

WEEKDAY WORSHIP

April 23-29, 2018

Worship as encounter with the living God cannot be limited to one hour per week. "Weekday Worship" invites you to extend your worship beyond the sanctuary, to hear the story of the Bible as your story, lived out each day of each week. Feedback is appreciated and should be directed to Rita Boyer.

BIBLE READING

This week's reading is: John 15:1-8 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?q=385553174>).

Other readings are: Acts 8:26-40 Psalm 22:25-31 1 John 4:7-21.

The theme is: Love Abides.

The Gospel of John contains many statements by Jesus that begin with the words "I am." In these statements, Jesus uses metaphors to reveal some truth about who he is and what he does. Many of those statements occur in Jesus' "Farewell Discourse" to his disciples, found in John 14:1-16:3. Last week we reflected on the ways in which Jesus is the Good Shepherd. This week we hear Jesus say that he is the "true vine" (verse 1). In agricultural Israel, vineyards were an important part of life. Hard work went into preparing the soil to produce the vines, and much attention went into caring for the vineyard. High walls and watchtowers were built to protect the vines from animals and people. Most of the grapes were used to make wine, and a good harvest of grapes was seen as a sign of God's pleasure. Isaiah and other Hebrew prophets spoke of Israel as the vine and God as the vinedresser, or one who cared for the vine. The metaphorical fruit of the vine in Hebrew Scriptures is justice. In this week's reading, Jesus uses the metaphor of a vine to illustrate how we are all connected to Christ and gain our strength from him. God is the gardener. Dead branches must be cleared away. Pruning is required to produce new growth. Pruning does not hurt the plant, but rather makes it stronger and more productive. Our "fruit" is to carry out Christ's work in the world, and we can only do that if we remain in Christ.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

"Questions to Consider" enable you to connect your story to the biblical story. Rather than easy questions to be answered at first glance, these questions or reflections can be returned to and meditated upon throughout the week.

Are you connected to branches that need pruning? What inhibits growth for you and how can that branch be pruned for healthy growth?

Continue to reflect upon the worship theme of April 23:

Consider how valuable you are to the Good Shepherd!

Prospect Presbyterian Church, Maplewood, NJ, www.prospectchurch.org
Rita Boyer, rita@prospectchurch.org