



## Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May - Living in Christ

### Welcome

### Greeting

Leader We come from scattered lives to meet with God.  
Let us recognize his presence with us.

*Silence is kept.*

As God's people we have gathered:

**All let us worship him together.**

### Hymn For the beauty of the earth

For the beauty of the earth,  
For the glory of the skies,  
For the love which from our birth  
Over and around us lies,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the wonder of each hour  
Of the day and of the night,  
Hill and vale, and tree and flower,  
Sun and moon and stars of light,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of ear and eye,  
For the heart and mind's delight,  
For the mystic harmony,

Linking sense to sound and sight,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love,  
Brother, sister, parent, child,  
Friends on earth, and friends above,  
For all gentle thoughts and mild,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For thyself, best gift divine,  
To the world so freely given,  
For that great, great love of thine,  
Peace on earth and joy in heaven,  
Lord of all, to thee we raise  
This our hymn of grateful praise

Opening activity Bible trees and plants quiz

*Guess these biblical trees and plants – answers at the end of the sheet*



## Confession

Leader We are often slow to follow the example of Christ.  
Lord, have mercy.

**All Lord, have mercy.**

Leader We often fail to be known as Christ's disciples.  
Christ, have mercy.

**All Christ, have mercy.**

Leader We often fail to walk the way of the cross.  
Lord, have mercy.

**All Lord, have mercy.**

## Absolution *(we are reminded that God forgives all who repent)*

Leader May the God of love bring us back to himself,  
forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All Amen.**

## Collect *(Prayer for the day)*

Leader Risen Christ,  
your wounds declare your love for the world  
and the wonder of your risen life:  
give us compassion and courage  
to risk ourselves for those we serve,  
to the glory of God the Father.

**All Amen**

## **Everyday Faith** *Jean Crowhurst and Frances Daborn, St Peter's*

### Song **Jesus, be the centre**

Jesus, be the centre,  
be my source, be my light, Jesus.

Jesus, be the centre,  
be my hope, be my song, Jesus.

*Be the fire in my heart,  
be the wind in these sails,  
be the reason that I live,  
Jesus, Jesus.*

Jesus, be my vision,  
be my path, be my guide, Jesus.  
*Be the fire in my heart . . .*



## Bible readings

*John 15:1-8 – Jenny Carter, St Peter's*



**15** "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. **2** 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. **3** You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. **4** Remain in me, and I will 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.

**5** "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. **7** If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. **8** This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

*Acts 8:26-end – Eliot Johnson, St Peter's*

**26** Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road--the desert road--that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." **27** So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, **28** and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. **29** The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it."

**30** Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.

**31** "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

**32** The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture:

*"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. **33** In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."*

**34** The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" **35** Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

**36** As they travelled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" **38** And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. **39** When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. **40** Philip,

however, appeared at Azotus and travelled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

## Sermon – Geoff Pugh – Living with Jesus

*Let us pray* – May the living Jesus Christ be with me and with my words to you today, and in your hearing of them, as we continue our Eastertide sermon series. **Amen**

My Sermon Title this morning is Living with Jesus, although perhaps we should first be asking just – who is Jesus ?

Moses, in the desert, in his revelation, at the burning bush there, sought re-assurance from God, before taking on his supremely difficult task of leading the people of Israel, Gods chosen people, to their eventual destiny in the Promised Land. Moses sought to know just who was talking to him. The answer he was instructed to tell the people, was that famous phrase ‘ I am – that I am ‘ – which sacred phrase, shortened recognising its sacredness, becomes YHWH in the Hebrew, or eventually ‘Jehovah’, or ‘ the Lord’ in modern English.

‘I am the true vine’, says Jesus to his disciples, as we just heard in our reading from John. This is the last of seven ‘I am...’ statements or allegories that Jesus makes to them and that are recorded in John’s Gospel. You will doubtless recognise the others, starting with ‘I am the bread of Life’ 6.35, and later ‘I am the Light of the world’ 8.12: ‘before Abraham was, I am’, 8.59, then ‘I am the good shepherd’ 10.11: perhaps look for the remaining others yourselves? Each one is a different way Jesus had of answering that question to him – Who are you ?

Today just let’s look a bit further at this last of these allegories– ‘I am the true Vine’. John 15.1

We notice at once how Jesus immediately follows this with his reference to his father, Jehovah, the Lord, saying – ‘and my father is the vinedresser’, the gardener, looking after his crop.

Just as the disciples then, in their agricultural economy would have immediately related to this day to day powerful picture, this image, then so can we also relate to it today, perhaps quite immediately if we have gardens to tend, however large or small, outdoors or an indoor garden. But Jesus is saying he IS the vine, and that this is what bears fruit, if it is well looked after. And of course, with this strong picture in mind, his disciples then, and now we, you and I, are the potential fruit. The fruit, meaning us as changed, enlightened followers of Christ, who will in turn

bear further fruit, the fruit of good works that advance the work of God, our Lord, the Gardner, the vine dresser of our world.

IT is quite likely, following the narrative of events in John, that Jesus offered this teaching as they progressed to the upper room for the Last Supper, passing by a local garden or household vine as a basis for his pictorial allegory.

