

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Show the Vineyard!!”
(Part III of the Lenten series “The great “I AM” statements of Jesus”)
March 15, 2026

Scripture

Isaiah 27:2-6
John 15:1-6

Core Idea and purpose

Core theological ideas from earlier sermons in the series:

- (02/22/2026) To know Jesus is to know God on a first name basis
- (03/01/2026) We must let the light of Jesus illuminate our situations and hearts.
- (03/08/26) Jesus is the bread of life. Through faith in Jesus, we have abundant & eternal life. So, no matter how hard it gets, we can say, “So What!? I have abundant & eternal life” and then take the next step.

Core theological idea: As followers of Jesus, we show people the vineyard. To do that we must stay connected to Jesus and allow Him to prune our hearts.

Challenge/purpose: To encourage people to stay connected to Jesus so they can show people the vineyard.

The Sermon

I love spending the day meandering through gardens. I smell the flowers, admire the bees, and breathe the fresh air. Usually, I take along a Bible and a good book. After a leisurely stroll, I sit on a bench or on the ground with my back to a tree. Then I spend the rest of the day reading my book, contemplating the Bible, and praying. It is wonderful alone time with God.

Gardens remind me of paradise – heaven on earth. Adam and Eve were in a garden before sin entered the world. While relaxing in a garden, I feel like I am in a make-believe world where everything is as it should be. It motivates me to go back into the cruel, real world to love as Jesus loves so that the world can be as it should be.

There is, however, a type of garden that I have never visited. It is a vineyard. I would very much like to visit a vineyard. Yes, I would take along a good book and Bible. But I would also enjoy the sweetness of red grapes and tartness of green grapes. A glass of grape juice (I don't drink) at the end of the day would be perfect.

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In God’s written word, vineyards represent life as God intends. They are an image of the Kingdom of God on the earth.

Isaiah 27:2-6 uses the vineyard imagery to describe a world redeemed by God’s grace. Let’s read it together:

- ² *In that day— “Sing about a fruitful vineyard:*
³ *I, the Lord, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it.*
⁴ *I am not angry. If only there were briars and thorns confronting me! I would march against them in battle; I would set them all on fire.*
⁵ *Or else let them come to me for refuge; let them make peace with me, yes, let them make peace with me.”*
⁶ *In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit.*

Notice, in verse 4, God promises to keep out the briars and thorns. But, in verse 5, God promises to welcome the briars & thorns if they want to make peace. The briars & thorns symbolize the hateful, sinful people who want to be part of the Kingdom of God. When these people repent and seek to live a life characterized by love, God welcomes them with open arms. We should remember, all of us, every single one of us, are briars & thorns until we repent and seek transformation by God’s grace. God welcomes and loves all of us.

As previously stated, the vineyard represents life as God intends. Faith is the soil and God waters it with love, justice, and righteousness. The grape vines bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There are no weeds that bear the fruit of sexual conquest, immorality, anger, racism, sexism, classism, hatred, jealousy, anger, selfishness, injustice, and the like. It is life as God intends.

As followers of Jesus Christ, God calls us to show people the vineyard. We are to demonstrate what this world would look like if we all lived life as God intends. We show the world what it would look like if everyone loved each other with unconditional love. We show the world what it would look like if everyone experienced joy amid suffering. We show the world what it would look like when everyone sees the image of God in each other.

But is it possible for us, on our own, to show the world the vineyard? Absolutely not! We all have our own internal sins to deal with. We all have filthy attitudes and desires lodged in our hearts that keep us from loving all people unconditionally. We all have doubts & fears that sap our joy the moment we

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experience a little pain. We all have prejudices that keep us from seeing the image of God in every person.

How then can we show people the vineyard? Our Savior & Lord, Jesus, tells us as he further explains the vineyard. He says, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches.”

So, Jesus teaches us that He is the vine and we are the branches. To show people the vineyard, we must:

- 1) Stay connected to Christ
- And
- 2) Allow Christ to prune our hearts.

We stay connected to Christ through the spiritual disciplines – also known as the means of grace. These are the practices that we do to cooperate with the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit can bring us into a closer relationship with Jesus and make us more holy and loving like Jesus. They consist of prayer, fasting, Bible study, worship and serving others.

For these disciplines to work, we must practice them. How can we expect the Holy Spirit to use prayer to bring us into a closer relationship with Jesus if we never pray? How can we expect the Holy Spirit to use fasting to bring us into a closer relationship with Jesus if we never fast? How can we expect the Holy Spirit to use Bible study to bring us into a closer relationship with Jesus if we never read the Bible? I think you get the picture.

We allow Jesus to prune our hearts by approaching the spiritual disciplines with an open & surrendered heart. We realize that some of our attitudes & desires may be unloving while our opinions may not conform to God’s wisdom. So, we expect God to prune our hearts.

