A few years ago, we got a very special holiday in Portugal, a family holiday, one of the days we went around a vineyard it had just transferred ownership, and the new owners, were guiding us around these beautiful tended vines. And the fruit was growing. And we asked about a field down in the valley that was really untidy and stragly, oh, they said this is these vines haven't been pruned for some years and they've forgotten how to fruit. I have no idea that vines could forget, but apparently you don't prune vines, they don't produce fruit and they forget. They look so beautifully alive. Lots of leaves and lots of growth, but no fruit.

I am the true Vine and My father is the vine dresser or the gardener, as we might remember. Well, you might say we've been through quite enough, thank you very much, in the last year or so, so much so that when I was watching Ash Wednesday service, the preacher said, we've got to give up so many things for Lent. I advise you not to give anything else up. It's tough enough. And so I think we all feel right, we've been pruned. So it's been a painful year. But I think this picture Jesus is painting is a hopeful picture. After pruning comes fruit. After this really tough year, what fruit is Jesus's life going to produce in me?

But the picture isn't simply just me and Jesus and the difficulties I've been facing because he doesn't say I am the vine and you are the branch, it's clear that this is a picture of us as achurch. A vine with one branch would be a very strange vine indeed. Instead, Jesus is talking about us as the body of Christ, his disciples, and the goal is for us to become truly fruitful as a church.

Well, we are back in some ways, most of us in churches, some of us will still be watching church online, but when we get back, it doesn't still feel like church with no singing, wearing masks no hanging around afterwards, no coffee after the service. And so we can feel still very strange and wondering what is next. But again, I want to say I think this passage brings us great hope that as churches that have to find their life afresh in many different ways over this last year and much as being pruned. So as we come out of lockdown I think we will be able to see the power of Jesus, and bear much fruit too.

Build back better. They say, well, maybe there is no going back, but rather a call to build the future better as Jesus produces that fruit. Our church life has changed, and I don't think we all know what it's going to look like as we move on this year and do pray for your clergy. It's such uncertain times. Where are they leading the church? It's not the same as in the past. What do we have to do when we have to stop from the past and perhaps we don't need to start again? What have we learned during lockdown that's been good and we need to continue. Where is Jesus leading us to?

I don't think the answers are going to be fairly clear at the moment. It takes the whole of the summer to bear fruit. And so it will take us time to see what fruit, but each church will have its own answer to that. But being fruitful does need pruning, says Jesus, and I think sometimes this is what churches really don't like, that just because a ministry in the past produced great fruit. It may not be doing so now. And they need pruning. We are in the business of resurrection, not of resuscitation or CPR, and some churches seem to desperately want to keep things going when perhaps they are time limited. And so the picture of the pruning is exactly the same. There is no resurrection without death. And actually, the pruning gives the space, the new life and new fruit, and that's the promise. New fruit, fruit that will last fruit to the glory of God, our Father.

What is this fruit? . Well, I think the epistle gives us a clue of hwat I think in Jesus means abiding in the love of God is love and those who abide in love abiding God and God abides in them, we heard.

Do you realize the grapevine roots go down deep? I didn't until I visited the L'Arche community, which was having a celebration in All Saints West Dulwich. It's a vast building . And in the middle of the nave, there was this vine right up there and the roots came right down to the floor vine roots can go six to seven meters deep, which is more than the roof here. I think it's a lovely picture of the way that churches need to have deep, deep roots in the love of God for ourselves and for us as a church, deep roots, bringing sap, life to the plant to bring love, deep roots, bringing fruit, love.

I think this is where churches need to long to grow, and the next challenge for us is to work out how to love. We are blessed here as we worship in the midst of the food bank. But the Lambeth Warehouse, every gift here is a gift of love given by people. Every parcel that is waiting to be delivered is the gift of love to those in need. Each of us need to work what that fruits of love that Jesus promises, we will bear after our pruning.

So we have been pruned that's just abide in Jesus and abide in love. His love working in our own lives and in the lives of churches. With our roots deep in love, so that as Jesus promises after the pruning comes the fruit. The fruit that will last fruit to the glory of the.