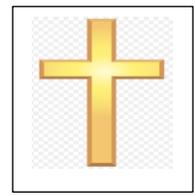




Perley Lutheran Parish
May 2nd, 2021
Fifth Sunday of Easter



Gathering Hymn: We Gather Together

We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing. He chastens and hastens His will to make known; The wicked oppressing now cease from distressing:
Sing praises to His name. He forgets not His own.

We all do extol Thee, thou leader triumphant, and pray that Thou still our defender wilt be; Let thy congregation escape tribulation:
Thy name be ever praised! O Lord, make us free! Amen.

Welcome and Announcements

Bingo Recap

Cemetery Help

Newsletter going out Monday

Senior Recognition on May 16

Continue to support financially

Reachout/Food Shelf

Confession and Forgiveness

Friends in Christ, in the Lenten season we heard our Lord's call to struggle against sin, death, and the devil-all that keeps us from loving God and each other. This is the struggle to which we were called at baptism.

Within the community of the church, God never wearies of forgiving sin and giving peace of reconciliation. On this day let us confess our sin against God and our neighbor and enter the celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord with God and each other.

Most merciful God,

We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us live together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of + Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen**

Prayer of the Day

O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. Nourish our life in his resurrection, that we may bear the fruit of love and know the fullness of your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Psalm 22:25-31(Read Responsively)

From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him.
The poor^{al} shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD. May your

hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. **For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.** To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in^[d] the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him. **Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord,** and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.

First Reading Acts 8:26-40

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip^[d] baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Holy Gospel according to John 15:1-8, **Glory to you O Lord**

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

The Gospel of our Lord, **Praise to you, O Christ**

Children's Message – lamp, extension cord, branch

I'm sure you all know the song, "This Little Light of Mine." I'm going to sing it, and I want you to sing along. While we do, I'll hold up this light and shine it all around. (Start to sing the song, but stop when you notice that the light isn't shining.) What's wrong? My light isn't shining. (Wait until someone notices that it isn't plugged in.) Oh, the problem is, my light isn't plugged in. (Plug the lamp in).

Now that we're plugged in, let's try it again. (Lead kids in singing.)

That was much better with the lamp shining brightly. It's pretty hard for a light to shine when it isn't connected to the power source. Actually, it's not just hard; it's impossible!

It reminds me of something Jesus said in the Bible. He told His disciples a story to help them understand why it's important to stay connected to Him. But He didn't use a lamp. In His example there was a grapevine. A vine is a plant with a lot of branches growing out from it. The branches have fruit on them. So grapevines have grapes on them.

Think about a branch that's been broken off of a tree or a vine. (Hold up tree branch). What happens to it? It withers up and dies. It can't ever have fruit on it again; it's not good for anything except firewood. (Discard broken tree branch).

Jesus said, "I am the vine and you are the branches. If you remain in me, you will have much fruit, but apart from me, you can do nothing." Jesus wants us to produce fruit. Good fruit, like kindness, generosity, and faithfulness. Most of all, He wants us to love others as He has loved us.

But we can't do it on our own. Just as the lamp must be plugged in before its light can shine, and just as the branches must be connected to the vine before they can produce fruit, you and I must stay connected to Jesus to produce the good fruit that God expects of us.

Dear God, help us remember that we need to stay plugged into Jesus if we're going to produce the kind of fruit You expect. In Jesus' name, amen.

Message

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

When we look back on this past year and this pandemic time – I think one of the biggest and most important themes – besides masks and distancing of course – is connections. We live in a society that is obsessed with staying connected and it was never more evident when many of us moved our jobs to our homes and our children's schooling to the kitchen tables. We have cell phones, we have I pads, we have laptops, we stream, we text, we GPS track things, we email, we scan and send, we still fax sometimes and we do so in seconds. We all need and want to stay in touch and we survived as well as we could this past year because of ways to stay connected despite all that was going on.

