

McCabe United Methodist Church

Motherhood and Pruners!
John 15:1-8: May 11, 2014
Pastor Rick Fossum

Did you hear about the mom who went to see her doctor? She didn't know what was wrong, but she was always feeling tired and run down.

"Mmm," said the doctor, "help me to understand. **You say you spend 50% of your energy on your job; another 50% of your energy on your husband; and another 50% of your energy on your kids. I think I see your problem!**"

Happy Mother's Day! I'm going to do a public service announcement today. You can thank me later. It might be too late for some of you, but just in case you haven't bought a Mother's Day gift yet, I'm going to suggest a few things **NOT TO BUY** for Mother's Day.

You might want to grab a paper and pencil. This is my list of *Things Not to Buy for Mother's Day*:

THINGS NOT TO BUY FOR MOTHER'S DAY

- Never buy anything that plugs in. This is also good advice for birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas, etc.
- Never buy anything that involves sizes . . . do I need to say more?
- Avoid all things that are useful. A new cookie pan or a meat temperature gauge is not going to win you any brownie points.
- Don't buy jewelry. The jewelry your wife wants, you can't afford. And the jewelry you can afford, she doesn't want.
- Don't buy her any of that frilly underwear. Your idea of the kind of underwear your wife should wear and her idea are probably light years apart.
- Lastly, don't spend too much. **"How do you think we're to going pay for that?"** she'll ask. But, don't spend too little, either. She won't say anything, but she'll be thinking, **"cheapskate!"**

Good luck. I hope you find the perfect gift at a reasonable price . . . and, of course, if you do, let the rest of us know about it!

A few years ago, the *New York Times* surveyed their women readers. They were asked to name the greatest person they had ever known. A clear majority of the women said, **"the greatest person I have ever known is my mother."**

When Thomas A. Edison, famous inventor, was a young boy his school teacher sent him home with a note addressed to his mother. The note said, **“Dear Mrs. Edison, your child is dumb. I'm sorry, but we can't do anything for him.”**

Mrs. Edison wrote back, **“you don't understand my boy like I do. I'll teach him myself and you'll see.”** And she did and the rest is history.

There's something special about motherhood. Mothers love their children without conditions, no matter what. Mothers can see the potential of their children where others may miss it. And mothers are always willing to give and to give and to give some more.

It's in this spirit that I want to celebrate motherhood.

Our passage today from John is about pruning. I choose this passage because I think mothers are good at pruning. In fact, pruning is one of a mother's main jobs. In our reading from John, Jesus compares himself to a vine. **“I am the Vine,”** he said **“and you (meaning all of us) are the branches.”**

As branches, we need pruning from time to time to help us grow into the persons we were created to be. Jesus put it this way, **“every branch that does not bear fruit must be pruned or removed.”**

Fruit, for Jesus, meant being faithful to God. It meant taking the faith we have and using it to make a difference in the world around us.

The Apostle Paul talked about bearing fruit in the book Galatians. He used words like love, peace, patience, kindness and generosity to describe fruit-bearing people.

A family moved into a house that had a grape vine growing in their back yard. They didn't know anything about grape vines or how to take care of them. They found a local expert and asked him. He said they needed to prune the vine and they did. By the time they finished, there wasn't much vine left. They thought they had killed it. But by the fall, the vine had grown back and it was full of delicious grapes.

This is pruning. Over time the years, many of us may pick up bad habits or bad attitudes or bad behaviors. We get into unhealthy ruts and routines. We do things or don't do things that act to separate us from God, from our spouses, from each other. These are the things that need to be pruned away.

For some, pruning is a painful experience. It means letting go of those sins and habits, behaviors and attitudes that are harming them and hurting them and keeping them from bearing fruit.

For others, pruning is less drastic, but just as important if they want to be more productive and more fruitful.

Mother's are good at pruning sons and daughters and even husbands. Have you ever heard your mother tell you or maybe you've said these words yourself, **"If I hear you talk like that again, I'm going to ground you forever!"** This is a form of pruning, isn't it?

Or, maybe you've heard this one, **"OK Jimmy, share your toys, or else!"** Or, **"play nice with your little sister."** Or, **"don't talk with your mouth full."** Or, **"go sit in the corner until your sorry."**

I could go on. All of these little bits of wisdom are meant to prune away the unfruitful parts of us and encourage the good parts to grow and bear fruit. Mothers have a way of wanting us to be better . . . and so we get pruned.

As they get older, mothers do less pruning and Jesus, among others, takes over the pruning business. Through prayer, through reading the Bible, through church and Sunday School, we're all exposed to the pruning shears of Jesus Christ. The old, unproductive parts of us . . . those parts that aren't bearing fruit ... are pruned.

Al and Charlie opened a butcher shop together. The butcher shop flourished and the two men became fairly wealthy. One day, a traveling evangelist came to town and persuaded Al to receive Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

The evangelist tried to persuade Charlie as well, but Charlie kept saying **"no."**

Al didn't understand. **"Charlie,"** he said, **"why don't you listen to the man and accept Jesus as your Savior?"**

"Listen," Charlie said, **"If I get religion, too, who's going to weigh the meat?"**

It's called pruning. It's removing all the misguided and unproductive and unfruitful parts of ourselves which will enable us to be better than we are.

What needs to be pruned in your life? What part of your life is keeping you from having a better relationship with Jesus Christ? With your

spouse? With your children? What part of your attitude isn't reflecting the love of Christ? What part of you is preventing you from reaching your potential?

Jesus said, **"I am the true vine, and God is the Vine Grower."** As the Vine Grower, God prunes every branch, making every branch more fruitful.

A plane was flying over the ocean. Suddenly, the pilot made this startling announcement. **"Folks, we have a problem and we can't seem to correct it. I don't think we're going to make it. I'm afraid we're going to crash. I suggest you take this little bit of time that you have left and get your life ready."**

What would you do?

A well-dressed woman on the plane took off her diamond necklace and the matching diamond ring from her finger. She took the cash out of her purse and gave it all away. And then, she prayed.

In spite of the impending doom, the people on the plane were glad to have the time. For them, it was pruning time. They had time to fix their lives before it was too late.

Since this is my story, I'm going to say that the plane made it. There wasn't a crash. The people arrived at their destination without any harm or injury.

And the woman? The woman who made the changes in her life . . . the one who was pruned? She stayed pruned. She stayed ready to meet her Maker.

Pruning . . . it's about making ourselves better. And after all, isn't this what mothers have always wanted for their sons and daughters?