

During Lent and Easter, we invited our congregation to spend time in God's word. Once a week, we guided this time with a devotional reading from Scripture and a reflection from someone within our church family. Begin by centering yourself in prayer; ask God to reveal something new and speak to you today. Next, spend time reading the Scripture passage for the day, noting what stands out to you and what word from the Lord might be coming through the text for *you*. Then, move to reading the reflection shared below. Below, you will see that we have also included a piece of visual art for you to consider as you reflect on the passage. I (Pastor Ashley) encourage you to actually get out your Bible and engage with the text on your own first, before reading the reflections shared below. *This is our last devotional in our Lent and Easter devotional series.*

Easter Devotional: Week Three

Step One: Prior to reading the Scripture passage, spend a moment centering yourself in prayer.

Step Two: Our Scripture reading today is **John 15:1-11**. Read through the text (maybe even twice), noting what stands out to you and what word from the Lord might be coming through this text for *you* today.

Step Three: Now, enjoy this reflection from our Joanne Heineman:

The Vine and The Branches



"In Our Hands" by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman
A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Every late winter I go out to tend to my rose bushes. I take great care to make sure I cut off the dead branches and then start pruning the live ones, making cuts that will encourage them to grow bigger, produce more flowers and get rid of diseased leaves. A couple of months later I am blessed with yellow and coral blossoms that smell so sweet. Like my rose bushes, if I don't cut the things out of my life that take me away from Jesus (my dead branches) and also take care to make sure the things I continue to do (my live branches) reflect him, I can't be a true disciple. I need to show his love to all I meet.

In this passage Jesus tells us that he is the vine, we are the branches and God is the gardener. God cuts off every branch that does not bear fruit and prunes every branch that does bear fruit so that it will produce more fruit. Branches that don't bear fruit are then thrown into the fire and burned. Not sure about you, but I sure don't want to be the branch that gets thrown into the fire and burned. He goes on to say that if we bear fruit and remain in Him we can ask whatever we wish and it will be done for us. That gives me great comfort.

We can't bear fruit by ourselves; we need Jesus. All he asks of us is for us to keep his commands. Sounds easy, doesn't it. But we all know that it can be hard to do sometimes. He tells us all of this so that our joy may be complete. In order to bear fruit, we need to remain in Him. We do it to honor Him.

- Joanne Heineman

Step Four: Close in prayer, thanking God for what has been revealed to you today and asking the Lord to help you carry it into this day and the days ahead. Here is a prayer written by Joanne that you may use to close your devotional time today:

Dear God – thank you for all of the wonders you provide for us – the beautiful flowers, blue sky and green grass. Help me to live a life that will bear lots of fruit and stay true to you. Amen