

St. John & Bethesda Lutheran Churches

Sunday, May 2, 2021

This Sunday's image of how the risen Christ shares his life with us is the image of the vine. Christ the vine and we the branches are alive in each other, in the mystery of mutual abiding described in the gospel and the first letter of John. Baptism makes us a part of Christ's living and life-giving self and makes us alive with Christ's life. As the vine brings food to the branches, Christ feeds us at his table. We are sent out to bear fruit for the life of the world.

GATHERING

WELCOME

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord. (Ps. 22:27)

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, the fountain of living water,
Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in Christ,
let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Water may be poured into the font as the presiding minister gives thanks.

We thank you, risen Christ,
for these waters where you make us new,
leading us from death to life, from tears to joy.

**We bless you, risen Christ, that your Spirit comes to us
in the grace-filled waters of rebirth,**

like rains to our thirsting earth,

like streams that revive our souls,

like cups of cool water shared with strangers.

Breathe your peace on your church when we hide in fear.

Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness.

Send us companions on our journey as we share your life.

Make us one, risen Christ.

Cleanse our hearts.

Shower us with life.

To you be given all praise,

with the Holy Spirit,

in the glory of God,

now and forever. Amen.

GATHERING SONG

Hallelujah! Jesus Lives!

ELW 380

GREETING

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

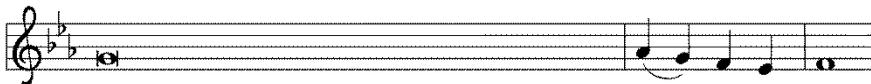
KYRIE



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



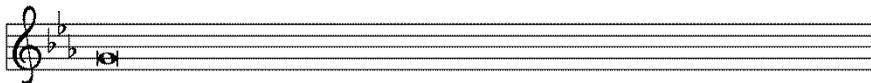
Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



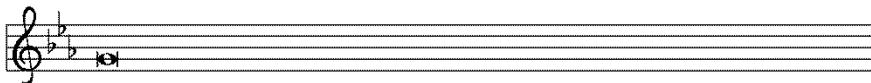
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



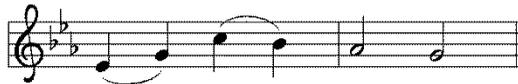
Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



A - men, a - men.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. **Nourish our life in his resurrection, that we may bear the fruit of love and know the fullness of your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Acts 8:26-40

Led by the Spirit, Philip encounters an Ethiopian official who is returning to his African home after having been to Jerusalem to worship. Philip uses their encounter to proclaim the gospel to him. Upon coming to faith in Jesus, he is baptized by Philip.

²⁶An 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.) ²⁷So 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 ²⁸and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” ³⁰So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹He replied, “**How can I, unless someone guides me?**” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³²Now 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.

³³In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “**About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?**” ³⁵Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶As 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?**” ³⁸He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When 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. ⁴⁰But 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.

The grass withers and the flower fades,
but the Word of the Lord endures forever.

PSALM: Psalm 4

²⁵From you comes my praise in the great assembly;

I will perform my vows in the sight of those who fear the LORD.

²⁶**The poor shall eat and be satisfied,**

Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts live forever!

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;

all the families of nations shall bow before God.

²⁸**For dominion belongs to the LORD,**

who rules over the nations.

²⁹Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow down in worship;

all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel before the LORD.

³⁰**Their descendants shall serve the LORD,**

whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.

³¹They shall proclaim God’s deliverance to a people yet unborn,

saying to them, “The LORD has acted!”

SECOND READING: 1 John 4:7-21

We love God and others because God first loved us. We cannot say we love God, whom we have not seen, while hating fellow Christians, whom we regularly see. Love toward God is to be matched by love toward others because the essence of God is love.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is

love. ⁹**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.** ¹⁰In 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. ¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹²**No one has ever seen God;**

if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. ¹⁵God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶So 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. ¹⁷Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There 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. ¹⁹**We love because he first loved us.** ²⁰Those 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. ²¹The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

The grass withers and the flower fades,
but the Word of the Lord endures forever.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia. *Repeat alleluia*
Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

GOSPEL: John 15:1-8

On the night of his arrest, Jesus taught his disciples about the relationship they would have with him. Those who abide in his word and love bear fruit, for apart from him, they can do nothing.

