

## **“Another Lesson From My Shrub Bed”**

You might remember a couple of weeks ago I wrote a Focus about me pruning my shrubs, and what a difference it made, comparing that to how God prunes us. As Paul Harvey used to say: “Now here’s the rest of the story.” Like Pastor Wes, I am not always a patient man, and although I knew at some point in the future, my Gardenias would recover and look great, I wasn’t willing to wait - I wanted action NOW!

That being said, as I was looking at my shrubs a week or so ago, I noticed there were at least 7 or 8 plants that just looked really scraggly, so I yanked them right out of the ground and threw them on the burn pile ( I also tend to be impulsive at times). So...having made that rash decision, there was no turning back, so Willow and I made a trip to Home Depot and purchased 14 new (different type) shrubs.

Another one of my qualities is I’m rather a “neat freak;” I like to have everything neat and tidy and all my ducks in a row. I realized that before I planted my new shrubs, I would have to transplant about a ½ dozen Gardenias, and then when I looked at my mulch, it looked awful, and I grudgingly decided that I really needed to dig out all the old mulch - ugh! I am close to turning 79! Why do I keep making work for myself?!!

So for over a week, the front of my house looked like a war zone, and being the anal neat freak I am, it really bothered me that my “ducks” weren’t all in perfect alignment, but at my age I can only work so hard for so long, then I have to rest or save it for tomorrow. I almost felt embarrassed by what my neighbors might think when they saw my hot mess, because they know what a neatnik I am, and of course, they didn’t know what the finished product would look like.

OK - why am I doing all of this babbling about my shrub bed? Because one day in the midst of my mess, the Lord explained to me this is how our lives might look to others when we’re “under construction!” He is constantly working in our lives to perfect us, to make us more like Jesus. He might prune us, or, He might have to yank out some dead stuff, and replace it with something more vibrant and productive, and during this divine process, we might look like a “hot mess” to those around us.

So here’s two takeaways for us today: 1) If you are the one God is working on, be encouraged, the end result will be worth the struggles! 2) If you look at someone else's life, and it seems like their “ducks” are all over the place with no sense of order, don’t judge them! God the Master Gardener is at work in them making all things new! Amen!