

February 14 Pruning

"Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, God takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, God prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. John 15.2

Growing up on a farm, one of the more challenging tasks was thinning sugar beets. Not because we started at dawn to avoid the heat of the day or because it was particularly hard work, it wasn't. It was hard because you had to destroy perfectly good plants. The sugar beet planter pulled by a tractor puts down too many seeds and too close together. Once the plants sprouted, my family would walk down each row "thinning the beets." We carried a hoe and chopped out every other plant so that the remaining plants would thrive and grow even bigger.

It the same principle as pruning, it's hard to cut off perfectly good branches trusting that more branches or fruit will appear. But it does. Pruning and thinning improves the health and strength of a plant. Structurally, pruning a plant will benefit the plant in the long run. It will require less corrective pruning as the plant matures and is more likely to have a healthier formation. Plants need proper maintenance for adequate growth.

In our verse from the Gospel of John, what is meant by God's pruning? It could mean that we get out of balance, have dead branches, and suckers that are draining away our spiritual vitality. We will flourish in our personal, spiritual, and physical life when we expose ourselves to frequent pruning. I don't know what it means for you, but it could mean that we examine where our energy is going.

On Valentine's Day, we often think of our love for the other. In order to love the other, we need a bit of self-love. Organizing our schedules, relationships and stuff could include a purposeful and ongoing process of elimination and refinement. What contributes to your health? What doesn't? It means examining our core values before we trim. We can prune our commitments and activities as well as our belongings. When we cut out extraneous activities, we can focus on investing our time with the people who really matter to us. We can say no to activities that don't foster our growth and wellbeing and yes to those that do. Even though it is sometime difficult, pruning is good for the heart and soul.