

Sunday Worship at Home, 2nd May, Easter 5

Introduction:

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Let us pray.

**Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people,
and kindle in us the fire of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

A Prayer of Confession:

Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed for us. Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil and confessing our sins with a sincere and true heart

We confess to you our selfishness and lack of love: fill us with your Spirit.

Lord, have mercy.

We confess to you our fear and failure in sharing our faith: fill us with your Spirit.

Christ, have mercy.

We confess to you our stubbornness and lack of trust: fill us with your Spirit.

Lord, have mercy.

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

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. **Amen**

Bible Reading: John 15:1-8

Jesus said "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. "

Reflection on the reading:

It's funny isn't it, how you can read a passage from the bible you have read many times, know really well, and still be hit between the eyes by something really important that you have never noticed before. *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit"*, That's fair enough, but then... *"while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful"*. Last week we learnt about the Good Shepherd. This week we think about the Good Gardener: the Good Gardener cuts back the good wood, the fruit bearing wood so that it will bear much more fruit. I must admit I am not a confident pruner. I know the basic three steps... 1. get rid of the dead wood, that's easy. 2. Take out the crossing over branches. That's harder when there are two branches that want to be in the same place, and it's the not quite so strong one that's in the better position. 3. Cut back the good wood to four or five buds.... well should I do four or five... and what if number six looks really good, especially if three, four and five don't... I'm rambling now, like an unkept vine, but you get the point. Cutting back the good wood is hard. The benefice leadership team are planning what in-person and on-line services we should have to support the life and worship of the church both in this Recovery phase of the pandemic and in the longer term post-COVID future. That may involve some hard choices for all of us, cutting into good wood as well as removing dead wood, if we are to move forward into a fruitful new time of helping God grow his Kingdom in our villages. Because in the end this is what being a missionary disciple is about. **Amen**

The Creed

We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.
We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith, and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.
We believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Be still and pray:

In your prayers, include prayers for the church, the needs of the world and our local community. Pray for Church leaders as we look to rebuild the church after COVID. Pray for India, Brazil and other countries where infection and death rates are still high. Pray for those struggling with isolation or financial hardship because of lockdown. Pray for healing who are ill. Give thanks for the lives of those who have recently died and pray for God's peace and comfort for those who are mourning their loss. Pray for those affected and killed at the religious festival in Israel. ***Finish with The Lord's Prayer.***

Conclusion

God of our salvation, you have restored us to life, you have brought us back again into your love by the triumphant death and resurrection of Christ.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia. Amen.

Reverend Eddie