

Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 2, 2021

Welcome

Greeting: God is good **all the time**. All the time **God is good**.

Question of the Day: When will the last freeze be?

- a) May 10 b) May 20 c) May 31 d) when Hell freezes over

Call to Worship

Worship God, whose love was revealed in Jesus.

We will worship the Almighty and sing praises!

Beloved, we are called to love as God loves us.

We are to love one another as sisters and brothers.

Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

We seek to let God's love be perfected in us.

In baptism God claimed us as God's own children.

We are the branches of Christ's vine.

We can bear good fruit for God.

Prayer of Invocation

Come, Holy Spirit, that through your word we may be guided into the love of God for all the world. Amen.

Hymn "Come, Now Is the Time to Worship" (*Recorded on March 7, 2021.*)

John 15:1-8 The Message

"I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn't bear grapes. And every branch that is grape bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken.

"Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

"I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you've joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is – when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.

I John 4:1-21 The Message

My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn't know the first thing about God, because God *is* love – so you can't know him if you don't love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about – not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.

My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us – perfect love!

This is how we know we're living steadily and deeply in him, and he in us: He's given us life from his life, from his very own Spirit. Also, we've seen for ourselves and continue to state openly that the Father sent his Son as Savior of the world. Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God's Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God. We know it so well, we've embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God.

God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we're free of worry on Judgment Day – our standing in the world is identical with Christ's. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life – fear of death, fear of judgment – is one not yet fully formed in love.

We, though, are going to love – love and be loved. First we were loved, now we love. He loved us first.

If anyone boasts, "I love God," and goes right on hating his brother or sister, thinking nothing of it, he is a liar. If he won't love the person he can see, how can he love the God he can't see? The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people. You've got to love both.

Acts 8:26-40 *The Message*

Later God's angel spoke to Philip: "At noon today I want you to walk over to that desolate road that goes from Jerusalem down to Gaza." He got up and went. He met an Ethiopian eunuch coming down the road. The eunuch had been on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and was returning to Ethiopia, where he was minister in charge of all the finances of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He was riding in a chariot and reading the prophet Isaiah.

The Spirit told Philip, "Climb into the chariot." Running up alongside, Philip heard the eunuch reading Isaiah and asked, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

He answered, "How can I without some help?" and invited Philip into the chariot with him. The passage he was reading was this:

As a sheep led to slaughter, and quiet as a lamb being sheared,

He was silent, saying nothing.

He was mocked and put down, never got a fair trial.

But who now can count his kin since he's been taken from the earth?

The eunuch said, "Tell me, who is the prophet talking about: himself or some other?" Philip grabbed his chance. Using this passage as his text, he preached Jesus to him.

As they continued down the road, they came to a stream of water. The eunuch said, "Here's water. Why can't I be baptized?" He ordered the chariot to stop. They both went down to the water, and Philip baptized him on the spot. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of God suddenly took Philip off, and that was the last the eunuch saw of him. But he didn't mind. He had what he'd come for and went on down the road as happy as he could be.

Philip showed up in Azotus and continued north, preaching the Message in all the villages along that route until he arrived at Caesarea.

Response: *The Word of God, for the people of God! Thanks be to God!*

Time of Prayer

How Is It With Your Soul?

Call to Confession

Sense the love of God that seeks to live in us. Remember the times you have felt connected to the true vine, Jesus Christ. Listen again to the promise and challenge: If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish and it will be done for you. . . . bear much fruit and become my disciples.

Unison Prayer

O God, we have ignored our origin in you and denied your rule over the nations. We have pursued illusions of self-interest rather than abiding in your love. We have turned away from brothers and sisters as if they were enemies to be hated. We are afraid to love those who differ from us or who have the power to harm us. We hesitate to take the risks of caring for fear that we may be hurt. Discipleship seems too demanding. O God, release us from our fears and failures to trust your love and live with bold generosity.

(Time of Silent Prayer)

Assurance

There is good news for all who sincerely repent and seek a living, growing relationship with God. Those who are open to the gift of God's love are blessed with the capacity to extend love to others and thus experience the depth and riches of life that God intends for us. When we love one another, God's love is perfected in us. **Thanks be to God!**

Answer to the Question of the Day

When will the last freeze be? a) May 10 b) May 20 c) May 31 d) when Hell freezes over

Time of Offering *Thank you to everyone for your faithful generosity.*

Offering Prayer

Lord, we know that offering what we have for the sake of others is a discipline of pruning – letting go of our possessions, our time, and even ourselves – to extend the gospel witness into the world. May we be generous in our ministry of giving. Help us not to fear; but to abide in your vine. Amen.

Sermon “Brother, Have You Got a Scroll?” Rev. Joyce Rich

Holy Communion *Have your bread and cup ready.*

Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Blessed are you, O God, who with your Word and Holy Spirit created all things and called them good. In Jesus Christ your Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Through Jesus' suffering and death you took upon yourself our sin and death and destroyed their power for ever. You raised from the dead this same Jesus, who now reigns with you in glory, and poured upon us your Holy Spirit, making us the people of your covenant.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

On the night before meeting with death Jesus took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:

“Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

When the supper was over Jesus took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to the disciples, and said: **“Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,**

poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and upon these gifts, that in the breaking of this bread and the drinking of this cup we may know the presence of the living Christ and be renewed as the body of Christ for the world, redeemed by Christ's blood, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at your table for ever. Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever. **Amen.**

And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray together:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Sharing of the Elements

The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The cup over which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

Prayer After Receiving

Holy God, may these gifts continue to draw all into the community of your kingdom of love. Help us to share the grace and peace of Christ. Amen.

Commission and Blessing

Go with joy to share the story of faith that is given to us
by the One who never lets us go,

the Vine that we are part of.

The blessing of Almighty God be upon us

today and always.

Amen. **And Amen.**

Announcements

Readings For Next Week: Psalm 98; John 15:9-17; I John 5:1-6

Video Thank You "Help for the Homeless" Hygiene and Cleaning Products Donation Drive

*Liturgical resources drawn from: **Led by Love: Worship Resources for Year B**, Lavon Bayler © 1996 United Church Press; **Feasting on the Word: Liturgies for Year B, Volume I**, Kimberly Bracken Long, editor © 2014 Westminster John Knox Press; and **The United Methodist Book of Worship** © 1992 The United Methodist Publishing House.*