The pruning process for a grape vine occurs when the farmer carefully inspects a branch and identifies the leaves and stems that are dead and no longer able to produce fruit. He then cuts them off. That way, the living leaves and stems receive more nutrients and produce bigger fruit.

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Likewise, as we practice the spiritual disciplines, Jesus examines our hearts to find the dead leaves and stems that will keep us from producing good fruit.

- He might look at our hearts and say, "That prejudice is keeping you from loving some people" And then he cuts it out!
- He might look at our hearts and say, "That greed is keeping you from helping some people." And then he cuts it out!
- He might look at our hearts and say, "That lust is keeping you from respecting people & seeing my image in them." And then he cuts it out!
- He might look at our hearts and say, "That inaccurate opinion is keeping you from standing on the right side of justice" And then he cuts it out!
- He might look at our hearts and say, "That jealousy is keeping you from having a healthy relationship" And then he cuts it out!

So, when we worship, pray, read Scripture, fast, and serve others, we expect Jesus to do some pruning. It will often be quite unpleasant, but only then can we begin to show people the vineyard.

Several Years ago, I had a parishioner named Pat Reynolds. She shared a story with me about how Jesus pruned her heart.

Her dad was overbearing, stern, harsh and mean. As a teen-ager and young adult, Pat often butted heads with him. Resentment towards him took root in her heart.

However, when Pat was a little girl, there was a time when her dad showed some loving tenderness. Pat was playing with a glass bottle of soap bubbles. She accidentally shattered the bottle and cut herself. A piece of glass was stuck in her hand. Her dad pulled the glass out and cleaned the wound. But the wound did not heal. So, he took her hand, re-opened the wound, used a needle to search in the wound and found another piece of glass. He removed that piece of glass and the wound healed.

Several years later, Pat took a Bible based course called 'Healing Streams'. This course required the participants to prayerfully look deep into their hearts to find any deep-seated resentments or unforgiveness. One day, while taking this course, Pat saw a vision of her dad. In this vision, her dad had cuts all over his body. Then she remembered the time when her dad helped heal her hand. That is when she realized that there was no one to help him heal as he grew up. With this revelation, Pat was able to let go of her resentment and forgive her dad. Jesus had pruned her heart. Jesus said, "This resentment has got to go" and then cut it off.

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With this pruning, Pat was able to show her dad the vineyard. She was able to demonstrate love towards her dad. During his last days on earth, Pat was his principal caretaker. Her dad transitioned into the next phase of eternal life experiencing his daughter’s love.

God calls us to show people the vineyard – to demonstrate life as God intends. To do this, we must stay connected to Christ and allow Him to prune our hearts. Let us all take a minute or two and silently ask, “What kind of pruning does Jesus need to do with me?”

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Sermon Outline

- I. I love spending the day meandering through gardens.
 - A. I smell the flowers, admire the bees, and breathe the fresh air.
 - B. Usually, I take along a Bible and a good book.
 - After a leisurely stroll, I sit on a bench or on the ground with my back to a tree.
 - Then I spend the rest of the day reading my book, contemplating the Bible, and praying.
 - It is wonderful alone time with God.
 - C. Gardens remind me of paradise – heaven on earth.
 - Adam and Eve were in a garden before sin entered the world.
 - While relaxing in a garden, I feel like I am in a make-believe world where everything is as it should be.
 - It motivates me to go back into the cruel, real world to love as Jesus loves so that the world can be as it should be.
 - D. There is, however, a type of garden that I have never visited.
 - It is a vineyard.
 - I would very much like to visit a vineyard.
 - Yes, I would take along a good book and Bible.
 - But I would also enjoy the sweetness of red grapes and tartness of green grapes.

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- A glass of grape juice (I don't drink) at the end of the day would be perfect.
- In God's written word, vineyards represent life as God intends.
 - They are an image of the Kingdom of God on the earth.

II. Isaiah 27:2-6 uses the vineyard imagery to describe a world redeemed by God's grace.

A. Let's read it together:

² in that day— “Sing about a fruitful vineyard:

³ I, the Lord, watch over it; I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it.

⁴ I am not angry. If only there were briers and thorns confronting me! I would march against them in battle; I would set them all on fire.

⁵ Or else let them come to me for refuge; let them make peace with me, yes, let them make peace with me.”

⁶ In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit.

B. Notice, in verse 4, God promises to keep out the briers and thorns.

C. But, in verse 5, God promises to welcome the briers & thorns if they want to make peace.

- The briers & thorns symbolize the hateful, sinful people who want to be part of the Kingdom of God.

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- When these people repent and seek to live a life characterized by love, God welcomes them with open arms.
- We should remember, all of us, every single one of us, are briars & thorns until we repent and seek transformation by God’s grace.
- God welcomes and loves all of us.

