

St Peter's Scottish Episcopal Church, Kirkcaldy



Sunday 2nd May 2021, Easter 5

- Introit Hymn:* Praise the Lord, ye heavens adore him
- Welcome:* Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**
- Collect for Purity:* **Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: 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.**
- Gloria:* **Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**
- Collect:* Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Give us grace to love one another and walk in the way of his commandments, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**
- Collect SPB:* O almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men: Grant unto thy people, that they may loe the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**
- First reading:* Acts 8. 26-40 (SPB 1 St James 1.17)
- Second reading:* 1 John 4. 7-21
- Gradual hymn:* What a friend we have in Jesus
- Gospel acclamation:* **Alleluia! Alleluia! Make your home in me, as I make mine in you. Whoever remains in me bears fruit in plenty. Alleluia.**
- Gospel:* John 15. 1-8 (SPB St John 16.5)
- When gospel is announced:*
Glory to Christ our Saviour.

At end:

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious Gospel.

Praise to Christ our Lord.

Homily:

Let us pray: God of mercy and grace, walk with us. As we celebrate the resurrection of your Son, Jesus, heal our hearts, guide our minds, and lead us to a place of restoration. May we seek spiritual renewal, may our hearts and minds serve you and your Truth, and may we bear fruit in all that we say and do. Amen.

Jesus said to his disciples, “I am the true vine... abide in me as I abide in you.” This Gospel and our lessons today remind us to whom we belong with a clear visual image. These lessons call us into a new and wonderful way of living – a way that welcomes the other, that is not done alone, but in community – a way that starts with Love.

Everyone who loves is born of God. As we continue to celebrate the glorious resurrection of Our Lord, we are called to bear fruit and become disciples because we love – though this isn’t always easy. How can we do this when we are still hurting from this pandemic? How can we do this when the news around us leaves us spiritually and emotionally drained?

How do we proclaim the Good News about Jesus when we think there is just too much happening around us and in the world? The answer is never the same and will vary from person to person. Still, the text, the overall message of this Gospel, suggests this simple response: We show up. We show up authentically as ourselves. We love others. We share the Good News with others. We speak and act in ways that support this message of love.

In our Gospel, Jesus is addressing us. Twice, he says, “I am,” reminding us that God knows our hearts. There is no need to hide from God, no need to hide those parts of ourselves of which we are ashamed, no need to use those ugly parts as excuses to stay away from God. Instead, this truth, this love, draws us nearer to God. It allows us to see those parts we think cannot be restored and instead allows us to run to the Father, allows us to abide in God.

Our epistle reminds us that if we love one another, God lives in us. God abides in us. There is no secret we can keep from God.

But what is love? We could attempt to define it in many ways, and we could provide examples of how we have experienced love, yet it would still not be enough. We could look at our relationships and draw from those, but even then, we would not have a certain definition.

But – we could look to the One who sent Jesus into the world to die for us to create a clear example of love. A different kind of love. This embodied love. This love that liberates. A love that clears our eyes to see the injustices of this world and empowers us to act in ways that seek the well-being of all. A love that makes us curious about systems that oppress.

Now, for some this may be difficult to understand; perhaps a concrete example is needed. Imagine the following: You walk into any nursery or vineyard and there you encounter life. You encounter different individuals caring and tending to the needs of every vine. The vine grower tends to them all, making no exceptions! The vine grower is aware of what each vine needs to bear fruit. The vine grower loves the branches. Similarly, God examines our hearts, provides for us, and can also remove those parts of ourselves that bear no fruit. If the vine grower worries about all the vines and knows that every branch can bear fruit, then the pruning becomes a special and necessary part of the growth process. Pruning will change the outcome for the vine, and it will change our outcomes, too.

