

5 Easter Sunday B, May 2, 2021
St. Mary's-in-the-Valley Episcopal Church
1010 12th Street, P.O. Box 491
Ramona, CA 92065

Liturgy begins on page 355, Book of Common Prayer

Alleluia. Christ is risen.
People The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

The Celebrant may say
Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid;
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.

To God be the Glory
Tune: The Ashgrove, from Malcolm Archer's English Folk Song Mass
Sung by St. James Press Choir

To God be the glory, all glory in the highest
and peace to his people who dwell here below,
Our heav'nly Father, our Lord, and our sov'reign,
to you, the Almighty, our praises bestow.
We worship and adore you,
we bow here before you
with grateful thanksgiving,
our song let us raise.
All glory and honour and glad adoration
to God in the highest, hosanna and praise.

Lord Jesus, the only begotten of the Father
we praise and we bless you, the Son and the Lamb.
The sin of the world you have taken upon you,
have mercy upon us, the Great I AM.
For holy, you meet us,
yet lowly you greet us,
the Lord in the highest,
the Holy One.
All glory to the Father, the Son and the Spirit,
From ages everlasting, the Three in One.

The Celebrant then says
The Lord be with you.

People And also with you. Celebrant Let us pray.

Collect

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Acts 8:26-40

An 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.) 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 22:24-30

Deus, Deus meus

- 24 My praise is of him in the great assembly; *
I will perform my vows in the presence of those who worship him.
- 25 The poor shall eat and be satisfied,
and those who seek the LORD shall praise him: *
"May your heart live for ever!"
- 26 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, *
and all the families of the nations shall bow before him.
- 27 For kingship belongs to the LORD; *
he rules over the nations.
- 28 To him alone all who sleep in the earth bow down in worship; *
all who go down to the dust fall before him.
- 29 My soul shall live for him;
my descendants shall serve him; *
they shall be known as the LORD'S for ever.
- 30 They shall come and make known to a people yet unborn *
the saving deeds that he has done.

1 John 4:7-21

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 Savior 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 judgment, 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.

John 15:1-8

Jesus said to his disciples, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. 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."

Sermon:

5 Easter B May 2, 2021
Acts 8:26-40 Psalm 22:24-30
1 John 4:7-21 John 15:1-8

The writer or writers of John's Gospel was one who used lots of metaphors, particularly as they came from the oracle words of Jesus. In High School English we learned the difference between metaphors and similes. The proverbial hippie spoke in similes using his favorite word: like. Everything was like this, like in love, like heavy, like groovy, like far out. A simile is when there is a comparison of likeness whereas a metaphor is when the comparison is a directly implied identification. I am the Good Shepherd, not I am like the Good Shepherd. And today's metaphor from the oracle speech of Jesus in the Gospel of John is: I am the Vine; you are the branches.

The Gospel of John begins with perhaps the metaphor of metaphors. Christ is the Word who is God from the beginning. So Word is God from the beginning. Word creates the signification system of relationships. Word creates the possibility of communication which is the essence of relationship.

Christ is presented as the supreme communication event between God and humanity. And to speak of Christ was to use the superlative of every human attribute. Or to use the perceived functions of plant growth processes to speak about the relationship of connection between Christ and us.

What does a vine, trunk, or stem do? It connects the branches and the fruit with the source of life which comes from the roots in the ground. And of course, branches with leaves help to collect and process sunlight for plant growth as well.

So who is Christ? Christ is the connecting Vine of God with human life. This metaphor comes from what I would call the cosmic organic mysticism of John's Gospel.

What does organic mysticism mean? It means that we are connected with the divine life. God as the creator is an organic creator, creating the paradise of a garden with the very divine image of God in Adam and Eve being the chief plants of the garden of Eden.

And what does the epic of Adam and Eve reveal? The same thing which the epic of every man and every woman reveals? We each become alienated in our connection with the Holy Sap of God's creating energy.

We forget that we are branches which have grown from divine stock; we pretend we are self made or socially made or psychologically determined by our environments. We forget the organic mysticism of life; namely, we are always already connected in and through God.

The Post Script Epistles to John's Gospel provide us with perhaps the greatest metaphor for God, by proclaiming, "God is Love. God is Love. God is Love." And if we are to be rightly connected with the creator of the universe, we too are going to have to be love as much as we possibly can.

