**Springfield Presbyterian Church**

**July 3rd, 2022**

**Faithful Gardening**

1. Teach them how to plant

When I was in my preteen years, I would go outside in the

summertime and look at the large trellis that my dad made and all the roses that were blooming. There were hues of red, rose, white, and the occasional yellow. It was during those summers where my mom would teach me how to prune back the roses and how to tenderly care for them.

 My dad has always had a garden as well, in the back of the yard, where he would plant vegetables. He created raised beds with these little fortresses that kept the bunnies from eating the veggies. I can’t remember as a child how many tomatoes we were giving out around the neighborhood, but my father’s love of gardening was and still is a point of joy in his life.

 I guess it makes sense then that I would come to love the garden. I think all that I’ve learned from the garden is important and vital and I think it is important that we teach our children the tangible skills and care of a garden. I find that my childhood was blessed by these markers of life, and I think all children, whether in a rural or urban landscape, would do well to learn some gardening skills.

As you can tell, I love the garden, so winter can be a difficult season for me, not only because of the crummy weather, but because I want to be out in the garden with joy, with my feet in the grass, and see the buds start to bloom. I can’t claim to be a skilled gardener, but I learn as I go, and for me, this gardening connects to the great gardener, the Creator of all, who has put all of this blooming life into being.

 The garden is also a place I go to when I am sad. Anytime we have had a loss, I go to the garden, and I plant something. I try to remind myself that in death, there is new life, and that something ending can be another beginning. I also find it comforting that Jesus went to the garden when times were tough, when he found life’s challenges to be profound. I know it’s hot and sticky out there, but some time well spent in the garden is probably good for all our souls these days.

1. You Reap what you Sow

The acknowledgement of the garden’s importance brings me to

our Galatians reading this morning. We’ve heard it said often, “You reap what you sow.”

 Thinking about the text this week has made me think about what I sow, not only out in the physical garden, but in the garden of my spirit. What do I spend my time on? Where do I spend my money? What am I reading, or what am I not reading? What am I eating, or again, what am I not eating (admittedly, for me, Brussel sprouts)? Where do I invest my energy, love, intelligence, imagination? All of these questions point to my priorities and they point to what I sow in my life.

 When I evaluate my life’s priorities, I think of a line that my mother said to me as a kid. Now, I know she wasn’t the original creator of the quote, but I first heard it from her, when she said, “A weed is just a flower you don’t want.” Sometimes you have to pluck up the weeds, sometimes that which you think serves you, doesn’t in the moment. Maybe it’s a flower for another time, another place in your life, but it’s less judgmental gardening. When I do this kind of review of my life, and I can answer these questions, it helps me to understand what I will reap down the road at Harvest time.

 For me, harvest time can mean a few things. Of course, we think of the Harvest as the autumn season, but maybe Harvest can happen anytime in our lives. When do we see the full bloom of all that we’ve sown? Sometimes we see it when we are going through a major transition, or perhaps a challenging time, or a season of joy. It’s the harvest time where we really find out who we are.

 This Sunday, I ask you to consider those questions that I just named. What are you putting into your mind, your body, and your soul? It might be a worthwhile practice to write what comes to mind down on paper and then take some time in prayer. Without judgment, can you look at the list and see what is worth keeping and maybe what is worth changing? Taking stock of our garden, both out in the green field and in our hearts is a worthwhile and holy task.

1. If you need a place to start

If you need a place to start, a place to think about these

intangible but important things worth sowing, you can also find it within Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

 The most important part of our garden, according to Galatians and Scripture as a whole, is sowing the Spirit into our lives. The Spirit is indeed God alive within us – a compass for our journey, the tender nudge (or sometimes a loving push), and the guide of all our days. Whatever you want to sow, make sure that the Spirit is at the center of it.

 And after the centerpiece, Paul would tell you to plant gentleness in your lives, but a gentleness that also calls people to account, including yourself. I keep coming back to Ephesians, this sense of speaking the truth in love to one another and ourselves and through disarming gentleness, we can do that work.

 We can also sow the value of both leaning on one another and picking up each other’s burdens. What may be heavy for me, might be light for you, and what might be light for me, might be heavy for you. We live in community, and part of our participation in community life is being honest, sharing our burdens, lifting each other up, and encouraging one another in love.

 As for other things to sow? Well, this is the beauty – God created us in diversity and outside of the realm of this passage, it’s not for me to say what you should sow in your life. I’d urge you toward sowing love, kindness, peace, joy, and hope – but ultimately, what you choose to sow and what you feel God is calling you to sow in your lives is going to involve prayer between you and our Creator. Ask God what seeds need to be planted and what needs to be plucked up. May all that you have sown in your life be blooming, brightly and in abundance, during the Harvest time. Amen.