

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus as LORD, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” Colossians 2:6-7. (NRSV)

[Jesus says], “Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide me. I am the vine you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:4-5. (NRSV)

Dear Christian friends,

These weeks I start to get restless and my “green thumb” gets fidgety. The weeks of winter become tedious; the season has been long enough. My thoughts increasingly are occupied with gardening and spring seeding. The biggest temptation for a gardener is to rush the season. If I try to plant out flowers or vegetables too early, I probably will fail in my efforts. Spring frosts will be the greatest menace to those plants, but many other afflictions may come upon them.

The Sunday School children and I are watching some tomato seedlings germinate and grow. We will be hoping to harvest some fruit from those plants later in the summer. Right now those seedlings need special care. They are kept indoors. I must keep a check on them between Sundays to ensure that they have adequate water and light. As they grow they need to be re-potted to ensure their root systems have ample room to support and sustain the vegetative top. It will be interesting to observe each individual plant over the growing season to see how they thrive and produce fruit.

I know that planting some tomatoes in my garden will have its challenges. Two years ago I put four plants into a garden plot that is very well suited for tomato plants in regards to sunlight, heat and shelter. That year two plants succumbed quickly to dying because a fungus infected their crown region. (The crown is the region on the plant where the root and stem unite; a healthy, functioning crown is totally essential to the plants survival.) Last year that infection spread to all four plants in that plot. This year I will try again, but will need to take other measures to try for their survival. (IE I will coat the crown region with honey and sprinkle cinnamon in the soil and hope they live!) The goal in all those plants is to get some fruit.

An alternative to treating my seedlings, would be to purchase plants that have been grafted. Numerous varieties of plants undergo this process to make them successful. Grafting is the process of taking a desirable fruit variety stem and surgically uniting it on a root and stalk that is hardy to the pathogens (disease organisms) that exist in the soil mixture. Apart from the Wildrose native to Alberta, other rose bushes are grafted onto hardy stems. (When I was a child, the most common root and stalk for a rose graft was the lemon tree.) Without a hardy stem the rose bush would never survive to produce the fragrance and beauty of the rose bloom.

Simon Wagner was a man truly genuinely gifted with the art of grafting. He would graft desirable varieties of apple, cherry and plum onto stalks that were resistant to our soil adversities and he would do that with great success. I always marvelled at Simon’s ability and talent, which allowed him a bountiful harvest.

These weeks of the Easter season in the Church, many of the scripture lessons will reflect the meaning of Jesus as the Christ, and his essentialness to our fruitfulness. Jesus uses the example of the gardener who grafts the vulnerable stem onto the hardy root and stalk so that stem can be fruitful. We are that stem, which needs to be grafted to Jesus as the Christ, in order to be fruitful and fulfill what God has created us to be in His realm. Our natural root and stalk will only lead to our death and the defeat of our purpose. Jesus as our root and stalk will make us rightfully fruitful – bearing the fruit of God’s Holy Spirit which is all righteousness and holiness. God grafts us to Jesus through Baptism.

As we will undertake tasks of attending our natural gardens in these weeks, looking forward to the rewards of fragrance, beauty and tasty fruit, so too may our lives lived in and for Jesus as the Christ, bear the fruit of God’s righteousness and holiness for us and for the world. Happy gardening; healthy growing.

In Christ forever, Pastor Kevin.