

Mark 14:26-31, 66-72

26 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

27 "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written:

"I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.

28 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

29 Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."

30 "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."

31 But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."

And all the others said the same.

66 While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by.

67 When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him.

"You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said.

68 But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway.

69 When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them."

70 Again he denied it.

After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean."

71 He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about."

72 Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends, I was glad when they said unto me let us go into the house of the Lord. King David said he was glad to go into the house of the Lord because it was in the Lord's house that they could pray and praise. I am glad to come into the house of the Lord because this is the place in which we should find peace. Peace, praise and pray words, which belong together and belong with the people of God when they come together.

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
 When sorrows like sea billows roll;
 Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
 It is well, it is well, with my soul.

It is well, with my soul,
 It is well, with my soul,
 It is well, it is well, with my soul.¹

This is Palm Sunday, this is the day we set aside in the Christian calendar to celebrate Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. This is the beginning of Holy Week. Yet the editors of the International Sunday School Lessons have not given us a Palm Sunday passage but rather a Holy Thursday passage. For the events we have just read responsively occurred on Thursday.

As I pondered why and what it was we were to learn I looked back over the lessons for the month of March. On first Sunday we read the story of the young boy filled with an evil spirit and his father's request to heal him. The title for the lesson was **A Vibrant Faith** and I challenged you to meet me at **High Mountain Drive and Deep Valley Road**. I was attempting to get you to examine your faith and seek ways to strengthen it. I was trying to tell you that our lives will have some high mountains and some deep valleys, but through it all we are to keep our faith in God.

On second Sunday we considered the story of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus to find out what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him to sell everything and give it to the poor. The title of that lesson was **An Authentic Faith** and I challenged you with the sermon title of **Fan or Follower**. I wanted you to understand that God does not call us to

¹ Lyrics from [eLyrics.net](http://www.elyrics.net)

be fans He calls us to be followers. And sometimes in order to follow Jesus we have to give up some stuff. I trust you are beginning to see a pattern these lessons have been about faith. The lesson for this week is about Peter and his denial of Jesus and the title is **A Struggling Faith**. I want to use as my theme

“Jesus is Pruning Us to Bear More Fruit”

SHALL WE PRAY!

God of heaven and earth we thank you for the challenges of the International Sunday School lessons for without them we might be tempted to study and preach our favorite scriptures and not move more deeply into your Word. Thank you for allowing us to be in your house to hear your Word in order that your Word might transform us. Thank you for the challenges you have placed before us for we know that you will not bring us to what you will not bring us through. Abba, I ask that you give me what is needed for this preaching moment. It is in you that I put my trust, please spare me confusion, and grant a discerning spirit. In the matchless name of Jesus we pray. Amen and Amen.

“Jesus is Pruning Us to Bear More Fruit”

The first houseplant that I owned was English Ivy. It came in a little clay pot with a saucer and I took excellent care of it. I purchased a gauge that I placed in the soil to tell me when to water it. I bought some leaf shine and I carefully cleaned each leaf. When it got infected I took qtips and applied the medicine just as directed and nursed my plant back to health. But with all my tender care and spoke words of encouragement to grow, my English Ivy began to die. I cut off shoots and placed them in water so they could take root and be planted in another pot. And still my English Ivy was turning yellow and dying. Then one day I took it out of its saucer and noticed that the roots were poking out of the bottom! My English Ivy had outgrown its pot and needed to have the roots pruned. It could no longer get the nutrients it needed from the soil because it had become a clump of roots and taken on the shape of the pot.

I wonder if some of us are root bound. We have become so set in our ways that our personalities have taken on the shape of the containers we hang out in. We are turning colors, and we are not growing and we are dying. Maybe we need some root pruning.

Pruning roots is a normal part of helping your houseplants grow. You just have to be careful whenever handling the root structure of any plant, and be sure to give plenty of water and fertilizer, if recommended in the plant instructions, after you do root pruning on any of your plants.²

P

- **Prepare the plant**
- Cut the plant back so you can work safely. Hybrid teas and shrubs should be cut down to approximately waist height.

R

- **Remove all broken, dead, dying or diseased wood**
- Any branches that look dry, shriveled or black should be removed as they will no longer produce new growth. Healthy canes are brown or green and firm.
- Also, remove canes that are crossing and rubbing, which can create weak spots.

U

- **Understand the plant**
- **It's important to understand what type of rose bush you are pruning.**
- Determine what you want the bush to look like after it grows out.
- Shape the plant to meet your needs.
- Make your final cuts at a 45-degree angle and about 1/4 inch above outward facing buds eyes.