[Jesus said:] ¹**"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower.** ²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide 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. ⁵I 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. ⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If 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.”**

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

Love Has Brought Us Here Together

ACS 1040



1 Love has brought us here to - geth - er; love of fam - 'ly,
 2 Love is gen - tle, love is pa - tient, soft in words and
 3 Love does not re - joice at e - vil; love re - joic - es



love of friends; love, our vow till death should part us; love, God's
 kind in deeds. Love is strong and nev - er pom - pous; love puts
 in the right. Keen in giv - ing and for - giv - ing, spread - ing



gift, that nev - er ends. From our birth, through-out our life - time,
 first the oth - er's needs. Not quick-tem - pered or re - sent - ful,
 love is love's de - light. When two peo - ple pledge their u - nion,



love's in - sis - tence calls our name. Floods of wa - ters
 prone to take of - fense or brood, love ex - cels in
 all who wit - ness are re - newed, feast - ing at love's



can - not drown it or put out its danc - ing flame.
 grace and mer - cy, nev - er jeal - ous, nev - er rude.
 earth - ly ban - quiet, tast - ing heav'n's be - at - i - tude.

CREED

The Apostles' Creed is the oldest known creed of the Christian faith and is a foundation of the church believes. We join with the faithful of all times in confessing our faith.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

God of all fruitfulness, you abide in your church and your church abides in you. Cleanse us by your word and give yourself to the whole church on earth so that it bears fruit and witnesses to your love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You have created the heavens and the earth. As we wonder at the beauty of creation, may we seek vital connections among all that depends on the earth for life. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You rule the nations with justice and love. Give the leaders of the earth assurance of your abiding presence, that they lead not by fear but with love for those they are called to serve. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You have loved us so that we can love others. We pray for all in need of your love: those who are poor, lowly, outcast, weak, or fearful. Provide for the needs of all *at Bethesda*: **Todd Pape, Mary Cumming, Donnie Koch Lenyce Lawrence, Kristi Lee Little, Daryl Lauritsen, Bernadine Hansen, Ethel Mae Kratz, and at St. John: Bev Crafton, Jan Behm, Lillian Smithson, Ed DeLozier, Vern Andrews, Adriaan (Schaben) van boord,**

Rachelle Tucker, Gordon and Barb Foss, Charlie Arvik, Jodi Klein, Karen Cadwell, Audrey Androy, Grant Gorham, Jim Berka, and those we name in our hearts or on our lips. Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

You gather us with all the saints by the power of your Spirit. With them, may our hearts live forever in your keeping. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

At this time, we share a greeting of peace without shaking hands. You can make the peace sign, use a simple wave, make a heart with your hands or even offer a polite bow.

MEAL

OFFERING

OFFERING PRAYER

Faithful God,
you walk beside us in desert places,
and you meet us in our hunger with bread from heaven.

**Accompany us in this meal,
that we may pass over from death to life
with Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

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

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

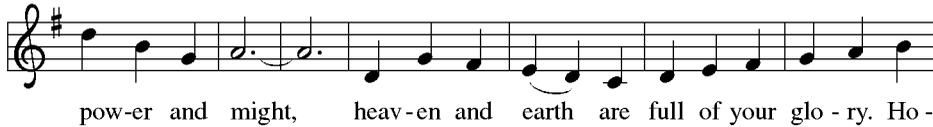
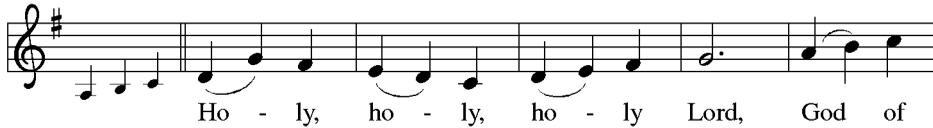


It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
for the glorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ,
the true Paschal Lamb who gave himself to take away our sin;
who in dying has destroyed death,
and in rising has brought us to eternal life.
And so, with Mary Magdalene and Peter and all the witnesses of the resurrection,
with earth and sea and all their creatures,
and with angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

In the night in which he was betrayed,
Our lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
Broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
And gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
Shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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 and ever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

The risen Christ invites us to this table. Come, eat and be satisfied.

COMMUNION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray. Wellspring of joy,
**through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts.
Satisfy the hunger still around us,
and send us as joyful witnesses,
that your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

SENDING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BLESSING

May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom
to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus.