Jesus is telling his disciples, and us, that he is the true vine, that Jesus is now the true destiny for an Israel and its people, which had failed Jehovah in those many years after Moses initial guidance in the desert of Sinai.

It is one of those teachings of Jesus which I sometime think we all say, oh, lovely, its quite clear, its about who Jesus is, and we think we know who we are as followers, and then we skip over any text finer points and move on. But let's look at it just a little more before we move on.

Yes, it is a simple picture, but hang on, what is all this stuff about pruning, and burning branches thrown away, e.g. vs 2 and 6. Is that me, or you, when we fail, as pruned branches? Or does this refer to non-believers only, those not abiding with or in Jesus, as in v8 and also this raises the question whether they can or cannot they be brought back from the ground and find themselves back with a fruitful vine? Difficult questions to answer. And at that time, was Jesus possibly looking at his disciples themselves for a pruning, like Judas in due course, or indeed any of them, like doubting Thomas, who had to endure or experience a little minor self-pruning before their final abiding with Christ at Pentecost? And so, as we are his disciples too, does this apply to us? Perhaps in a more serious way than that the only pruning I have recently endured – and yet appreciated – was having my hair cut by my wife Helen, under our latest lockdown.

There is much material here for more sermons and for many Bible commentators to write about. But let us today focus on the essence of this picture. It is simply a picture, a gardening or horticultural allegory which we all can understand, which is about abiding with Jesus, and him abiding with and in us, as we the fruit are an essential part of the vine. It is all about the disciples' dependence on Jesus and now our own dependence on Jesus, in prayer, trust and obedience. For, as in v5, apart from Jesus, we can do nothing that is of any spiritual or approved eternal value, so that with Jesus our own fruitfulness can then bring glory to God the Father – and who is our Gardner.

So the picture, the allegory ends, with v8, 'bear much fruit and be my disciples'.

But that is not quite the end is it, for now we, as the Disciples had to then, must ask ourselves, must consider, how can we bear fruit for Gods glory?

In support of Rachel's sermon a few weeks ago, our Curate Sam asked members of our church to illustrate five different ways in which we in our Parish life might be following the CofE's current proclamation of 5 marks of mission. If you can recall that sermon and the contributions of our church community then, you will have some ideas as to how you might be able to be fruitful yourselves. Keeping in the spirit of our reading from John, and the blossoming springtime around us today, I will look just a little this morning at how we can look after the last of these 5 CofE marks of mission, that is, to sustain and renew the life of God's earth and to safeguard the integrity of God's creation

Well, the very first human allegory of our Bible finds Adam and Eve in a perfect Garden, the garden of Eden - Genesis Ch2. The crop failures of Egypt are an essential part of the story of Joseph: there are many OT references to Israel, once settled in the promised land, as like a vine or vineyard eg Ps 80; in their exile time to Babylon, the hanging gardens there were one of the original top ten world's great wonders bucket list in Biblical times. Horticulture, gardening on a large scale, and also smaller private gardens and orchards have been with us since mankind settled from its early nomadic life. In recent times, with an ever increasing world population, we are now conscious of the impact of human activity on our environment and our planet, our possible failure to safeguard God's creation.

So how can we be fruitful as disciples for Jesus, as he abides in us, and particularly today focusing ourselves on our gardens and our environment?

There are so, so many ways, and we should all be making our own lists for our own circumstances. Herewith just a few suggestions from me today, and do enjoy or have fun in what you do:-

Plant flowers, indoors or out, or shrubs or trees - they can be decorative, not necessarily for food, and they all play a part in helping balance the wonder of God's creation - nectar for the bees, food for the life cycles of many insects and fungi when eventually decomposing.

Minimise your use of destructive plastics, entering our food chains and polluting our lands and seas in ways not once foreseen.

Avoid unnecessary atmosphere polluting car journeys, leave yourself time to walk when you can, don't cut it vine- sorry, fine- it's good for you to walk!

Always think about what will be your good seed for the day – sorry deed.

And perhaps, if you want to get in on the ground flora – sorry floor, – you might consider supporting God's local vineyard of St Peter's church community, particularly for the forthcoming cycle of annual meetings, or even offering your services for one of the various vacant church council positions?

Concluding simply now, as we heard Jesus say

'whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit'

*Let us pray;*

Heavenly Father

We thank you for your wonderful Biblical reading and its picture of finding our own fruitfulness through Jesus abiding with us and we in him. As Spring blossoms around us, may this picture remain with us and sustain us throughout whatever the forthcoming seasons of the coming year hold for us. For Jesus Christ's sake: **Amen**

### Hymn    **O Jesus I have promised**

O Jesus, I have promised  
to serve Thee to the end;  
be Thou for ever near me,  
my Master and my friend.  
I shall not fear the battle  
if Thou art by my side,  
nor wander from the pathway  
if Thou wilt be my guide.

O let me feel Thee near me;  
the world is ever near;  
I see the sights that dazzle,  
the tempting sounds I hear;  
my foes are ever near me,  
around me and within;  
but, Jesus, draw Thou nearer,  
and shield my soul from sin.