N

- **Nothing left behind**
- **Clean up all cuttings, dead leaves and other debris from around the plant. Do not compost, as this could potentially spread pathogens.**
- Leave a clean area free of material to minimize the growth of diseases.

² <http://www.gardeningknowhow.com/houseplants/hpgen/prune-roots.htm>

E

- **Enjoy your roses**
- Enjoy the roses in your garden or cut roses and bring them inside.
- To cut roses, cut the stem right above the first five-leaflet leaf under the flower. Immediately place the cut stem into a clean bucket of lukewarm water.³

Rose bushes and apple trees have the same directions for pruning and the same desired outcome: more roses on the rose bush and more apples on the apple tree.

When pruning is done properly you get a healthier, plant, bush or tree and when it is healthier it looks better, it produces more, and it smells better.

Peter needed some pruning. He had stopped listening to Jesus and seeking to discern what Jesus was saying instead Peter was telling Jesus how it was going to happen.

Peter needed some pruning. Although he knew who Jesus was. Had sat at the feet of Jesus. Had been present for many of the miracles he still was able to lie when backed into a wall.

Peter needed some pruning. After denying Jesus he also abandoned him.

I think it is safe to say that we have each had our Peter like moments:

we have tried to prove we were better than those around us
we have opened our mouths before engaging our brains,
we have made promises that we did not keep

we have failed to speak the truth because we were afraid
we have been backed into a corner and lied
we have been ashamed

But here is the good news of the gospel. Jesus is in the pruning business!

Pruning takes a variety of forms
takes a job away, ends a relationship, breaks your heart

Pruning is not a one-time event
Prune regularly for maximum health, growth, and development

³ http://www.heirloomroses.com/info/care/how-to/prune/?utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_term=pruning%20rose%20bushes&utm_content=%21acq%21v2%2141008571977-7612131666-2422937856&utm_campaign=General&utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=General&utm_term=pruning%20rose%20bushes&utm_content=Rose%20Pruning

Pruning not only helps you but those around you

When I turned to scripture to look for the passage on bearing good fruit I was surprised by what else was there. I will read it first from the NIV.

¹⁵ “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’⁴

“Jesus is Pruning Us to Bear More Fruit”

When Jesus had finished pruning Peter, Peter became a new creation. He was able to preach the gospel and thousands came to know the Lord because of him.

¹⁸ “Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.

¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland.

“Jesus is Pruning Us to Bear More Fruit”

⁴ <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/Matthew+7:12>

Addendum to the Sermon

Monday of Holy Week: According to Matthew 21, Mark 11, and Luke 19, Jesus returns to Jerusalem today and, seeing shameful practices in the Temple area, he cleanses the Temple.

Tuesday of Holy Week: According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus again returns to Jerusalem where he is confronted by the Temple leadership for what he did the day before.

Wednesday of Holy Week: Traditionally this day was called "Spy Wednesday" because it was on this Wednesday before the crucifixion that Judas conspired to hand Jesus over. For this he was paid 30 pieces of silver (cf Mt. 26:14). Jesus likely spent the day in Bethany. In the evening, Mary of Bethany anoints Jesus with costly perfumed oil. Judas objects but Jesus rebukes him and says Mary has anointed him for his burial! (cf Mt 26:6). The wicked are besetting Jesus and plotting against him. Are you praying?

Holy Thursday: This marks the beginning of the sacred Triduum, or "three days." Earlier this day Jesus had given instructions to the disciples on how to prepare for this most holy meal, which will be his last supper. Through the day they make these preparations (cf Mt 26:17). In the the Lord's Supper conducted at our parishes, we remember and make present that Last Supper which Jesus shared with his disciples. We are in the upper room with Jesus and the Apostles and do what they did. Through the ritual of washing the feet (Jn 13:1) of 12 parishioners, we unite in service to one another.

Good Friday: All through the night Jesus has been locked in the dungeon of the high priest's house. Early this morning he was brought before Pilate who transferred his case to Herod. Herod sent him back to Pilate who, sometime in the mid-morning, bowed to the pressure of the Temple leadership and the crowds, and condemned Jesus to a horrible death by crucifixion.

In the late morning Jesus was taken by the soldiers through the city and up the hillside of Golgotha. By noon he is nailed to the cross where he hangs in agony for some three hours. He dies around three in the afternoon. He is taken down from the cross and placed in the tomb hastily before sundown. Today is a day of prayer, fasting and abstinence. Whenever possible, Christians are urged to keep today free of work, of social engagements, of entertainment, and to devote themselves to communal prayer and worship.⁵

⁵ <http://www.newsmax.com/US/Jesus-Holy-Week-Easter-day-by-day-guide/2015/03/30/id/635369/#ixzz43P8v4XQv>