Despite all of the ways we have in this world today in order to stay connected, it seems there is only one REAL connection that should remain at the top of our priorities and that is our connection to Jesus. That connection is more powerful and more important than ANY other connections we have in our lives. It's not high tech, or modern, but rather timeless and ancient. We see that when we look at the image that our Gospel shares with us this morning. "I am the vine and you are the branches". What a great image to help us understand the connection that Jesus wants us to know and feel. We – the branches – are connected to the main vine – the sturdy and life giving stem which gives us nourishment and life. And think about vines - perhaps those amazing vines that you see sometimes growing along walls and buildings and how they provide shade, and beautiful greenery. We are branches, connected to the root of life by the vine. The image of being connected to God with life and power and blessing flowing THROUGH us. The emphasis on this image and the giving of life is more internal rather than other images we may have of our relationship with God. We see and feel God's blessings each day when the sun shines on us, the rain drops on His creation and how all of that gives life to the plants, the animals and to us. That's external though and the ideal and image of the vine and the branches focuses on the direct flowing and giving THROUGH rather than on or upon us.

What then do you think that Jesus is trying to tell us in His words this morning when he talks about bearing fruit? How do we bear fruit in our lives as Christians? Let me read you a passage from Galatians that may help us to understand even better. Galatians 5: 22-23 says "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Bearing fruit therefore is of utmost importance.

Our Gospel says the following:

- Every branch in Him that does not bear fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.
- The branch itself cannot bear fruit
- Whoever abides in Him and he abides in them bears much fruit
- By this the Father is glorified, that we bear much fruit and prove to be His disciples

So what am I trying to get to? What's the main point of all of this? Well simply put, it's all really all about trying to get us to focus on verse 4 which says "Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me." Why is this so important? Well think about these branches and these vines. Branches and vines wither and get torn down and thrown away however branches are not intended to be brittle or dry much less dead. Branches are expected to bear fruit. As Christians we grow in the strength of our faith, our lives take on the characteristics of God, and we are bold and loving in our witness to our lives with Christ. All of these are the natural consequences of being connected to the vine.

If we measure our lives on how much fruit we bear we could be in a world of hurt. Can you imagine if our lives and our everlasting life was simply determined by how much you gave and shared of the Holy Spirit and the love of God? Luckily we know that God's grace and mercy is always with us. We do however need to listen and focus on the importance of abiding in Jesus. That connection that we talked about – the relationship when we wait for Jesus, when we remain in Jesus, we live in Jesus – that's abiding him and that's what we can celebrate each and every moment in our lives.

When it comes to Jesus there really is never a moment in our lives when he doesn't want us to be with him – he never grows tired of us despite all that we put him through. His call to abide – stay connected with him – is constant and is eternal. And if and when we are abiding in Him it will show as Christians in our actions and our deeds towards our activity in our faith, our serving of our neighbors and our diligence in doing God's work. Simply put, as we stay connected to the vine, we will produce fruit through us just like the branches do from the vine.

But it's important to remember that the fruit bearing doesn't start with you and me. In fact, it really isn't about us at all. The fruit – the harvest – we bear are really the fruits of God's love. The fruit that we bear simply starts with God. Our God who loves us so much that he sent Jesus to pay for all of our sins. Jesus makes it pretty clear really "I am the vine; you are the branches." It's a simple image really – connected to the vine we bear fruit. No connection then no fruit.

So do you think that if we know Christ and are connected to him in Word and Sacrament that we then will always not only bear fruit and bear fruit perfectly? Of course not. But that's ok because we don't have to – Jesus covered our imperfectness. We have forgiveness. We just have to confess and seek forgiveness to receive it. Think about it – there is not one of us who comes to the Lord without sins but there is also not one of us that walks away from confession that is not also forgiven.

Our success in bearing fruit is not measured and weighed in how well we bear fruit but rather how much we come to God for forgiveness and grace. God's mercy fills us and builds us up. We are to repent our sins and seek forgiveness with the confidence that comes from God, not ourselves. With the joy of knowing that our God loves us not because we are perfect but rather because we are not perfect!

What do you do to your trees at home in order to help them produce? That's right, you prune them. Sometimes, like I've done over the years to my lilac bushes, you prune them way back so they produce more beautiful flowers the following year. Great image for our trees and bushes right, but not so pleasant if we think about our lives being pruned and trimmed way back. But God does do this, he prunes and trims us through our lives to grow and to be more fruitful. As our Gospel said "He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes^[a] to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed^[b] by the word that I have spoken to you." The challenge is however that God doesn't ever stop shaping us – and that shaping isn't always a painless process. We know what it feels like to hurt and struggle. Hebrews 11 tells us "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. That shaping – in troubled times or times when we want to control things rather than letting God have control – are not easy. But he uses these

things and times to help us grow. We are trimmed and shaped and molded to bear even more fruit of the spirit in those times.