D. As previously stated, the vineyard represents life as God intends.

- Faith is the soil and justice is the water that sustains it.
- The grape vines bear the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- There are no weeds that bear the fruit of sexual conquest, immorality, anger, racism, sexism, classism, hatred, jealousy, anger, selfishness, injustice, and the like.
- It is life as God intends.

III. As followers of Jesus Christ, God calls us to show people the vineyard.

A. We are to demonstrate what this world would look like if we all lived life as God intends.

- We show the world what it would look like if everyone loved each other with unconditional love.
- We show the world what it would look like if everyone experienced joy amid suffering.

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- We show the world what it would look like when everyone sees the image of God in each other.

B. But is it possible for us, on our own, to show the world the vineyard?

- Absolutely not!
- We all have our own internal sins to deal with.
 - We all have filthy attitudes and desires lodged in our hearts that keep us from loving all people unconditionally.
 - We all have doubts & fears that sap our joy the moment we experience a little pain.
 - We all have prejudices that keep us from seeing the image of God in every person.

IV. How then can we show people the vineyard?

A. Our Savior & Lord, Jesus, tells us as he further explains the vineyard.

B. He says, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches.”

- So, Jesus teaches us that He is the vine and we are the branches.

C. To show people the vineyard, we must:

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- 1) Stay connected to Christ

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V. We stay connected to Christ through the spiritual disciplines – also known as the means of grace.

A. These are the practices that we do to cooperate with the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit can bring us into a closer relationship with Jesus and make us more holy and loving like Jesus.

B. They consist of prayer, fasting, Bible study, worship and serving others.

C. For these disciplines to work, we must practice them.

- How can we expect the Holy Spirit to use prayer to bring us into a closer relationship with Jesus if we never pray?
- How can we expect the Holy Spirit to use fasting to bring us into a closer relationship with Jesus if we never fast?
- How can we expect the Holy Spirit to use Bible study to bring us into a closer relationship with Jesus if we never read the Bible?
- I think you get the picture.

VI. We allow Jesus to prune our hearts by approaching the spiritual disciplines with an open & surrendered heart.

A. We realize that some of our attitudes & desires may be unloving while our opinions may not conform to God’s wisdom.

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- B. So, we expect God to prune our hearts.
- C. The pruning process for a grape vine occurs when the farmer carefully inspects a branch and identifies the leaves and stems that are dead and no longer able to produce fruit.
- He then cuts them off.
 - That way the live leaves and stems receive more nutrients and produce more and bigger fruit.
- D. Likewise, as we practice the spiritual disciplines, Jesus examines our hearts to find the dead leaves and stems that will keep us from producing good fruit.
- He might look at our hearts and say, “That prejudice is keeping you from loving some people” And then he cuts it out!
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E. So, when we worship, pray, read Scripture, fast, and serve others, we expect Jesus to do some pruning.

- It will often be quite unpleasant, but only then can we begin to show people the vineyard.

VII. Several years ago, I had a parishioner named Pat Reynolds.

A. She shared with me a story about how Jesus pruned her heart.

B. Her dad was overbearing, stern, harsh and mean.

- As a teen-ager and young adult, Pat often butted heads with him.
- Resentment towards him took root in her heart.

C. However, when Pat was a little girl, there was a time when her dad showed some loving tenderness.

- Pat was playing with a glass bottle of soap bubbles.
- She accidentally shattered the bottle and cut herself.
- A piece of glass was stuck in her hand.
- Her dad pulled the glass out and cleaned the wound.
- But the wound did not heal.
- So, he took her hand, re-opened the wound, used a needle to search in the wound and found another piece of glass.
- He removed that piece of glass and the wound healed.

D. Several years later, Pat took a Bible based course called 'Healing Streams'.

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- This course required the participants to prayerfully look deep into their hearts to find any deep-seated resentments or unforgiveness.
- One day, while taking this course, Pat saw a vision of her dad.
 - In this vision, her dad had cuts all over his body.
 - Then she remembered the time when her dad helped heal her hand.
 - That is when she realized that there was no one to help him heal as he grew up.
 - With this revelation, Pat was able to let go of her resentment and forgive her dad.
 - Jesus had pruned her heart.
 - Jesus said, “This resentment has got to go” and then cut it off.

E. With this pruning, Pat was able to show her dad the vineyard.

- She was able to demonstrate love towards her dad.
- During his last days on earth, Pat was his principal caretaker.
- Her dad transitioned into the next phase of eternal life experiencing his daughter’s love.

VIII. God calls us to show people the vineyard – to demonstrate life as God intends.

A. To do this, we must stay connected to Christ and allow Him to prune our hearts.

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- B. Let us all take a minute or two and silently ask, "What kind of pruning does Jesus need to do with me?"