

April 27, 2018  
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## “Pruning Diamonds”

They say every pastor has a one sermon to preach; mine comes in three parts. Pretty everything I have to say fits into one of the three categories; **Beloved, Called, and Equipped**. Today I want to say bit about those three words as they correspond well with the scripture from the book of John.

### **Beloved**

We all need to be reminded that we were called into creation out of the wellspring of all that is sacred. We come from and return to the Big Love, and everyday no matter what, each of us is capable and deserving both of giving and receiving love.

There are days when that can be hard to see and even harder to believe. Days we lose track of being connected to everything; we feel cut off from the world, far from belonging, far from beloved.

When we come together in this place we have but one job to do. It is to see one another the way one who knows they are beloved sees.

When we come together as the **Beloved** community, we are invited to be free from the need to judge ourselves and others, allowed to simply behold and be beheld by one another. That is a big deal- to be beheld by a loving gaze.

We all regularly need our buckets filled, so we can re-enter ready to pour our best intentions back into the world.

### **Called**

When we come together as people of God we are reminded that we belong to a bigger picture, we abide in God and we abide with one another, much in the way vines twist and turn as they grow, always remaining connected to the whole.

Because we are rooted to and grounded in the Source of life, we are called to be generative people in the world. People who bear much good fruit. It may seem obvious, but it is necessary that we be reminded both individually and collectively that we are **Called** to live into our highest potential.

## **Equipped**

Grapes can't grow apart from the vine, the vine won't thrive without care from the gardener. In this passage from the book of John, Jesus is quite literally saying that in order to be who we are called to be, we have to recognize that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. Jesus wants the disciples to acknowledge their covenant of interdependence with God and with one another. It is that connection that **Equips** us for growth.

Lately, I have been enjoying the work of author and speaker Seth Godin, whose latest book is called, "What to do When it is Your Turn (and it is Always Your Turn)". His point is that important things happen in the world when people step up and when they do, they almost never feel ready.

This congregation exists to encourage and support its members as we explore the ways each of us are uniquely **Equipped** to live into our gifts and strengths. We are here to say to one another, whether you *feel* ready or not "You've got this!"

That's it in a nutshell; each of us is beloved, called, and equipped to be the change we wish to see. If not you, who? If not now, when?

Yesterday, there was a huge garage sale in my parent's neighborhood in Santa Rosa. I have been collecting things to put in the sale for weeks.

Garage sales are amazing for so many reasons, not the least of which is that it gives people a reason to step into one another's lives in a very particular way. One party selling, one party acquiring stuff, both parties sharing a need or at the very least a desire, to let go or to hold on.

One thing most people who have or go to garage sales can usually agree on is that there is just plain more stuff in the world than any of us needs.

Even the fella I talked with who lost his home in the fire agreed that there is just too much stuff- and then he bought a strand of light up hearts for twenty-five cents saying, I'll put these to good use."

So, I got to wondering why is it that we feel the need to have so much stuff?

I heard a story recently about a man who as a refugee had fled genocide in his country of origin. Although this person now has a home, a job and a family in this country- he still keeps a backpack full of only the essentials on a shelf by the front door.

Some of us went through that exercise when we packed "go bags" last October, prepared to evacuate our neighborhoods if the need arose. Most of us have unpacked those bags and gone back to living as we did before.

What seems clear is that most of us are more than just a little encumbered by stuff we possess, we are pretty emotionally connected to it as well.

The spiritual question on deck today is are whether we are connected to that which is life giving?

*Mathew 6:24*

*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.*

Do we invest our best efforts in connecting with that which ultimately sustains us, or do we get distracted by the stuff that doesn't encourage us to be truly alive?

### **A Retelling of John 15:1-8**

What I most desire for my children is that they live fulfilling and fruitful lives; that they grow to understand what a good and happy life truly is; that they learn the skills to discern what will harm them and what will help them thrive; that when they are in situations where they must choose between what's attractive but destructive, and what's unappealing but beneficial, they will choose what is most advantageous to their well-being, choose the things that will nourish them. I hope that they find friendship amongst genuine people who know each other's true worth and who work together to make the world an equitable and accepting place. I long to be in a deep and abiding relationship with them, based on compassion, kindness, hope, and love. I long to see them flourish. I am the true vine and my Creator is the vine grower. You, my friends, my brothers and

sisters, are the branches, and we belong together. Abide in me as I abide in you and together we will bear much fruit. Amen