

6/24/2018

"How Does Your Garden Grow?"

Scripture: **Isaiah 58.11, John 15:4-5, Luke 22: 39-44**

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Presenter: Marian Harvey

"The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail." **Isaiah 58.11**

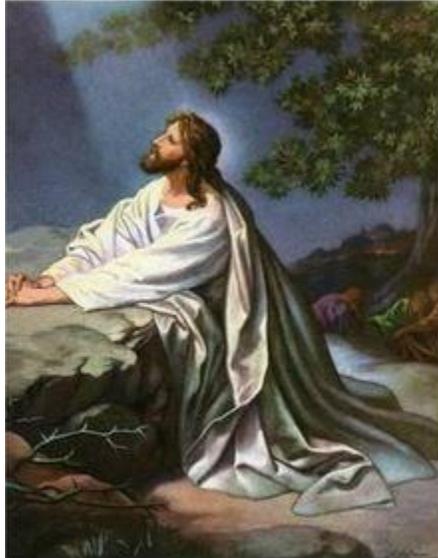
"Remain in me as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing." **John 15:4-5**



I love to garden. I call it my HAPPY PLACE. We all have one, don't we? A HAPPY PLACE. Where is yours? The beach? The mountains? Cruising in your boat at sunset on the Elk River? Or, on your sofa watching the latest installment of the series *Westworld* or a movie such as *The Perfect Wedding* on Hallmark Channel?

My family must know that being outside in my garden is where I feel the happiest, because these are some of the gifts I got for Mother's Day (hat, gloves, new trowel and potted plant).

Ah, yes, being outside... hearing the birds singing like the angels, smelling the freshness of the new day, feeling the warmth of the sun or the gentle breeze pass by. Ahhhh... deep breathe ... Ahhh...



It's like this painting of a Garden that you see each week of our brother Jesus in HIS happy place, the Garden of Gethsemane. Look at him. He's feeling the gentle breeze, the coolness of the rock, the warmth of that streaming, heavenly light on his face. He's feeling like life is just perfect. He's probably hearing the angels sing ...

Just like I feel **all the time** in MY garden ... Happy. Right????? ... BOLOGNIE!!!! That is what I used to think when I sat where you are sitting, and I gazed at this painting Sunday after Sunday.

But, hopefully today, I can show you that this is so far from the reality of what goes on in my garden, and I believe far from what we think is going on with Jesus in this picture.

Let me explain...

To give a little background, I was raised on a working dairy farm and having a garden was not just for the pretty flowers or the therapeutic effects (although, I'm thinking my mother, who had 10 children, may have used our large garden as her get-away- from-it-all therapy session) ... just sayin' ...

Our garden was much of the daily food on our table and future food in our freezer and pantry for our meals during the winter months. So, needless to say, gardening was a lot of work, but it was work that had to be done.

My dad passed down many tidbits of wisdom about growing plants; wisdom that I carry with me each gardening season, like:

"Always take care of your tools and your tools will be there when you need them."

And, *"rotate your plants every year or so 'cause this helps the soil retain its nutrients."*

AND, *"YES ... ALWAYS CALL IT SOIL! Never call it DIRT. Dirt is what gets sucked up in the vacuum cleaner. Soil is a sustainer of life ... a living thing."*

Soil is a living thing that gets fed by decay and debris and is aerated by worms. Worms are like little, long, wiggly factories that eat the bad things in the soil and poop out rich, fertile nutrients. (Can I say poop in church?)

So, let me tell you what actually goes on in my garden. First, preparing the garden each season is a process. I clear the debris left from the fall and winter and till the compost and manure into the soil to help feed it and the worms. When the soil is warm enough, I plant my seeds and seedlings, being very gentle with each one, as I want them to grow strong and flourish.

Then, each day, I go to my garden in the morning to weed and feed and to see how things are producing, waiting and watching for the first veggies to be ripe enough to harvest.

Well, at least that is what my hands and eyes are doing. But, INSIDE my head and heart, well, there is a lot more going on.

I go to my garden to be away from the hubbub of the world. I bend down as I work the soil, and I start talking to my God. Sure, I share with Him my happy, thankful feelings. But, I also share with Him my frustrations with family or circumstances, most of which are beyond my control. I tell him my woes, my pain. I pour out all the decay and debris that is weighing me down, as I tend my plants. Sometimes, I even get in a good cry. And, He listens. And, I feel better.

Just the other morning as I was in my garden, I was reminded of a conversation I had a few years ago with my dear friend, Marlene White. She also loved to garden and would come work side by side with me from time to time. On one particular morning, as we are pulling weeds and sharing stories about our lives and our children, she said she likes to give her weeds the NAMES of people or circumstances she dislikes, as she pulls them and tosses them away! How fun and therapeutic! I can still hear her laughing ...

I feel so close to God in nature. I'm sure many of you do. It's not surprising. I mean, God started by giving us a garden called Eden. And, when I visited the Mount of Olives on a recent trip to Israel, which is where the Garden of Gethsemane is located, I learned that Jesus was very fond of this place. He had family and friends who lived near there. There is historical evidence that, while growing up, this garden is where he often visited with his grandmother, Anna, who was Mary's mom. We know he prayed here often, because in Luke 22: 39-44 it says:

*39 Jesus went out **as usual** to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. 40 On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." 41 He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, 42 "Father, if you are willing, --- take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." 43 An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. 44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.*

In Matthew 26:38 Jesus says "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death."

So, when you look at this picture, try to feel the anguish, pain, the trepidation going through his thoughts of what was about to come. Yet, he said, "Not MY will but YOUR will be done."

"Not MY will but YOUR will be done."

What if we faced our life like that? What if we were so connected - so aware of our connection to God - that we shared absolutely everything with Him; our pain, our pleasure, our joys, our sorrows? He knows it all anyway. And, what if every day, no matter if we are feeling overwhelmed with stress or bubbling over with joy, we asked God to be with us, stay with us, celebrate with us, help us through, and make us stronger ... give us peace.

When Todd and I went to Hawaii last year, I had the most awesome experience with a Banyan Tree. It grows right where it is planted. Well, let me show you ...

<http://milesamminute.com/video/banyan>

God is my source of life and growth. He is the vine to which I seek to stay attached. He has invested in my transformation during my life journey.

He is my soil; the sustainer of my life. He wants me to feed him with all my pains, my hurts, my frustrations. He wants me to share all my joys and praises.

Because, through this connection to his strong vine that pushes up through that soil, that soil that has all the debris of my life, he, then, anchors me ... and I am strong. As the call to worship passage from Isaiah says ...

*"he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail." **Isaiah 58.11***

I pray each day for the fruits of his spirit to increasingly grow in me; The fruit of Love... of Joy...of Peace...of Forbearance... the Fruit of Kindness ... of Goodness ... of Faithfulness ... of Gentleness ... and of Self-Control.

What about you? How is your connection to our Father in heaven? Are you willing to grow where God plants you? Are you feeding his soil with all your life debris? He

asks you to stay attached to him, and he will be right there with you. Do this, and he promises you will bear much fruit!

Are you ready to watch the fruits of His spirit increasingly flourish in your life?

Think about it ... How Does YOUR Garden Grow?