

2020 SUMMER DEVOTIONAL

First Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, NC
fpcgreensboro.org

Week two



I am the vine

WEEK TWO
DAY ONE

Scripture & reflection

John 15:
1-11

I admit, I haven't had a biology class since my senior year of high school, and I found the botany part very boring. But since then, I have experimented with some simple gardening on my deck and have grown rather fond of some wild blackberries in my backyard. It is amazing to see how quickly a vine can grow under the right conditions—how seemingly overnight, a few scraggly leaves can turn into a whole lot more leaves and a handful of fruit. The fruit will sneak up on you if you aren't paying attention.

I wonder if that is how this whole "I am the vine, and you are the branches" thing goes. As I reflect, it seems like the places in my life that were most fruitful always managed to sneak up on me. I would have never had the foresight to plan those things myself.

It's a good thing that we are not the vine-growers. We do not decide where things get planted, or what gets pruned, or when the fruit is harvested. God is in control of all of those things, and only God gets to be the master gardener.

Instead, our job is to abide in Christ and allow him to abide in us, and to love one another as Christ has loved us. As we abide in Christ and love one another, we bear fruit. I find it freeing to know that the big picture is not up to me. I don't have to have the answer to every problem, and the weight of the world doesn't fall on my shoulders.

It is such a joyful thing to walk by a berry bush, or any other fruit plant, and to suddenly discover plentiful sweet fruit where there previously was none. I hope that we can remember that we are not the gardeners here, we are just branches. And I hope that we will be pleasantly surprised by the fruit that grows out of our lives when we focus on abiding in Christ.

Rev. Keith Dove, Sid & Cathy Batts Pastoral Resident



“Napa Landmark” by FPC member Doug Key

John 21:12 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.”

Take in the painting, slowly moving your eyes over the image. Invite the Holy Spirit to be present with you in this exercise of visual devotion.

What do you notice when you look at the painting? What first stands out to you?

How do the colors and shapes in the painting make you feel? Does your eye gravitate towards a particular shape or color?

Read today’s scripture verse. Do you experience any resonances between the scripture and the image?

Pause. Breathe. Take in the image once more. Close your devotion time with a prayer, offering to God the prayers of thanksgiving and intercession that are on your heart this day.

WEEK TWO
DAY TWO

Visio divina

WEEK TWO
DAY ONE

Spiritual practice

Gardening & sharing the bounty

For this year's summer devotional, each week will include an invitation to a spiritual practice. We know that our faith deepens and broadens when we engage embodied practices that form us as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. We invite you this week into the practice of gardening and sharing the bounty.

In this week's scripture passage, Jesus refers to himself as a vine, and to God as the vine-grower. This image reminds us that just as a garden requires careful tending – watering, pruning, plucking – so do our spiritual lives require careful tending, as we learn to live as those who abide in the life of God, the vine-grower.

Do you have a garden? Are you caring for flowers in your yard? If you are, spend some time in the coming days thinking and praying about what that experience can show you about God and about being a faithful disciple of Jesus.

If you aren't tending to a garden right now, consider growing something this summer. Find some seeds from the store or a friend and grow something in a pot. And when you end up with flowers or veggies or herbs, share the bounty with your neighbors, remembering that Christ the vine causes us to bear fruit to share with the world.

Prayer

God of creation, you bless the earth with sunshine and water the soil with your refreshing rain. You make gardens to grow, producing gifts from the earth that nourish us in body and soul. Help us to tend to the soil of our own hearts and bodies, that we might grow in grace and share the bounty with others; through Jesus Christ, the true vine; Amen.