

Sunday 2 May 2021

The Fifth Sunday of Easter



Sermon and prayers of intercession © Revd Jane Hyde.

Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

- All the Bible readings come from the *New Revised Standard Version*.
- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration have been included at the end.
- The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.
- To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page, <http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 Love divine all loves excelling (click on this link to hear the hymn)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul, with all your mind,

and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us.

Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil

and, confessing our sins in penitence and faith,

firmly resolve to keep God’s commandments

and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for the Fifth Sunday of Easter

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.

First reading

A reading from the Book of Acts

An angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Get up and go towards the south^[g] 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 baptised?' He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptised 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. *Acts 8:26-end*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from First Letter of St John

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also. *1 John 4:7-end*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Now the green blade riseth (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

Jesus said, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. 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. 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. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. *John 15:1-8*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

*'Happy are they, they that love God,
whose hearts have Christ confest
who by his cross have found their life,
and 'neath his yoke their rest.'*

goes the first verse of that well known hymn.

God wants us to be happy, in spite of what many people outside the Christian community believe about what it means to love God and live a life dedicated to following the teachings of Jesus.

Some people 'not in the know' often have a stereotypical view that we suffer for the sake of it ... we deprive ourselves of the things that (to them) make life enjoyable and pleasant ... the excesses and self-serving aspects of daily life, the urge for bigger and better no matter what the consequences to those with whom we share the earth. Others talk about religion as a 'crutch' ... as something that only weak, disillusioned and damaged people need to help them make their way through life. Still others have the view that we are somehow fearful of a monstrous God who threatens horrific consequences - when earthly life comes to an end - if we do not follow his restrictive rules.

Nothing could be further from the truth...they clearly have little (or no) real understanding of the overwhelming extent of the love that God has for us and what that means. In our dislocated Western world, where individuality rules, unity is

often regarded as inhibiting, and the duties of relationships may be seen as tiresome and claustrophobic. Reliance on God (they think) is at best, foolish and, at worst, dangerous.

Yet we are surrounded by people who feel insecure, who turn to external means to satisfy their need to feel relevant, confident and able to compete with others whom they admire or aspire to emulate. For those with the means, life becomes bigger and better than that which went before, but so too does the emptiness inside them which alienates them from their true selves and which no amount of goods can fill or satisfy. But still they remain suspicious of a unity with God, which seems to give us ... Christ's disciples...something which money cannot buy.

This 'something' is the simple knowledge that God loves us, as we hear in the first letter of John which is our second reading. The words '*love*' and '*loved*' occur no less than twenty six times in the passage (I counted them!). It is a passage we can turn to time and time again when we need to be reminded of the awesome covenant, bought by Christ's blood, between us and our Heavenly Father. He loves us...and we cannot know what it is to love unless we know and understand this at the deepest level, and return that fearless love by letting it spread through our lives to others.

In our beautiful Gospel passage (one of the '*I am ...*' sayings from John's gospel) Jesus wants us understand that we are joined to him...part of him...in a way which allows us access to that which God has given him. He will love us and value us, respect us and never let us go. In him we shall find our authenticity, our confidence and our relevance to God and to the rest of our world.

A vine is a remarkable plant. As it grows, a vine develops a very thick, winding stem from which the branches emerge. They can grow such that it can be hard to determine which is the original branch and which other are developed branches. When Jesus says, '*I am...*' (God's own name given to Moses) he is speaking from his divine nature. He ... Jesus-as-God ... invites us to be grafted and rooted with him in the vine, heavily symbolic of the love we celebrate at the Eucharist. His precious blood poured out for us ... the wine we take at Communion ... the 'something' ... the love so freely given, is an invitation to us to become a living part of that wine-bearing vine ... a living part of that love.

But it is important for us to remember that even though vine branches at first glance look alike, no two are exactly the same. They may weave and twist in similar ways, they may produce similar fruit after the same pattern, but each is unique. And this is symbolic of Jesus' call to each of us. He calls us in our uniqueness to become joined with him in a similar purpose, that of spreading the love of God wherever we are. We produce the same fruit from our individual branch; we are integrally united with the original stem. Whether or not we are fruitful vines depends on us ... and there is a cost, of course, just as Jesus' life had a cost.

The love of God is given freely to all, but that does not dilute it, it does not affect the preciousness of the gift, it does not lessen its power to change lives. God's special gift strengthens and inspires us to hold fast, to remain faithful and fruitful, both when we are challenged by the world and when we experience personal hardships.

The wider our life experience, both good and bad, the deeper our understanding, and the greater our appreciation of life as a precious gift. The better we see others through Jesus' eyes, the greater value we place on them ... our little branch becomes an active extension of Jesus. From this grows a greater love for God and each other and the expansion of love throughout the world.

Happy are they, they that love God, whose hearts have Christ confessed, who by his cross have found their life, and 'neath his yoke their rest.' Amen.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray to the Lord God Almighty,
in whom we live and move and have our being.

Father, we want to produce good fruit in abundance;
nurture us as branches of the true vine,
train and prune us where necessary,
and may our spiritual harvest make rich wine,

wine of your kingdom.

Lord in your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

Father, clearly we see around the world
the tragic and expensive consequences
of branches cut off from the true vine.

We pray for a seeking after your truth
and a desire to act rightly and justly
in all areas of human society.

Lord in your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

Father, we pray for those to whom we are linked
by family, friendships or work;
~especially we pray for those
separated from their loved ones or their home.

Lord in your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

Father, we long for healing and wholeness
in all who suffer
and in all dysfunctional communities;
guide us to understand
how we might be part of the healing.

We pray today for the people of India
and other underdeveloped nations
where the ravages of the Covid pandemic
are causing catastrophic devastation.

Lord in your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

Father, we know that death
cannot separate us from your love;
in that knowledge we commend your keeping
those who have died and all who mourn them.

Lord in your mercy,

All hear our prayer.

Father, we thank you that we can live
in the joyful freedom of your love,

as we dedicate ourselves, as branches of the true vine,
to serving others.

Merciful Father,

All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The peace

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.
Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.
Peace from the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 [Longing for light we wait](#) (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
and the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 [As the deer pants](#) (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, you made the world and love your creation.
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.
And so we gladly thank you,
with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**All 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.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

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

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour 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.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Eternal God,
whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life:
grant us to walk in his way,
to rejoice in his truth,
and to share his risen life;
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.