

July 23, 2024

# Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

## "I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES"

By Elisabeth Beall

### An Excerpt from Today's Gospel

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.  
He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit,  
and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit.  
You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you."*

**JOHN 15:1-4**

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### Reflection

There are two kinds of people when it comes to gardening: the person who celebrates a "volunteer" tomato plant that has cropped up unexpectedly ... and the person who uproots it, because it didn't belong there in the first place.

I've always taken a "more the merrier" approach in the garden (which is how, one year, we ended up with 14 cucumber and nearly 30 tomato plants).

But the more time I've spent in the garden, the more clearly I see that allowing the plants to run rampant doesn't do anybody any favors. Planting too many seedlings doesn't give any of them the space they need to grow, and the ability to absorb the nutrients they need. If a mature plant grows too tall or spreads too wide, it's at greater risk of being damaged – especially when the Santa Ana winds roar through our neighborhood.

Judicious pruning keeps the plants healthy. Growth is good – but it needs to be guided.

That's easy for a gardener to say, though – the gardener isn't the one getting a branch lopped off! I am not nearly so easy-going when I am the one being pruned and shaped and molded. It's not always a pleasure to accept constructive criticism from someone who loves me – how much tougher it is to break negative habits, put others' needs before my own, and open my heart to God's desire for my life!

But that pruning is vital. Without it, how could I possibly become the person God created me to be?

I take comfort in the reminders in today's Gospel that each of us is a branch of God's vine – that God has nurtured us, and looked after us, and yes, pruned us. "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples" (John 15:8).

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Gardeners Cutting Branches and Twigs of Trees



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## For Pondering

- Recall a time when you felt God was “pruning” your branch. What was your response in that moment? Did your response change over time?
  - How do you strive to become more fruitful in God’s vineyard? What spiritual practices could be helpful to you as you prune your own branch?
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## For Prayer

*It was not you who chose me,  
but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain,  
so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.*

**JOHN 15:16**

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