

Easter #5

5-2-2021

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Vicar Karen Pugatch

Celebrate (Introduction)

“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 as 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 come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Break Now the Bread of Life”](#)

Psalm: Psalm 22:25-31

“From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

²⁶The poor[Ⓜ] shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the Lord.

May your hearts live forever!

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

and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.[Ⓜ]

²⁸For dominion belongs to the Lord,
and he rules over the nations.

²⁹To 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.[Ⓜ]

³⁰Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord,

³¹and[Ⓜ] proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying that he has done it.”

Hymn of Praise: [“Now Thank We All Our God”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“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.”

1st Reading: [Acts 8:26-40](#)

2nd Reading: [1 John 4:7-21](#)

The Gospel: [John 15:1-8](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“Let Us Break Bread Together”](#)

The Message: ([Video Link](#))

This is the time of the year to which every true gardener looks forward. All of the fall plantings of bulbs and last year’s pruning of flowering scrubs have given their reward of a job well done. For the true or avid gardener, the seeds planted indoors during late winter are now seedlings and nearing ready to transplant in the garden or permanent pots and window boxes. After their blossoms die off, pruning of bushes and mulching takes up any spare time. For the average gardener it is time for a trip to the garden center, nursery, or greenhouses in order to select the ready to plant flowers and vegetable plants, although in this region, the frost date is May 12th. My trip to the greenhouse this past week saw the parking lot almost totally filled and gardeners hovering over tables filled with blooming young plants.

Memories came flooding back of years ago when I had my shop in Fell’s Point. During springtime I became the area’s garden center. Ultimately the sidewalk in front of my store was crammed filled with carts of flowers. During that time petunias were in fashion. I can vividly remember telling people after planting them they should remove the first couples of blossoms. This allowed the plant to bush out and to produce many more stems producing more flowers. This was in effect pruning but bought a look of consternation since the customer wanted an instant blooming garden. In truth, pruning many flowering annuals will quickly reap its results like it does with bushes and trees.

This is especially true with plants such as the grape vine. They thrive on pruning. The results are healthier vines and a great yield of larger grapes. This brings us to our gospel lesson for today. Jesus compares himself to perhaps one of the most important plants in the ancient world, certainly one in which most people would have known, the grape vine. “I am the true vine and my Father is the vine grower.” Jesus was saying that it was His Father, God, who made His life possible. His Father made it possible for Him to produce the fruits of His life. In truth His Father gave Him the nourishment and strength to live and give the message of the good news. It was God who not only define Jesus but also instilled in Him the life which would reveal the true nature of God.

Jesus’ then goes on to give a message which every vineyard owner would understand. “He, [the vine grower, the Father,] removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.” The vineyard owner thoroughly understood the necessity of pruning in order to gain a bountiful harvest. In turn the message to us is that we must prune our lives of the non-productive and harmful ways which may be a part

of our lives. In doing this we are able to give our full attention and efforts in producing what is not only helpful and meaningful for us but also for others. It allows us to live the message of love and forgiveness. This personal pruning is what is called repentance. To hang onto those dead, harmful, and unproductive branches in our lives deters us from giving full attention to the fruits of God's vineyard –God's love. It keeps us from realizing the kingdom of God and the new life of joy in living a life which finds the fulfillment of living love.

It is obvious that many in today's society by their actions or words say that they don't need God nor Jesus. All of that religious stuff is passé. We can go it on our own. Our lives are just fine we do not have to change or prune our lives. We certainly don't need God to realize the fruits of life or be hindered from our pursuit of more and more fruits regardless of all others. We can get all we want and even more without God.

For those who live such a life there is little or no foundation. The supposed good life can change overnight leaving a life which just flounders to stay in existence. There is little or nothing to support them in their disillusionment. Their source of life has been cut off. They have cut themselves off from the true source of life itself. One only has to look back in history to the great depression in 1929 and 30. When the money supply was cut off and the source of money dried up there was no life giving source which was the foundation for so many. For them there was no longer any meaning in life leading far too many to commit suicide. They had no true belief and foundation in the creator of life itself and saw nothing left to life. Sadly our society is experiencing the same thing. All too many suicides are occurring even among our young people because of the pressures which society's value system is producing. They see nothing but a hopeless life ahead. In so many cases they only have seen and lived in a society whose foundation is hopelessness and fill with hypocrisy. There is little example of life's true foundation of God's love to look to and follow.

Therefore, for so many who say I do not need this God or this Jesus, it would behoove them to look beyond those self-indulged momentary earthly treasures and ask themselves what do I really have? Is there life without them. Being a living branch of the true vine of life as a foundation, which is always there for us, then the life in Christ gives value and meaning to life no matter what the circumstances of life may be. We are told by Jesus, "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." We have been given this life and being cut off from its life-giving source is ultimate despair and a life floundering to exist.

To be a living branch of the vine of life, to live a life grounded in God's love, is the life in Christ. John in his epistle further defines this life, "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 God, and God abides in them." John thus says that God's love flows through the depth of its roots, through the vine into its branches. We need to be attached in order to know and live this love. This means we must be willing to be honest with ourselves and know what needs to be pruned in our lives in order to maintain this flow of love.

In the beginning I talked about the initial pruning of the petunia plant. There is more to that story. In order to get the most lasting beauty from the petunia is to continually dead-head or cut off the withering blossoms so that the plant doesn't go to seed. When the plant goes to seed it slows its production of flowers for it thinks its work of reproducing itself has been accomplished. Dead-heading is a constant, almost daily, process but well worth it for the beauty of a massive display of color until the first frost.

It is the same with our lives. We need to pinch back our shortcomings, our tendency to become egocentric, and pursuit of other gods, so that we may experience new growth and new goals which an unhindered life can produce. In this there is no end in finding ways to reach out in love.

But, those who chose not to follow such a life, rooted in God's love, have chosen to be separated from the vine, the giver of life, and thus die. Jesus tells us this, "Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned."

On the other hand, God finds glory when we remain in His life and bear much fruit. Jesus concludes, "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." This is our call to be the branches which reach out in order to bear the fruits of the life in Christ. It is so important that surrounded by a society which is threatened by injustice, inequality, and hatred, that we remember that we can bear the fruits of love which can begin to change this troubled existence. This is our calling.

Anthem: ["Reach out and Touch"](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer:

Our eternal Father, the source of our being, without you there is no life. Give us the wisdom to realize that the love you have shown us is our hope during all of the problems which challenge us. We pray for the courage to change our lives where change is necessary in light of your love. May we find the strength in your word in order to extend your love through what we say and do. Instill in us the perseverance to continually strive to make a positive difference within the life of our world by the example that we live. Continue to comfort and bring healing to those who may have contracted Covid -19. Bring all of us to the realization that vaccination is the way out of this pandemic.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Della , Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack, We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["The Church Is One Foundation"](#)

Announcement:

In person worship services have begun, 9:30am. Services will be outdoors unless inclement weather conditions which then we will be indoors. Face masks and social distancing both indoors and outdoors will be required. An email will be sent late Saturday afternoons stating whether indoors or outdoors.

*Offering to be sent to:
Bob Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043
<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291