Guess what, he's not ever going to be done pruning us in this life. He will continue molding us as we continue to abide in Him. And that's great news! God is always alive in our lives. Our lives aren't always easy but there is always a blessing in knowing that God calls us HIS and that he abides in us and we abide in him so that we can bear fruit in a world that really needs it. Connected to Him, the vine, God runs right through us. Transformed, we can transform the life and the world in which we live. Amen.

Hymn of the Day: Abide with Me
Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
The darkness deepens Lord, with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee
In life, in death, o Lord, abide with me

Apostles Creed

*I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian/catholic Church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen*

Prayers of the people: (Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**)

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love...

God of all fruitfulness, you abide in your church and your church abides in you. Cleanse us by your word and give yourself to the whole church on earth so that it bears fruit and witnesses to your love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great**

You have created the heavens and the earth. As we wonder at the beauty of creation, may we seek vital connections among all that depends on Earth for life. Lord, you rule the nations with justice and love. Give the leaders of the earth assurance of your abiding presence that they lead not by fear but with love for those they are called to serve. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great**

You have loved us so that we can love others. We pray for all in need of your love: those who are poor, lowly, outcast, weak or fearful. Healing God, you hear the cries of those in need and answer them in distress. Grant to those who are sick and suffering your compassion and love to find health and wholeness. We lift up those within our congregation and those that have reached out to us for prayers, Margie and Marlis, Sonya and Roger, Terry and Jeff, Evonne and Kirk, Byron and Whitney and all of those that we now name silently in our own hearts..... Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great**

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Meal

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection and ascension, we await his coming in glory.

Pour out your Holy Spirit, that by this Holy Communion we may know the unity we share with all your people in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Words of Institution and Lord's Prayer

Our father who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen

The risen Christ invites us to this table. Come, eat, and be satisfied.

After Communion Prayer

Wellspring of joy, through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts. Satisfy the hunger still around us, and send us as joyful witness, that your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus. The God of life, Father, +Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen**

Sending Song: Earth and All Stars

Earth and all stars! Loud rushing planets! Sing to the Lord a new song! Oh, victory!

Loud shouting army! Sing to the Lord a new song!

He has done marvelous things. I too will praise him with a new song!

Knowledge and truth! Loud sounding wisdom! Sing to the Lord a new song!

Daughter and Son! Loud praying members! Sing to the Lord a new song!

He has done marvelous things. I too will praise him with a new song!

Dismissal – Alleluia! Christ is risen. **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!** Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia! **Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

Mark Your Calendars:

Sunday, May 9th – Services at 9am at Kirkebo (live streamed and in -person)

Sunday, May 16th – Services at 9am at Nora (live streamed and in-person)

Senior Service & Reception – Nora council meeting to follow reception

The True Vine

"I am the vine: you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.," John 15:5 (NIV)



The puzzle is based on John 15:1-8

R P O W M P N S I O N F J X Z
S E O G A Z Y M H A P B K G X
N S M L D R W O E P P V T P W
X C U A Y R M L X N X S A Y K
B P P L I A C R T N M F R Z A
X K R N N N A I H W O R D S J
C S U N L E D A R G J N R K X
J J N Q B A K E O L G E V Y T
B E E P W I G J W O U F Y I C
R B S W N I D Z N R O E U V E
A U Z N N H T B T Y G R X N J
N R F D P W H H J Z F N I F H
C N S I J F M K E G B V Y B G
H E Q E R H X G A R D E N E R
U D F V A E W R Z U S S G G E