I don't mean just the kind of syrupy love of every Country Western song; I mean the profound connecting love on which the entire connection of the universe depends.

If Christ is the Vine and we are the branches and the Father is the Gardener, then it is Holy Spirit Love which is the living connecting flowing sap of the energy of God.

What insights can we can from this metaphor of organic mysticism? First, we are connected with God whether we want to accept it or not. Second, we have a choice to choose to interpret our relationship with God in this way. How does the Gospel state this? Through the oracle words of Jesus: "Abide in me as I am in You."

You and I are connected with God whether we want to be or not; what we have the choice about is to accept this connection and obey the realization of abiding in Christ as the one who connects us best with God who is love and who wants us to accept the flow of this love into us as branches of divine life.

So it makes a difference whether we choose to abide or not. We have the freedom to interpret our lives as connected with God through Christ and the Holy Spirit of Love. Or we can ignore this completely and interpret the reality of life as impersonal energy and chemicals of existence which comprise us.

We, who believe the Gospel, believes that it makes a difference whether we believe that God is love and that love is the connection between ourselves and Christ who is the personification of the love of God to us.

We believe that it makes a difference in understanding that God is love and that Holy Spirit Love is how we abide and remain connected to the cosmic Christ who is the source of what enlightened humanity is to be.

Let us receive this organic mysticism of John's Gospel to inspire us to "abide" in Christ. Let us choose to remain connected with our Christ nature which can proclaim through our lives the belief that God is love.

Let us choose to interpret the essence of God as love and abide in that love as the good news which we have to offer in this world. Amen.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven: by the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

The Peace of the Lord be always with you. People: And also with you.

Hymn: # 657, Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
Played and sung by Rob and Deborah Lewallen

1 Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heav'n, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art.
Visit us with thy salvation;
enter ev'ry trembling heart.

2 Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit
into ev'ry troubled breast.
Let us all in thee inherit,
let us find the promised rest.
Take away the love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be.
End of faith, as its beginning,
set our hearts at liberty.

3 Come, Almighty, to deliver,
let us all thy life receive.
Suddenly return, and never,
nevermore they temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

4 Finish, then, thy new creation;
true and spotless let us be.
Let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee.
Changed from glory into glory,
till in heav'n we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise.

Doxology: Sung by Rob and Deb Lewallen

The Lord be with you. People And also with you.

Holy Eucharist, Prayer A, p. 361, BCP

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People We lift them to the Lord.

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. People It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. But chiefly are we bound to praise you for the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; for he is the true Paschal Lamb, who was sacrificed for us, and has taken away the sin of the world. By his death he has destroyed death, and by his rising to life again he has won for us everlasting life. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Sung and Played by Rob and Deborah Lewallen

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power, of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power, 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. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Celebrant: Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus

Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he 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. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Sung and played by Rob and Deborah Lewallen

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. AMEN.

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

Sung and played by Rob and Deb Lewallen

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 all that is evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen. Amen. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

Celebrant: Alleluia! Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; People: Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia

Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Communion Hymn: 'Tis the Gift to Be Simple, and I Danced in the Morning, Shaker Tune
Played by Stanley V. Smith, Jr. on the Hammer Dulcimer

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where I ought to be;
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed;
to turn, turn, will be my delight.
Till by turning, turning we come round **right.**

I danced on a Friday and the sky turned black;
It's hard to dance with the devil on your back;
They buried my body and they thought I'd gone,
But I am the dance and I still go on.

Dance, then, wherever you may be;
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he.
And I'll lead you all wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

Post Communion Prayer (BCP, page 365)

Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction:

Dismissal:

Lay Eucharistic Minister: Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. People:
Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Closing Hymn: Hymn # 594, God of Grace, God of Glory
Played and sung by Joshua Charney, Ph.D

1 God of grace and God of glory,
on thy people pour thy pow'r.
Crown thine ancient church's story,
bring its bud to glorious flow'r.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.

2 Lo! the hosts of evil round us
scorn thy Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us,
free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days,
for the living of these days.

3 Cure thy children's warring madness;
bend our pride to thy control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal,
lest we miss thy kingdom's goal.

4 Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore.

Let the search for thy salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving thee whom we adore,
serving thee whom we adore.