

Easter 5 – April 28, 2024  
Text: John 15:1-8  
Theme: On Rooting Plants and Raising Chickens

**On rooting plants. If a plant is not rooted it will die, right? No roots mean no food and no water and eventual certain death. We speak of a branch being dead the moment it becomes detached from the main plant. Even though it technically has some life left in it, the certainty of its death allows us to speak prophetically. On the other hand, if a plant is well rooted, and therefore well fed and well nourished, it will do just fine. I have not once read a book on how to grow African Violets to the African Violet in my office and yet, it seems to know just what to do, just how to bloom and just how to grow.**

**Now then, on raising chickens. Well, Victor Borge, the pianist comedian, tells a story about how he dumbfounded all his friends by purchasing a chicken farm. One of his friends doubted his sanity and asked him, "Do you know anything about breeding chickens?" Borge replied, "No, but presumably the chickens do."**

**And so, what do we Christians know about a Godly life? Well, it all depends on how well rooted we are, doesn't it?**

**"I am the vine; you are the branches." We are not a community organization. We are not a club. We are a branch**

**attached to the most power vine ever to grow. The more securely we are attached to Christ, the more powerful we are and that is what the ministry at Trinity is all about. Everything we do is centered around feeding and watering the branches of the vine whether or not branches choose to take full advantage of what we offer.**

**Jesus said, "Remain in me and I will remain in you." It really is that simple. Feed yourself on the Word of God in worship and Bible Study, refresh yourself with the remembrance of your Baptism and eat heartily at the Lord's Supper. The more you do all of this, the more you are remaining in Jesus and the more he is remaining in you.**

**We were not always connected to Jesus. We started out life cut off. Each of us was born a child of Satan, cut off from the love of God and doomed. We had to be rooted by the Holy Spirit. My mother was the queen of rooting plants. She would go on a foraging mission and soon there were little juice glasses lining the windowsill with pieces of plants hanging out of them. She would pinch off a little piece of plant she liked, and low and behold, before you know it, it had roots and then one day it was a giant houseplant.**

**Well, Jesus did not pinch us off another living and growing plant. He found us lying on the ground, cut off, shriveled, and dying.**

**He picked us up, robbed Satan of his prize and washed us with Baptismal waters. By pure grace, we were saved. The Holy Spirit entered us, breathed life into us and connected us to the vine. So now we are like those chickens. There are no do-it-yourself classes or self-help books to empower us to live faithful lives. We can read the accounts of those who have lived faithful lives, but those do not empower us to do likewise.**

**Chickens breed without being taught. They simply do what they have been created to do: eat, sleep, and lay eggs, which sometimes become new chickens and sometimes become a Denver Omelet. We too simply do what we have been created to do.**

**“If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” So, if you look at your life right now and you find that the fruit is heavy and ripe, thank God, for you are doing exactly what you are created to do. Don’t get haughty and proud of yourself because you did not jump up off that ground as a shriveled and dying twig and connect yourself to Christ – the Holy Spirit did that for you. Rather, bless God that you have been given such power and the will to serve him.**

**Perhaps, however, you look at your branches and see that there is not much fruit. Maybe you find yourself calling yourself a**

**Christian and yet making choices that are far more congruent with the world. People under 30, are particularly vulnerable and if they are under 20, there is probably no more vulnerable time for them. Why? Because they are beginning to move out from under their parents' influence and take on the responsibility of feeding their own faith.**

**Satan is not stupid. He knows that if he does not get them cut off soon, they will become a great threat to him. So, he attacks them. He tempts them to live a life that is congruent with him and with society. Soon they might notice that their fruit is diminishing, then gone and one day the branch begins to wither and then it falls off. Once that happens, no one remembers what it was even like to be connected to the vine. Satan works double-time on those who are most vulnerable just like the playground bully that he is.**

**But the rest of us can find our branches withering too. We can grow complacent, finding the Bible old hat. If we are old enough, we might be tempted to retire from God even as we retired from work. Whatever the reasons for a lack of fruit or the specific temptations that lead us away from the vine, the cure is the same: abide in him. Whether you are 12 or 92, if we look at our lives and find that the fruit of the Lord is not as abundant as it ought to be, we can fix that. All we have to do is remember the Baptismal waters that flow over**

**us daily and drink deeply from his Word and eat heartily at his Supper and the works of God will be amazing in your life.**

**This is not something you have to wait to do. I hear them all. Next week, I'm going to start reading my Bible daily. When I feel better, I'm going to worship more often. After I get out of this predicament, I'm going to be more faithful in my giving. This gets it all backwards. We speak as though we must produce fruit ourselves. No! What we must do is simply be well rooted in the vine. Abide in him. Do what you were created to do. Start today. Start this minute. Drink from his Word, the water of life. Receive his body and blood. Rejoice as the Baptismal waters nourish your soul.**

**The works will come. Suddenly, without your even being aware, your branches will be heavy with fruit. You do not know how to grow faith, but given the tools, the Holy Spirit knows just what to do and he is always faithful in doing it.**