yet has nothing;
another pretends to be poor,
yet has great wealth. _____

Good things come ... those who wait. _____

When in Rome, ... as the Romans do. _____

Do not wear ... your welcome. _____

Write the unscrambled proverb here:

MISSING LETTERS

The theme of this puzzle is “young animals.” Here are 14 young animal names without the consonants. Complete each word and cross off each consonant when you use it. (The adult version is in parentheses.)

B C C C C C D D F F G G G G H
J K K K L L L L L L L L N N N N
P P P P S T T T T T T T T W W
Y Y Y Y

1. _ U _ _ (BEAR)
2. _ O _ _ I _ _ _ (GOOSE)
3. _ I _ _ (GOAT)
4. _ A _ _ (DOE)
5. O _ _ E _ _ (OWL)
6. _ O E _ _ (KANGAROO)
7. _ I _ _ E _ _ (CAT)
8. _ O _ _ _ (HORSE)
9. _ A _ _ O _ E _ (FROG)
10. _ _ _ I _ _ _ (HEN)
11. _ U _ _ _ _ (DOG)
12. _ _ _ _ _ E _ _ (SWAN)
13. E A _ _ _ E _ _ (EAGLE)
14. _ I _ _ _ _ (MARE)

SOLUTION: Do not wear yourself out to get rich (Proverbs 23:4, NRSV).

- SOLUTION TO MISSING LETTERS:**
1. cub
 2. gosling
 3. kid
 4. fawn
 5. owlet
 6. joey
 7. kitten
 8. colt
 9. tadpole
 10. chick
 11. puppy
 12. cygnet
 13. eaglet
 14. filly

