

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the 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.”

Having grown up out in the country, we had a number of fruit trees on our property. I think that we had about 6 apple trees, 4 prune trees, a plum tree, several pears and a couple of pie cherry trees. Not to mention we had several rows of blackberries, raspberries and some grapes.

Every year, primarily in the spring, my family would spend a great deal of time over a number of weekends pruning back all the trees. It was always a process that I hated because my primary job was picking up all of the debris that was pruned away from the trees and other plants. I then had to cart them back to the burn pile.

The one element that I did like in all of this process was that as I started to get older, it was my job to tend the fire. So we would always have two big burn piles to burn off in the spring and then again in the fall after we cleaned off the gardens.

We had to do all of this pruning for two important reasons. The first was to make sure that the trees and bushes did not get out of control. If left unpruned, the trees would get out of hand and grow too large. The second lesson was so that the trees would produce better fruit. Cutting back the trees kept them from investing energy into making the trees bigger, and that energy was redirected to producing fruit.

Our lives are very much the same. If left untended, we can grow and get out of hand and our resources are used, not to produce fruit, but to make ourselves be bigger and more present. It becomes more about us.

When we let God prune the excess things we have in our lives, then we can focus our energy on producing good fruit. As we come before the Lord this weekend, we can look and see what parts of our lives that we need the divine gardener to cut out. Where do we need to cut back or be cut back, so the fruit that we are intended to produce can grow as God intended it to grow?

May each one of us be open to allowing the divine pruner to come in and prune away at the excess that is present in our lives.