

A Scion of Life

“Stay connected.”

John 15:1-8

Fourth in the series: Stuck in the Mud (growing faith in God's garden)

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Relationships

If you're a graduating senior you might not have gardening on your mind this year. You have other things to think about.

You've got proms and parties, open houses and commencements, closure with friends you've had since kindergarten, college orientation and summer jobs, the senior trip, and older adults who keep asking you what you're going to do with the rest of your life way too many times. And also times that are down times when you can't sleep and you wonder for yourself, "What am I going to do with the rest of my life?"

When you've got all that on your mind, a garden might be the last thing you'd want to think about. Am I right?

Far be it from me to want to talk about something that isn't on your mind. The last thing I want to do is have our graduates coaxed to a worship service so we can honor them, only to have them say, "What did I tell you? I went to church and they talked about the last thing I wanted to think about.

So this short message isn't really about gardening; even though I'm going to tell a story about a garden.

Two years ago we decided to grow vegetables. We cleared out a patch of ground and cared for the soil with a lot of attention and hard work so it would be good for the growing. We planted the vegetables and kept them watered and fed with the best of organic nutrients worked into the soil again and again all summer long.

We watched the garden grow: the cucumbers spread out on the ground and blossomed. The basil and parsley grew like bushes. The green peppers were robust. And the tomatoes grew up their wooden stakes and began to bear loads of big green fruit. Some of it was beginning to redden for the harvest.

Then it happened. A disaster. Feet were caught in a tangle of clothes and fencing: there was a fall and a crash and like dominoes one tomato plant after another went tumbling to the earth as the stakes went *snap, snap, snap*.

The Vine and the Branches

You know and I know that this threatened the end of the principle crop of our garden. Any branch snapped off the vine would be deprived of the precious nutrients sent up its vine. Shut off from food and water, the leaves would soon wilt, the branches would go limp, and the fruit would never grow from their size of that moment. It looked like all we could claim from all that hard work would be a plate full of...

...fried green tomatoes.

Everybody knew that's the kind of thing Jesus was talking about when he said, "I am the vine, you are the branches."

He was talking about connection and how important it is to stay connected to him.

He's comparing you to a branch that is capable of doing some amazing things in life if you only have the right source of life. In the fruit growing business, branches that can bear desirable fruit are grafted onto a different specialized tree trunk capable of providing the branch with everything it needs to grow well and produce. The trunk is called the *rootstock*. The branch is called the *scion*.

Jesus is saying that when we are connected to him, he will be our rootstock who will be our motivation and inspiration. He'll send the life of God's spirit through our veins so that we can produce such incredible fruits of God's love that we'll be able to change the course of history. We'll be his scions of life.

"I am the true vine...you are the branches," he says...

...as long as you stay connected.

Hopes and dreams and possibilities are packed into this time of year when trees blossom with the promise of fruit and commencement ceremonies declare the completion of their work. My prayer for graduates along with the rest of us is this: that you stay connected to Jesus, the vine. Stay connected to bear the fruit of his love.

Secure on the Vine

I walked through our damaged garden and took the tomato plants in my hands. I raised them up and reset the stakes: one-after-another. Only a few of the tomatoes had broken from the branches. I retied the branches for new support. Some of the branches were broken, but still attached. So I thought, "Why not try?" Pressing them to the vine I wrapped them gently but firmly with cotton bands. And I thought: "time will tell."

And it did tell. The attachment held. The plants healed and the life of the vine flowed through the branches as tomatoes continued to grow and redden and mature.

Through these years ahead: may you know that you are attached to Jesus. May his life ever-flow through your veins. No matter what you end up doing, may you bear the fruit of his love.

And if ever there is trouble and you find you have fallen – may you attach yourself to the vine: healed and strengthened once again.

May you stay connected to Jesus. May you be a scion for life.