

Worship for 2nd May

EASTER 5

Today Jesus teaches us how he is the true vine and we are the branches who are called to bear much fruit. So we come before him in worship, to affirm our dependence on God and to commit to being fruitful disciples.

Invitation to Confession:

Let us come before God in thankfulness and humility, acknowledging those ways in which we have failed to be faithful disciples.

For the times when we have kept your love to ourselves,
and not shared it with those around us.
Lord, have mercy.

For those times when we have known what you require of us,
but chosen not to do it.
Christ, have mercy.

For those times when we have been less than you created us to be
and missed opportunities to glorify you through our lives.
Lord, have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins
and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Collect of the Day

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.

A reading from the the Book of Acts (8:26-40 NRSV)

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Get up and go towards 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.

Psalm - 25:25-31 (NRSV)

From you comes my praise in the great congregation;

my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

The poor shall eat and be satisfied;

those who seek him shall praise the Lord.

May your hearts live for ever!

All the ends of the earth shall remember

and turn to the Lord;

and all the families of the nations

shall worship before him.

For dominion belongs to the Lord,

and he rules over the nations.

To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;

before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,

and I shall live for him.
Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord,
and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying that he has done it.

Gospel

Alleluia, alleluia!
Make your home in me, as I make mine in you.
Whoever remains in me bears fruit in plenty. Alleluia!

A reading from the Gospel according to John (15:1-8 NRSV)

'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.

Thought for the Day

With the seed of God's Word planted in our hearts, how can we best be fruitful? Each person's opportunities will be different, but we can each commit to abiding in Jesus and consciously seek to bear fruit that glorifies God. Our lives can bear fruit in our actions, our words, our relationships and our attitudes to God's creation. If our lives benefit only ourselves, we have to question whether we are, in fact, the unfruitful branches.

Intercessions

Take some time to reflect on your life this week. Where do you need God's presence and help? Give thanks for where you feel you have received it and pray for those situations - places and people - who are in particular need at this time.

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

An Act of Spiritual Communion

Our Father, who art in heaven...

Act of Reception

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were already there
and unite myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

Final Prayer

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. Amen.

Blessing

Jesus said, "My Father is glorified by this,
that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."
Let us go out into the world to bear fruit and glorify God.
And may the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be upon us, now and evermore. Amen.