

Thought For the day - 'Christian Growth' 29-06-2020

YouTube Link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sa0hkxKQ88w&list=PL0ssA46ANeapWFbcm6rgWxt2IEWWPZdbI>

HELLO THERE.

Some of you will know that I grow Bonsai trees.

Growing bonsai is a popular hobby which began centuries ago in China as a small garden or tree in a pot.



For me it began about 25 years ago after seeing a friend's impressive collection.

I quickly discovered patience is one of the prime requirements for growing and looking after bonsai trees.

I now realize just how much in common bonsai has with our Christian faith.

I have three short bible passages today to help us apply this to Christian Growth.

In Matthew 13:18-23, Jesus tells of a farmer sowing seeds - a very familiar story. Some seeds fell on the path, some on rocky places, others among thorns and finally some seed fell on good soil.

The parable shows how the word of God is received.

The question is, is my heart hard like the path; patchy like the rocky ground or choked by thorns. We ask God to work in our hearts until they become fertile soil where our roots nourish our faith.

I find myself a mixture of all four soil types and need to learn to rely daily on the Holy Spirit to help me keep close in my relationship with Jesus, firmly planted in the rich soil of his salvation.

If Bonsai growers don't get the soil mix right the trees suffer and don't achieve their potential.

My bonsai trees need frequent pruning and styling to remove undergrowth and unsightly branches, so that they become beautiful trees, some even with blossom and fruit, a delight to the eye,

Jesus, in John 15:1-2 says, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful.'

Just like trees, you and I need pruning from time to time to remove unsightly undergrowth and surplus branches from our lives which stunt our growth and relationship with Jesus.

We easily slip into ways of inhibiting our Christian Growth:- selfishness, pride, negative attitudes, wound's from the past, habits which we use for security, rather than trusting in God.

All these stop us from enjoying life as he meant it to be for us.

In John 15v4a Jesus says, 'Remain in me, as I also remain in you.'

The question is, are we, am I, using all the means of grace available to stay close to Jesus?

One of the most important aspects of growing bonsai is frequent watering and feeding. Wendy Curtis said recently, "I am using Tomorite to feed my sunflowers!"

That's very good for Bonsai too!

**The verses from Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NRSVA) read,
"blessed are those who trust in the LORD
and have made the LORD their hope and confidence.**

**⁸ They are like trees planted along a riverbank,
with roots that reach deep into the water.
Such trees are not bothered by the heat
or worried by long months of drought.
Their leaves stay green,
and they never stop producing fruit.**

When our hope, trust and confidence are in the Lord, in Jesus, rather than the tempting things of the world, we are best placed to weather the storms of life.

The present pandemic has affected us all in so many difficult and different ways. Testing days for us all!

But remember, '**God works in all things to bring about good**'.. (Ro 8.28a) Consequently, we can rejoice in all the positive things we see happening around us.

It's wonderful to see how God is working in the world.

When our roots grow into the presence and love of God, in Jesus, through the Spirit, we become like a **tree planted along the riverbank with roots that reach deep into the water, not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves are green, and never stop producing fruit.**

During these testing times, fix your eyes on Jesus and we will surely grow and mature in our faith,

The good news is all the planting, pruning and feeding keeps our hearts and minds healthy as we trust in Jesus.

If you are able read the verses again later, asking God, 'Soften my heart Lord', to hear and act on his word.

Matthew 13:18-23;
John 15:1-2 and 4a;
Jeremiah 17:7-8

Ask what is God the Spirit saying to your need today? May God richly bless you.

PRAYER.

Father God we bless you in our thankfulness for your promise and faithfulness to us.

Lord Jesus, help us to love as you love, keeping close to you, growing in trust and obedient faith.

Come, Holy Spirit, by your presence and power, fill us again to serve and do what Jesus calls us to do today. **Amen**

SONG : House of Praise 2 No 401 to Tune 382 in Singing the Faith

If you are able join in with the song on YouTube at, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XGM7haf4GM>

- 1 Fruitful trees, the Spirit's sowing,
may we ripen and increase,
fruit to life eternal growing,
rich in love and joy and peace.
- 2 Laden branches freely bearing
gifts the Giver loves to bless;
here is fruit that grows by sharing,
patience, kindness, gentleness.
- 3 Rooted deep in Christ our Master,
Christ our pattern and our goal,
teach us, as the years fly faster,
goodness, faith and self-control.
- 4 Fruitful trees, the Spirit's tending,
may we grow till harvests cease;
till we taste, in life unending,
heaven's love and joy and peace.

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