

## **07-01-2024 Lessons from the Berry Patch #12- Careful of that grip**

One of the most important skills of the berry picker is mastery of your grip. Some berries are firm, some are soft – you can't pluck them off the vine with the same technique.

When you are reaching way into the middle of the vine to grab one of those big ones, while avoiding those thorns and watching for snakes; you need to touch it gently and figure out if it is so ripe that it is soft. Those soft ones have really good flavor, but they can easily become mush in the face of a gorilla grip.

People are like that too... As we go merrily through our lives, we sometimes handle people roughly – it seems that we do this to our children a lot. Some people take rough handling in stride, some are damaged by it. So how do you know who is who and which is which? Well, each person in the world has those firm days and those mushy days and we don't usually have a sign on our forehead that tells our daily status.

The solution is that we should handle all people gently. Paul sums it up well in Colossians Chapter 4:

<sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving. <sup>3</sup> At the same time, pray also for us that God may open a door to us for the message, to speak the mystery of the Messiah, for which I am in prison, <sup>4</sup> so that I may reveal it as I am required to speak. <sup>5</sup> Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. <sup>6</sup> Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.

“Seasoned with salt” – I love that analogy; how good do things taste when they have just the right seasoning? Salt is also a basic preservative, it keeps your speech from becoming rotten and rancid.

Again in Galatians 6:

**6** Brothers, if someone is caught in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual should restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so you also won't be tempted.

We must admit that it is really easy to get on our high horse and unleash on someone who is struggling.

In years and years of following and studying Jesus Christ I have noticed something, maybe you have noticed it as well. Jesus was seldom harsh in His dealings. When He was harsh, it was most often with the high-and-mighty religious leaders. Jesus was almost always gentle and accepting of honest seekers, even when they were way off base. He gently led them back to Our Father in Heaven. One of my favorite examples of Jesus' gentle grip is found in John 8:1-11. Take a minute to reflect on this story and let me know what it says to you.

Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, 2 but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. 3 As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.

4 "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?"

6 They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger.

7 They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!"

8 Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

9 When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. 10 Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?"

11 "No, Lord," she said.

And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more." <sup>NLT</sup>

Are there people out there that you might need to loosen your grip on?



Be gentle with people in the Berry Patch today – be careful of your grip!