Pruning Season

On this fifth Sunday of Easter, I’m here to bring you good news … The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ brings life out of death … and … even if it feels like death, God is at work!

Hazy April air in Lincoln …

* Last ride with Dad down Highway 77 in Kansas Flint Hills at nightfall as fires burned all around as lightning flashed in the west …
* Spring pasture burning …
* Prairie grasses send their roots deep into the soil, and are able to thrive when rain is scarce. Blades grow from just beneath the soil (most other plants grow at the tips of branches).
* These grasses thrive when the dead shoots from past growing seasons are burned away by fire, whether started by lightning strikes or set by humans.

Jesus used many images to describe the Kingdom of God …

* The animal kingdom … sheep … last week
* The plant kingdom … grapevines … not morning glories … this week

Wine growers know that pruning is critical to producing good grapes …

Jesus goes on to say that that the church needs pruning now and then in order to be fruitful … and I am here to say that this is good news …

Preachers are taught that every sermon should proclaim good news …

Some people talk about the church in the US as if it is dying …

* You know … “just look at shrinking membership and declining attendance …”

But … what if God is pruning the church of its pride of place …

* which comes from prestige …
* which comes from siding with the powerful, instead of the vulnerable …

Heritage Presbyterian Church is in a time of transition as Pastor Ray retires …

* if it feels like a loss, it is …
* and you are not alone … we all feel it

The good news is that new life will emerge as the pain of the pruning lessens …

So … instead of thinking about losses, let us …

* Thank God that God cares enough for the church to prune it back … and
* Look forward to a bountiful harvest of the fruits of the Spirit

Jesus says that he shares these things that his disciples might have his joy and that their joy might be full.

Have you experienced this kind of joy?

All we need to do is to abide in Jesus …

* Continue, remain, survive, last, persist, stay, and live on

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ brings life out of death … and … even if it feels like death, God is at work!

All authority and power and dominion to the name that is above all names—Jesus Christ our Lord—now and in the age to come. Amen.