

## Discussion guide for March 24, 2024: John 15:1-8

Lent: The Names of Jesus, The Vine: Carmen Schrock-Hurst, HMC

**Opening thought and discussion questions:** Our Lenten series has focused on the seven names of Jesus. Spoiler alert: Next week's name will be "I am the resurrection and the life!" Review the different names we have studied. Share which name is the most comforting for you. Which name is the most challenging?

**Old Testament Scriptures as background:** Isaiah 5:1-2,7; Psalm 80:8-16. Read these and note how the vine imagery is used in these passages.

**Scriptures to ponder:** Read John 15:1-8 in several translations if you have different translations in the room. Pay attention to the words used for "prune," "abide," and "fruit." Note the frequency with which these words are used.

**Discuss:** Is there anyone in the room who has experience growing grapes? Or other fruit trees? Share observations about pruning and about the steps taken to maximize fruit production. What can we learn from this that would help to shape our own lives and growth?

**Discuss:** How have you experienced pruning? Do you think that God uses personal tragedy and specific health challenges as pruning? If so, how do you explain that some people have more than their fair share of pruning, and other people don't visibly seem to experience much pruning at all? Who said that life was fair?

**Personal Reflection:** Reflect on the traditions of Holy Week (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter services). Share specific ways various services have been meaningful to you and challenged you to greater faith. How does the Palm Sunday story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem set the backdrop for the week?

**Palm Sunday Question:** Carmen encouraged us to enter Holy Week looking for Jesus in unexpected places, engaging in unexpected ways. How have you seen Jesus do this in the past? What do these examples teach us about Jesus and about his call on our lives?

**Closing quote to ponder:** "Jesus invites us to abide in his love. That means to dwell with all that I am in him. It is an invitation to a total belonging, to full intimacy, to an unlimited being-with."  
— Henri J.M. Nouwen

**Prayer:** Jesus as we enter into this week of remembering your life, death and resurrection may we respond with compassion to the needs of the world. May we respond with obedience to your invitation to abide in you and to bear much fruit. Amen.