O let me hear Thee speaking  
in accents clear and still,  
above the storms of passion,  
the murmurs of self-will;  
O speak to reassure me,  
to hasten or control;  
O speak, and make me listen,  
Thou guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, Thou hast promised,  
to all who follow Thee,  
that where Thou art in glory  
there shall Thy servant be;  
and, Jesus, I have promised  
to serve Thee to the end;  
O give me grace to follow  
my Master and my friend.



O let me see Thy footmarks,  
and in them plant mine own;  
my hope to follow duly  
is in Thy strength alone;

O guide me, call me, draw me,  
uphold me to the end;  
and then in heaven receive me,  
my Saviour and my friend!

Words by John Ernest Bode  
Music by James William Elliott

**Affirmation of faith**    *(We stand to declare our faith)*

Leader    We say together in faith  
**All        Holy, holy, holy**  
              **is the Lord God almighty,**  
              **who was, and is, and is to come.**

Leader    We believe in God the Father,  
              who created all things:  
**All        for by his will they were created**  
              **and have their being.**

Leader    We believe in God the Son,  
              who was slain:  
**All        for with his blood,**  
              **he purchased us for God,**  
              **from every tribe and language,**  
              **from every people and nation.**

Leader    We believe in God the Holy Spirit:  
**All        the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!'**  
              **Even so come, Lord Jesus!**  
              **Amen.**

**Prayers**    ~ Brenda Cox, *St Peter's*

Dear Lord,  
You are the Vine of Life and in your branches we are  
nestled taking shelter and sustenance in the shade of  
your strength. With thanksgiving we celebrate the growth and hope we  
have found placing our roots in you, for in life you nourish us, and your  
Holy Spirit encourages us to reach our full potential in the gifts we have  
been given, that others may know of your love.

In Jesus name we pray

**Amen**



God of compassion, we pray for our troubled world, for countries with areas of deepening conflict, for those fleeing for their lives, or through frailty, must remain in war zones. Those struggling with drought or lack of clean fresh water. We pray too for the people of India struggling to cope with the increasing demands of Covid, lack of adequate healthcare and supply of oxygen. May all charity and relief workers, peace makers, medical and rescue staff know of your love and protection and show us ways where we can help bring about urgent action where the need is greatest. We pray that all the countries of the world that have the ability to share and give Covid Vaccine will do so with love.

In Jesus name, we pray

**Amen**

Father we pray for those whose lives are burdened with poverty or uncertainty about their future beyond the pandemic, for those without homes and very little food and for those who find themselves sleeping rough or who must use food banks.

Strengthen those who offer compassionate care and for all who are looking after the welfare of all who seek out to befriend the needy.

Gracious God, we pray for all who are bereaved by the loss of someone dear to them and for those who are sick and in pain. We especially pray for Eileen and Peter Bliss, Patrick Chapman, John Hunter, Lynda Kirk, Brenda Collard, Barbara and Trevor Lloyd, Catherine McCormack, Olive Park, Joy Storkey, and Malcolm Pritchard, bringing before God anyone who is known to us and is particular need of healing and peace.

In Jesus name, we pray

**Amen**

Gardener of all life, as you trim and shape us for your purpose, may we place our prayers into your hands and trust that new seeds may grow from tired and empty thoughts.

**Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praised into one, we join together saying the Lord's Prayer.

## The Lord's prayer

Leader As our Saviour has taught us so we pray.

**All 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 for ever.  
Amen.**

Notices – see N&N

## Hymn What a friend we have in Jesus

What a friend we have in Jesus  
All our sins and griefs to bear  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer  
Oh, what peace we often forfeit  
Oh, what needless pain we bear  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged  
Take it to the Lord in prayer  
Can we find a friend so faithful  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness  
Take it to the Lord in prayer

*What a friend we have in Jesus  
What a friend we have in him  
For he knows us and he holds us  
in his hands  
And his grace is never failing  
And his love without an end  
What a friend we have in Jesus  
What a friend we have in him*

Blessed Saviour, you have promised  
You will all our burdens bear  
May we ever, Lord, be bringing  
All to you in earnest prayer  
Soon in glory bright, unclouded  
There will be no need for prayer  
Rapture, praise, and endless  
worship  
Will be our sweet portion there

## Closing Prayer

### Blessing

Leader May God  
who clothes the lilies and feeds the birds of the sky,  
who leads the lambs to pasture and the deer to water,  
who multiplied loaves and fishes  
and changed water into wine,

lead us, feed us, multiply us,  
and change us to reflect the glory of our Creator  
now and through all eternity;

**All**      **Amen.**

Leader    Go in the peace of Christ, Alleluia, Alleluia

**All**      **Thanks be to God, Alleluia, Alleluia.**

**Worshipping ▶ Loving ▶ Sharing ▶ Growing**



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*Answers to bible trees and plants quiz:*

1. Cedar of Lebanon

2. Fig tree

3. Mustard tree

4. Sycamore-fig tree

5. Pomegranate tree

6. Grape vine