**“Say the Words"**

**January 28, 2018**

"Better to let the word sink in and drop to the bottom than skip across the surface of our minds and hearts."

Jn 15:1 “I am the true vine,

and my Father is the gardener.

2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit,

Growth is not particularly optional.

while every branch that does bear fruit

he prunes

He clips, shapes and directs its growth. But, unlike branches we have a choice. We can resist, we can ignore. Behind choice lies desire. What do you want? Do we want our lives to take the shape He wants to give them?

Stay in Jesus, let the Father have his way. Whatever else we say let’s not miss the simple force of these words.

“Help me Lord to put my life in your hands.”

every branch that does bear fruit

he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

Last week we added the Biblical idea of the race to this idea of growth, Abide and Run, each in their turn. That is probably a good combination.

One of the most famous runs that took place in the ancient world, took place after a desperate and famous battle in 490 B.C.. The Persian empire grew tired of the Greeks pecking on the edge of its empire on the eastern Mediterranean.

An army marched from Persian, Iraq, to the coast and embarked in ships for Greece. Athens was the first target they had been most arrogant and annoying.

To their surprise the free soldiers of Athens in their tight formations, locked in together shoulder to shoulder, shield to shield, beat the larger Persian army of mercenaries.

From this battle a single runner was sent back to Athens. It is said that he ran the entire distance without stopping, burst into the Athenian Assembly and cried out exclaiming [νενικήκαμεν](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AC%CF%89) (nenikēkamen, "we have won!") and then collapsed and died.

The distance he ran is traditionally calculated at just over 26 miles and the beach where they fought was near the town of Marathon. It is one of the great stories of the free West triumphing over Asiatic despots and their hordes.

But there is another fight and race for us. It does not concern any earthly city or country but the Kingdom of God itself. It must make the higher claim. It does call on the same courage and sacrifice.

It is described this way:

Heb 12:1 . . . let us throw off everything that tangles, trips, distracts or tempts . . .

and let us run with determination

the race marked out for us.

[most of all] 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus. . . [hearts, minds]

3 Consider him [Jesus] who endured such opposition from sinful men,

so that you [and I]

will not grow weary and lose heart.

Jesus, We also read the words from the middle of I Corinthians 13. This is our race.

1Co 13:4 Love is patient . . kind. It does not envy, does not boast, is not proud or rude . . .

I was wondering after Sunday last week how many times we can read I Cor. 13 before it seems tedious or repetitive. It is hard question for me to answer because if we get too far away from those words what is the point of anything else we do?

Now let me add one more piece to this picture of growth (It is in John 12 but let's take if from Galatians 2:20)

Here is the way it comes through the pen and life of the apostle Paul in a letter he wrote:

Gal. 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ

Now this is extreme. It is a jolt to listen to it. To give it sustained attention will cost us something. It is comforting on the back side, not up front.

And, it is not literally true, Paul was not there on a cross next to Jesus nor is he claiming to have been. We will have to find the meaning elsewhere.

It may come down to this, say the words yourself and let them take you where they will, Say the words.

It may be a kind of spiritual magic, an incantation. Say the words, listen to what you say and let them work on you. What thoughts and feeling come next?

“I have been crucified with Christ," 'I am willing to be, Holy Spirit, lead me into this."

"This changes everything and . . I will follow where it leads. Help me Lord."

I suspect if we do this we will find safety and strength unlike any other.

I have been crucified with Christ

and I no longer live,

"I" alone, me on my own, is no more. That life is over. Vine and Branch, connected and inseparable. It is not about me, not any more.

These are deep words, no doubt, but that's good.

but Christ lives in me.

Yes Lord, yes, yes, Lord.”

The life I live in the body,

"I" am still here. In fact everything looks a lot the same, here I am in the same body walking around doing a lot of the same things. I still have to dress and eat and shake hands.

But it is not the same. Everything has and is changing.

I live by faith

in the Son of God,

Trusting Him is the most important thing I do every day.

who loved me and gave himself for me.

“Lord, help us say the words and may they grow in our hearts.

Does the world need deep people? R. Foster