

Morning Service of the Word

Easter 5 - Sunday 2 May 2021

Welcome and Opening Prayer

SONG

Introduction

O Lord, open our lips:
and our mouth shall sing your praise.

O God, make speed to save us
O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Praise the Lord:
The Lord's name be praised.

Confession

A moment of silence:

Christ our Passover Lamb has been offered for us. So, let us rejoice by putting away all malice and evil and confessing our sins with a sincere and true heart.

God our Father, we are sorry for the times when we have used your gifts carelessly and acted ungratefully.

We are sorry when we enjoy the fruits of the harvest but forget that you have given them to us.

We are sorry that, while we belong to a people who are full and satisfied, we ignore the cry of the hungry.

We are sorry that we are thoughtless and do not care enough for the world you have made.

We are sorry that we store up goods for ourselves alone as if there were no God in heaven.

Father, in your mercy, forgive us and help us. Amen.

Absolution

May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins and restore us in his service to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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Bible Reading

1 John 4:7-21- New International Version

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so, we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

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Gospel Reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to..... **Glory to you O Lord.**

John 15: 11-18

“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. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will

be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Easter 5

Our Gospel bible reading show us Jesus talking to his disciples, but it also shows us Jesus looking forward to the guiding principles that will help in the development of all his followers, and the church. In this passage Jesus is explaining how and what the relationship between himself and his followers looks like.

We see Jesus telling us that he is the true vine and that we as his followers are part of the vine like branches. We are part of what Jesus is doing.

As Jesus spoke of Himself saying, "I am the true vine," He was trying to help us understand the value of being connected to Him by our faith. This faith should be part of a deep and growing relationship with Him that results in Peace in all circumstances, Hope in trials, Strength in adversity, and Joy that cannot be taken from us.

I am not a great gardener in fact a more accurate description would be I am not a gardener. No matter what I do with plants – water them, feed them, care for them, lick them... they tend not to be very health and more than likely die.

My father on the other hand was. He was a great biologist and loved caring and growing plants of many varieties. He would take great care in preparing the soil, selecting the different seeds and seedlings that he intended to grow that season. He would spend many hours weeding, watering, and tending and pruning the plants as they grew to ensure he had a bumper harvest each year and could feed his family with the things he had grown.

As I have said one of the things my dad spent time on was pruning the plants as they grew. This was a necessary act to ensure the plants produced an abundant harvest. Many people when they read this passage are put off by it because they feel that pruning knocks something off them – takes something away that they might need. But pruning is not a punishment; it is a reward. In the same way as the gardener, God prunes the life of everyone who seeks to live a life as God intended. So that we can follow God's commandments and bear the fruit of Gods spirit in the lives that we live for him.

If we go all the way back to Genesis, we see a creation borne out in Love, our reading from 1 John shows us the soil in which our roots are fed. It is a soil of love. We are told that we love because God first loved us. And that if we love one another then that is seen as God living in us and His love becomes active in the way we treat and care for those we meet each day.

God wants us to abide in Jesus, to live, continue, or remain; in Him, and as a result of abiding, we bear fruit for His glory. So as branches on the vine we are part of a divine life. Life in all its fulness – and as a result fruit is produced. If we go all the way back to the creation story God saw the world was Good, it is in this very moment that sets out how God wants us to be. God created a good world and our task was to care for it.... We've not done a very good job.

Why? Because we stopped producing the good fruit things produced by following God's way and listened to other things and other way. We took our eyes off God – Hebrew 12v2 reminds us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our lives.

A few years ago Birmingham Diocese education team had John 10:10 as their guiding verse, in it Jesus tells us: "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." Not just forgiveness of your sins. Not just salvation and an ongoing relationship with a loving God. Not just eternal life in heaven after you die. Abundant life. Right now. God wants us to have abundant lives and in doing so produce the fruits of His spirit. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. How much do we need a community that truly loves, that is full of joy, full of peace and patience? An estate where kindness and goodness are everywhere. A place where being faithful in our actions and our relationships is important. A community that is gentle to each other and full of self-control. I know what you are going to say to me. Christopher, this utopia doesn't exist. But my response to you is yes it does or at least it should, and every follower of Jesus should be striving to produce these good fruits. This is the good news of the gospel and the new life we have through Jesus.

If we had time we could go for a journey through the bible, from Noah to Abraham, to Ruth and Naomi, to the major prophets of Isaiah and Ezekiel, to Daniel and Job, through the minor prophets and into the gospels and the early church letters, where we would see a faithful loving God who wants us to care for each other with justice and love and all the fruits of his spirit.

This week a friend shared this Facebook post. An old Cherokee native American is teaching his grandson about life. "A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy.

"It is a terrible fight, and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego." He continued, "The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?" The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

The True Vine of God is the one that gives life to the branches that produces these good fruits, in the same way as the Cherokee story, as followers of Christ we need to be constantly removing and pruning the things that stop us producing the good fruit of our good God.

Let's become a Christian community where the utopia of our loving God is a reality both in our own lives and in our community life.

The Creed

We believe in God the Father, by whose plan earth and heaven sprang into being and all created things began.

We believe in Christ the Saviour, Son of God in human frame, virgin-born, the child of Mary, upon whom the Spirit came.

Christ, who on the cross forsaken, like a lamb to slaughter led; suffered under Pontius Pilate and descended to the dead.

We believe in Jesus risen, heaven's King to rule and reign, to the Father's side ascended till as judge he comes again.

We believe in God the Spirit; in one church, below and above: saints of God in one communion, one in holiness and love.

So, by faith, our sins forgiven, Christ our Saviour, Lord and Friend, we shall rise with him in glory to a life that knows no end.

Peace

Intercessions

Intercessions for Easter 5 (2021)

Thank you, God, that we can depend on you. You give us life and hope and help us to grow in our faith. You want us to live lives that benefit others and we seek to glorify you. Help us to share your love, forgiveness, and grace with those around us. Give us the confidence we need to stand up for others to support them and to help them to see how much you love them. Remind us that it is your power and love within us that sustains and strengthens and guides us. Help us to listen to your guidance and live our lives as you would have us do.

God, you give us all the task to look after your world and we see so many images of your world battered and bruised, your people suffering and being neglected. It is our job as your people to make a difference, we come before you and plead on our world's behalf. Lord would you rise up people that put others first, would you bring them into areas where they can make a difference. May our political and other leaders be convicted of the need to serve people and to improve their sphere of influence. We bring before the disaster in India and other parts of the world, may the right equipment and people be able to get to where the need is greatest. In this pandemic we ask that you bring us all to a global consciousness where we see need wherever it is and act to meet that need. In a moment of quiet we bring other areas before you now.

We would bring your world church before you. Would you enable us to meet people where they are and bring your light to shine where it is needed. Would you help your people to see their role in serving others and give us outward and inward looking hearts and minds so

that we share your love and encouragement with others. As our churches seek to support people who have lost much in the recent months would you restore the energy and inspiration of our leadership teams and empower us as a group to make a difference where we are and where you send us.

Father God, you love us unconditionally and you feel our pain. We know of many who are hurting either physically or mentally. We bring them before you... May they be comforted by knowing your presence and strength, may they be encouraged by your grace.

Jesus your wonderful name is powerful and reminds us of your death and more importantly your resurrection. You live within our hearts and we would seek to live lives that are true to you.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

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Blessing and Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.