

**Collects, Readings and Reflection for the Fifth Sunday of Easter  
2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021**

*You can use this sheet in conjunction with our recorded service  
which you can find here <https://youtu.be/DM5eVqMBptk>,  
on the Christ Church Shamley Green YouTube channel  
or via the link provided on our website [www.shamleygreen.net](http://www.shamleygreen.net).*

**COLLECT**

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ  
have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life:  
grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires,  
so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect;  
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**FIRST READING**

**Acts 8.26-end**

An angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Get up and go toward the south  
to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' (This is a wilderness road.)  
So he got up and went.  
Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace,  
queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury.  
He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home;  
seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.  
Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over to this chariot and join it.'  
So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah.  
He asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?'  
He replied, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?'  
And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.  
Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:  
'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer,  
so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him.  
Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.'  
The eunuch asked Philip, 'About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this,  
about himself or about someone else?'  
Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture,  
he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.  
As they were going along the road, they came to some water;  
and the eunuch said, 'Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?'  
He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch,  
went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.  
When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away;  
the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.  
But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region,  
he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

**GOSPEL**

**John 15:1-8**

Jesus said to his disciples: 1 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower.  
2 He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit.  
Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.  
3 You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.  
4 Abide in me as I abide in you.  
Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine,  
neither can you unless you abide in me.

5 I am the vine, you are the branches.

Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

6 Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.'

**REFLECTION** *The Reverend Gussie Walsh; view in our online service*

*Our Gospel passage this morning is part of Jesus' after dinner talk with his disciples during the last supper where he wants to impart some wisdom to them before his trial and ultimate death the following day.*

I wonder what you would say to your friends and loved ones if it was to be your last meal with them before you died. I am sure you would give it serious consideration . Would you simply say how much you love and appreciate them, or might you also give them some words of wisdom?

*Why not take a moment to think about that question.*

Like Jesus you may want to give a word of caution, challenge them to keep taking stock of their relationship with God and others, or give some words of encouragement and guidance in order to help them through any tough times that may lie ahead.

And so it is into this context that we are looking at Jesus' words, not just for the disciples that evening but for us today. He starts with.. **I am the true vine and you are the branches....**

For the Jews that were listening, they would have not only have understood that in order for a vine to produce a bountiful harvest, it needed both the right soil and environment as well as someone to carefully nurture and prune the plant if it was to produce the purpose for which it was planted...an abundance of grapes. But they would also have connected with the times that prophets used the vine as an illustration in the OT.

A man called Isaiah spoke of how the vineyard of the Lord is '*the house of Israel*'.

Jeremiah shared God's message of how he had planned for them to be a '*choice vine*,' and Ezekiel described Israel as being a '*luxuriant vine*.'

So this morning is not a lesson on horticulture as interesting as that is – rather it is about Jesus who said,

**' I am the true vine (i.e the real deal) and my father is the gardener- and you (directed to both those who were listening then and us today) – are the branches.**

However it does not take much to realise that to be a healthy branch of the company, aka disciple, we must first and foremost be connected to the stock and the roots -to Jesus, who in turn was connected to God his father.

**John 5 "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.**

However our reading goes on to tell us that we are not just here simply to make healthy new shoots and leaves but to bear fruit.

I wonder what fruit would you bear or would like to bear?

Perhaps Galatians 5 springs to mind- '**the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control.**

A great passage but maybe you think that is somewhat theoretical- an ideal that you are way off from achieving. But here Jesus is saying...no, this is the fruit that will bring glory to my father which I will develop in you if you abide, stay connected to me.

Nevertheless there is an alternative -to become disconnected.



For example this geranium plant has healthy roots, which in turn produces healthy shoots and leaves, buds and flowers. But if I was to cut off one of the flowers it will thrive for a time before it eventually dies from being separated from the parent plant. The truth is it is easy for us to not realise we are becoming disconnected from Jesus.



I was walking with a friend the other day and we were discussing what 'Abiding or not abiding in Christ' looked like. She told me of a skit she had once seen.

A woman knocks on the door of her friend's house.

The friend opens it and asks her to come in.

For a moment the woman hesitates before stepping through the door.

'I can't stay long', she says.

'Oh do sit down. Can I get you a cup of tea?. I would love to spend some time with you and hear your news' counters the friend.

The woman still standing replies,

'Thank you for the offer but I am afraid I must go as I have a pile of washing I need to do, shopping to get, and a lawn to mow', and with that she leaves.

The following day another visitor comes and knocks on the door.

The friend opens it and invites her in and says,

'Do sit down, can I get you a cup of tea?'

'Oh yes please', replies the visitor and immediately makes herself comfortable.

Soon the two are chatting away, laughing, reminiscing and enjoying each other's company.

As time flies by the hostess asks her visitor,

'Hey, it is so great to spend this time with you do stay for some lunch' then it turned into an afternoon before the visitor eventually left.

Which of these two 'abided in Christ'?

So how do we abide in Christ?

- By reading the bible- the living, speaking, breathing Word of God.
- Praying... communicating with God by sharing and listening to each other
- Worshipping and enjoying Jesus' company!

But there is one more thing that is necessary...

V10 **IF you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.**

Commands require actions.

Michael Chan tells the story of how a father asked his daughter to clean her room one day.

An hour later he asks her... "Emma have you cleaned your room?"

She replies, "Dad I heard and memorised what you said don't worry."

Later he asks her again.. "Emma have you cleaned your room?"

"I learnt what you said in Greek Dad."

At lunch the father asks again..

"Emma have you cleaned your room?"

"Well, I face-timed my friends and we discussed what you asked and how we might clean my room. Stop going on, I will do it sometime"

The father gives up asking!

So often we might theorise something and not do it. We hear the command and do zilch all about it. If we want to be like Jesus God says.. stop putting it off, go and do it.

*Get up and clean your room*

May be you need to forgive someone, step up to the job that he has put on your heart, be more generous, take more time with the family...

*Then get up and clean your room!*

Understand that Jesus is not an authoritarian dictator. He says,

‘ I am asking you to do this because if you remain in my love, as I remain in my father’s –through the joy (v11), the friendship( v15) the love( v 10) you receive from me - you will produce abundant fruit.

In other words our challenge is to love like Jesus loves, not just one another, but on a whole new level.

Not a begrudging love, but a scandalous love, shown and shared by the one who lay down his life for you and me.

We can’t do it on our own, but we can if we abide in Him.

*I am the true vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

### **FINAL PRAYER**

God of deep soil and luxuriant growth:

you call us from our shallow selves to find our depth in you:

may we abide in him alone who can teach us who we are;;

through Jesus Christ, the true vine. Amen.

*(Steven Shakespeare ‘Prayers for an Inclusive Church’)*

### **BLESSING**

God the Father, by whose love Christ was raised from the dead,  
open to you who believe the gates of everlasting life. Amen.

God the Son, who in bursting from the grave has won a glorious victory, give you joy as you share the Easter faith. Amen.

God the Holy Spirit, who filled the disciples with the life of the risen Lord,  
empower you and fill you with Christ’s peace. Amen.

And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
rest upon you this day and remain with you until we meet again. Amen.

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