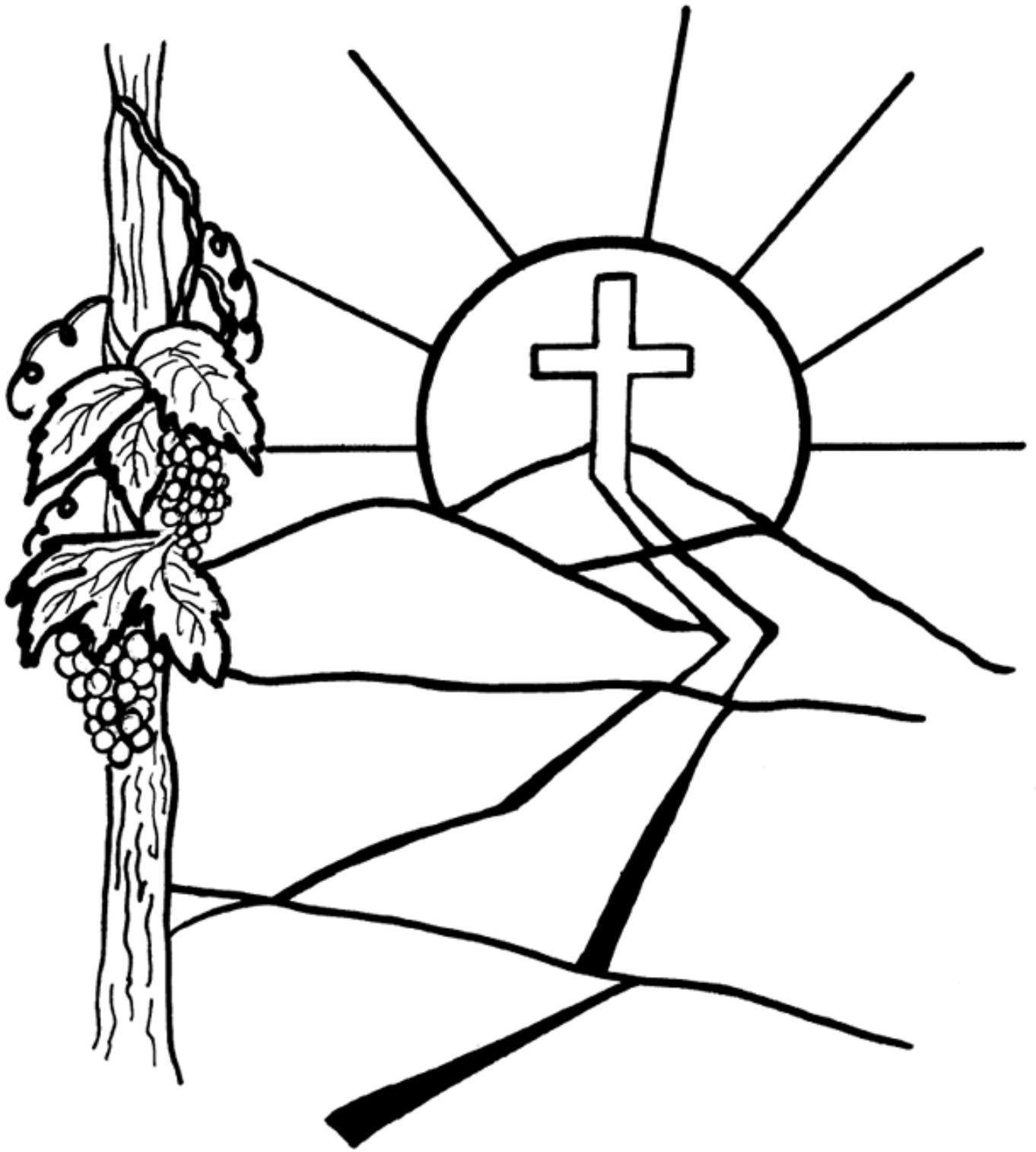
WORDS
CLEAN
FRUIT

GARDENER
PRUNES
BRANCH

REMAIN
THROWN
FIRE

BEAR
VINE
WITHERS

GLORY
TRUE
BURNED



The True Vine

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5 (NIV)



The puzzle is based on John 15:1-8

The words below have been written in code. Use the hints in the decoder at the top of the page to help break the code (the letters on top are the correct answers, the letters on the bottom are the code). Write the correct word on the line provided beside each code word.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

- 16-18-21-14-5-19 _____
- 22-9-14-5 _____
- 20-18-21-5 _____
- 7-1-18-4-5-14-5-18 _____
- 6-18-21-9-20 _____
- 2-5-1-18 _____
- 18-5-13-1-9-14 _____
- 2-18-1-14-3-8-5-19 _____

PRUNES
FRUIT

VINE
BEAR

TRUE
REMAIN

GARDENER
BRANCHES