

20/05/2018

JOHN 15:1-8 = PENTECOST (In the pruning/crushing = new wine/fire)

#SCRIPTURE READING: Acts 2:1-4, John 15:1-8, Deuteronomy 8:2, 1 Peter 1:3-9

#SERMON=INTRODUCTION: (1) Pentecost 2017(04/06) vs 2018 (20/05). If you think back *re* your Spiritual journey the past year, *where do you find yourself today - closer/deeper in your relationship with God or "on the contrary"?* (2) W' Cape = Wine regions drought - job losses, millions lost in revenue. But they say the irony is *this season will yield some of the best/highest quality wines in many years!.*

+TRANSITION: I'm asking this in the light of *the Spiritual principle that says "*Spiritual stagnation/inactivity=Spiritual deterioration/Geestelike stilstand=Geestelike agteruitgang*" & *HEB 12:14: "*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.*" But I'm also asking it, because *this Book is the "*Gospel of another chance*" & celebrating Pentecost renders us the opportunity to (under the guidance of the HS) *confess our (possibly only) lukewarmness and pursue our Groom afresh.*

+EXEGESIS&APPLICATION: In a conversation with our local CP winemaker the conclusion I came to, was that (1) *a vine can't be/become a true vine - a fruit bearing vine - without pruning,* (2) *there's a whole process involved in making wine as such = different techniques.* *Re* the latter, I would like to share on that with you in 2 weeks time (MARK 2:13-22)

Re pruning - you have 2 processes: (1) *You have to make sure the cultivar you plant, can bear fruit in the environment you plant it in (climate/type of soil).* E.g. when Flip Smith became the winemaker @ Mt Pellier (Tulbagh), he found that the the *Chenin Blanc* cultivar (planted years ago) was rotting and bearing ± no fruit. From his own years of experience & local research, *he knew he had to "start afresh" with other/new cultivars.* Process: *A vine has two parts,* the "bottom" part, called *the underroot/rootstok* & the "top" part, called *the scion.* Flip *didn't uproot/remove the rootstok - he pruned the top part/scion away, and then grafted the new cultivar/-s onto the rootstok.* (2) Then the 2nd process of pruning started; As this new cultivar formed branches, *they had to cut away the branches that would drain/waste growing/fruit bearing potential.* I'll never forget his words: "*Gerhard, a vine can't be/become a true vine - a fruit bearing vine - without pruning.*"

*Application: (1) When I'm *born physically,* I'm "rooted" in this world - a lost sinner (ROM 3:9-18). Like that *Chenin Blanc* cultivar @ Mt Pellier, *I'll eventually rot away - unless I'm "cut loose" from myself/this world and grafted onto the True Vine - Jesus Christ.* Therefore I have to be *born-again/born Spiritually* (JOHN 3:1-8). (2) In order to bear Kingdom fruit, *JC will have to continuously - but Lovingly! - prune me.* We often refer to *these times as desert seasons/going through the wilderness* - hard, severe, barren, austere, challenging, dry & dusty periods in our lives; at least - it feels like that while we're going through it...

Re these times: Yes, whether it is the result/consequence of choices we made or something inexplicable - *it's challenging.* There could even come times (especially when it's a prolonged period) when throwing in the towel/denying God/death looks like an inviting alternative... And yet, Bride of the Groom, *the wilderness is a holy place: It was in the desert wilderness that God revealed His Presence; it's where He gave His Law/Word to His people,* (EXOD 16:10 / DEUT 8:2 / LUKE 3:2). *For the Eternal Winemaker the wilderness is holy & fruitful.*

Do I mean then that hard times in our lives are holy? *Yebo, for those who are His children.* Listen to this, dear Bride: *In Hebrew* the wilderness is called the *midbar.* *Midbar* comes from the root word *davar* - which *means to speak.* It's *the place of His voice = where He speaks. It's especially where He talks to us: He brought His people* there to talk to them. *He brought Moses* into the *midbar* to speak to him through a burning bush. *He brought Elijah* there to

Speak to him in a still, small voice. *So too He brings us into the midbar/wilderness that He might speak to us.* He takes us there, because He talks to us during our daily routines but *we're so caught up in all our daily "stuff", that we don't hear Him!* But *in the wilderness the distractions are gone, in the midbar/wilderness we hear His voice/instructions clearly.* Dear Bride of JC - especially being that = Bride of the Lamb, *don't wish your wilderness journey to be something of the past; the Grace Farmer is busy pruning/preparing you for glory!*

*May I ask, *during your time of wilderness pruning - what were some of the "branches" that were cut off:* Bitterness, unforgiveness, pride, love of money, a secret addiction? Or was it rather just a matter of God *dealing with your Spiritual comfortzone, dealing with the dangerous reality of "My sins of omission were far greater than my sins of commission"?* Meaning: "No, I didn't commit any 'ugly' sins/things - but that was it. *On the other hand* I didn't pursue/love JC whole heartedly. I wasn't obeying His instructions 'radically/practically' on the market place. *I compromised.*" But doesn't that apply to most of us, B/S? That the "*Spiritual stagnation/inactivity=Spiritual deterioration*" principle is so true of most of us?..

**There's a huge Spiritual danger lurking while we're being pruned in the wilderness - that is a pity party.* That because of personal pain/challenges, my main (especially prayer) focus, is just to "sort out the pain/discomfort". And in the process I lose my Kingdom vision/calling. I forget *that it's not in the 1st place about my happiness but my holiness; not in the 1st place about my earthly comfort but my Kingdom character.*

Dear "Branches of the Vine", *where does MATT 6:33 come into the equation:* "But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Within my own wilderness journey, I'm trying to "keep a Kingdom focus", but it ain't easy... What I'm learning though during my present pruning season, is that *as I focus on the Kingdom 1st - in spite of my huge challenges - (as I'm doing this) God turns around and asks me: "What do you want = what are your needs?"* Not that He doesn't know what they are, but He confirms to me He's a caring Father! Furthermore: When I make the Kingdom - *and intimacy with the Holy Spirit - my 1st priority, a miracle happens - it numbs (for the time being, because it hasn't been dealt with yet) the pain/fear/desperation.* And that's very NB, because *desperation is a danger to Spiritual maturity. Desperation births impatience & when you're impatient, you produce Ishmael.* (See Abraham x Hagar - GEN 16) *Desperation disables you to discern between God's supply and Satan's bait.* The secret here is that challenging term/word in GAL 5:22 (Fruit of the Spirit) = "longsuffering".

**Pentecost x new wine/fire:* Words of dance song written and performed by *Brooke Fraser Ligertwood* (Hillsong): "In the crushing / In the pressing / You are making new wine / In the soil, I now surrender / You are breaking new ground / So I yield to You and to Your careful hand / When I trust I don't need to understand... / Make me You vessel / Make me an offering / Make me whatever You want me to be / I came here with nothing / But all You have given me / Jesus, bring new wine out of me... / 'Cause where there is new wine / There is new power / There is new freedom / And the Kingdom is here / I lay down my old flames / To carry Your new fire today..."

+**CONCLUSION:** Let's not fear/despise the pruning of our lives/wildernesses of our lives. Don't despise His removing of the distractions. Rather embrace it; draw closer to Him. And seek to hear His voice - you will hear it (JER 29:12-13). *Because the wilderness in your life is more than that - it's holy ground, the midbar = the place of His voice... And when we're through it - may the world taste the new Wine/see the new Fire!* Amen!

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