

## Thought for the Day 29th October - Joan Loane

Romans 11:11-24 and John 15:1-8

When we are down the South Coast, we go to a small church, small in size and small in congregation. Occasionally I read one of the lessons. Last time I was to do this, we arrived at the time for church to start and the minister asked me to play the piano. This was definitely outside my comfort zone! I had done it previously two or three times, but had practised for a week prior to the service.

I found the hymn book and located some hymns I might be able to play. When I put the book on the piano, it fell off and broke into three sections! It did not bode well for my subsequent playing. Somehow, I played some hymns, any mistake very obvious because there was only a humming accompaniment.

When I went out to the lectern to read the Romans reading, a huge Huntsman spider walked across the page. Should I say something? What if the minister had arachnophobia? I mumbled something about a spider being there and continued on. The reading was all about the believing Gentiles being grafted into the olive tree whereas the unbelieving Jews had been cut out. Paul's hope was that his Jewish brothers and sisters would turn from their unbelief and be grafted back in.

Then in my readings in John at home, I came to John 15 where there is a similar metaphor but not the same. Jesus said: 'I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.....No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me....If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.'

So what do we learn from this? We must 'remain in the vine'. How do we do that? By prayer and spending time reading God's word and walking daily with Him? And what about the pruning? It sounds quite painful to me but unfortunately it sounds as if it is necessary to keep us growing the right way and producing fruit. And what is the fruit? Is it the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5 (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control)? Or is it that others come to trust in the Lord? Or does one lead to the other?