The God of life,

Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

SENDING SONG

Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ

674

ELW 744

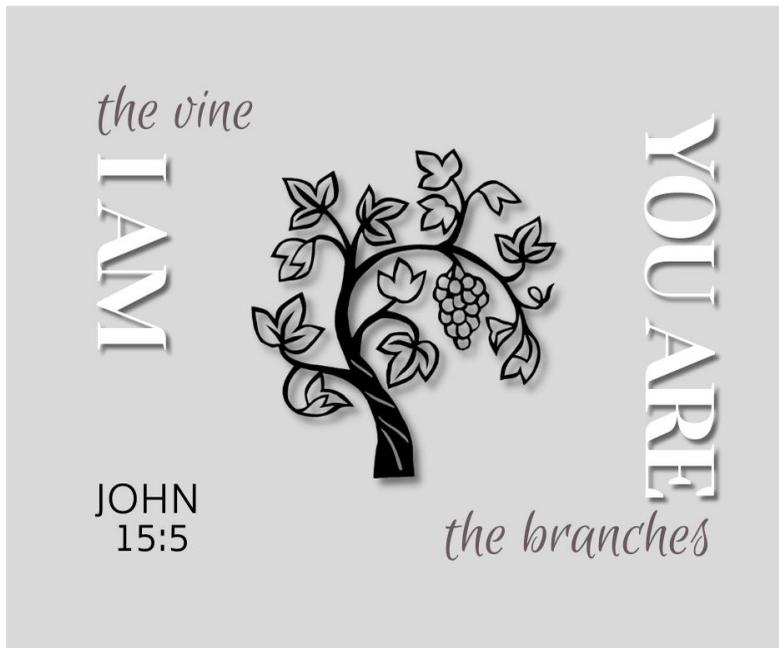
DISMISSAL

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Alleluia!



We Are the Branches

To encourage flowering and fruit production in vines, trees, and shrubs, most of us know that pruning is necessary. This isn't the easiest of work, nor does it make the pruned plant look all that great for a while afterward. Yet often what results after pruning is a plant that is more abundant, beautiful, and healthy than it would have been otherwise.



In our reading today, Jesus makes it very clear that he is the vine, his Father is the vine grower, and we, his disciples, are the branches on which fruit grows. Without the vine and the vine grower, the branches do not exist. Yet, often in our spiritual lives it seems as though we get these roles mixed up. We are wooed by the sense of accomplishment and value that comes from producing results of one kind or another, and we fail to acknowledge the source that makes that “fruit” possible.

However, in today's gospel, Jesus reminds us that our job isn't to produce results; it's to stay connected. “Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing,” Jesus says (John 15:5). Jesus is our source and strength; it is only by our connection to Jesus the vine that we the branches bear fruit that will last, such as love, compassion, forgiveness, hope, service, kindness, and patience.

To grow this kind of fruit, Jesus relates how necessary it is for us to be pruned occasionally. In other words, those things that are not of God in our lives have to be rooted out from time to time. The process of pruning isn't always the most enjoyable and can even include a good deal of pain, but it leads to lives that are whole and abundant. As we abide in Jesus, we are given the strength we need to endure the pruning process. We also experience the peace that comes from knowing that the fruit that will follow is for the glory of God.

From sundaysandseasons.com.

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Our Long-Term Prayers

Each week we lift up each other in prayer. Sometimes the need for prayer continues for extended periods of time. As a church family, we care about those long-term needs. Please continue to keep these individuals and families in your prayers as they deal with long term illnesses and life changes. Also, please keep Pastor Chip and the office updated so the congregation knows when extra prayers are needed.

At Bethesda

† Lenyce Lawrence

At St. John

† Audrey Gorham

† Helen Miller

† Davie Vander Kolk

† Sam and Diane Jacobs

† Russ Miller (Leonard and Helen Miller's nephew)

† Pam Odland

† Pat DeLong

† Joel Berka

† Dennis Schrauth (Suzie Schutz's brother-in-law)

† Arlene Eisermann (Ron Holst's Sister)

† Cheryl Rath (Tom Heistand's sister)

† **Grant Gorham's address:** Grant Gorham

Ronald McDonald House, room 3101

350 Erkenbrecher Ave.

Cincinnati, OH 45229

Grant has been moved. Your prayers are especially needed at this time.