When we abide in God, we invite God into our lives – however messy that may be. When we abide in God, we are empowered to seek our place in this world, loving others, living into the mission of the Church, restoring all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

It is a slow and transformational relationship between the vine grower and the branches. Just like the Ethiopian eunuch in our first lesson, we will not always understand. We may ask, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” These relationships require honesty and require us to let go of all those parts we think we can hide

from the world and God. How many times have we been afraid to ask for help? Or even embarrassed to ask, "Who can guide me?"

If we have learned one thing from this pandemic and the past year, it is that we cannot do this work alone. We have Jesus' example of love by being in relationship with people. We have Philip's example of love teaching, sharing about God, and baptizing. We have the disciples' example of love by following Jesus, even amid their own shortcomings. All of these examples are needed. Our world needs people who are capable of this love because a church that only condemns and only sees sin would not truly be the church. It would not be transformed by grace or mercy. There would be no opportunity for restoring our brokenness.

As God transforms us, we transform the world. Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador knew what it meant to be transformed by love; he knew what it meant to be with the people of his country and knew that speaking the truth would likely cause his death; he knew that loving the people of El Salvador meant that his actions and words mattered. He is reported to have said, "If a man knows how to detach from himself and knows how to love, he is a saint; if a man speaks too much about holiness but does not know how to love, he is no saint." This is how we love.

When we abide in God, God abides in us. God abides in our relationships. God transforms. God will allow us to bear fruit. Amen.

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 substance with the Father. Through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven;
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate of 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.
With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped 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.**

Intercessions:
Group

Composed and prayed on behalf of the congregation by a member of the Intercessors

Lord, grant that your Church, constant in faith and love, may bring forth good fruit. Rooted in you, we know that such fruitfulness is not only possible but cannot be prevented with you as the dresser of the vine, pruning us into the form you would have us take. Help us to understand that, though there are many branches, we all stem from the one vine, the true vine, our Saviour. And then others, too, may taste and see that you are good.
Lord, where we see love we recognise your presence: in your mercy, hear our prayer

In the Diocesan cycle of prayer we pray for Bishop Mark the Primus and Ian our Diocesan Bishop whom we look forward to welcoming next Sunday when Stuart Gray will be licensed. We also pray for the All Souls Group, St Serfs, Burntisland, St Columba, Aberdour and St Peter's, Inverkeithing and Dean Norby and Carol Latimer who serve there. Here we pray for the work of our Rector Christine and all who assist with worship. Far away on a distant shore we pray for Archbishop Stephen of Myanmar and the Karen people he leads.
Lord, where we see love we recognise your presence: in your mercy, hear our prayer

Lord, you have set each one of us into a community, with needs and strengths and weaknesses. Help us to form a useful part of that community and teach us what you need us to be doing, and where you ask us simply to be. Let us do all that we do in a spirit of love, reflecting the example of our Saviour, and where we fail, as we know we will, let us above all do no harm.

We pray for nations, for leaders and governments that integrity will always mark their dealings For the Government in London, the Parliament in Edinburgh and the Assemblies in Wales and Northern Ireland.

Lord, where we see love we recognise your presence: in your mercy, hear our prayer

Lord, we pray for those who are sick, whether of the mind, body or spirit. Remembering the people of India in the midst of a terrible surge of Covid 19 praying that as more are vaccinated and with the help from Governments all over the world this situation will improve. We also pray for all recovering from the lingering effects of the virus. Be with them in their travail, and let them know that, whatever they are called upon to undergo, you will always be by their side. May they feel the reality of your everlasting arms, buoying them up on their journey through the vale of tears, whether it be long or short.

In a moment of silence, let us pray for your blessings for all we know to be in any kind of trouble and from our congregation remembering Sheila Brown.

Lord, where we see love we recognise your presence: in your mercy, hear our prayer

Lord, we pray for those who have departed this life and are now in your everlasting presence. From our year's mind this morning we remember Adeline Hanks and Evelyn Chalmers praying that they, with all the faithful departed, may rest in peace and rise to glory.

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 and merciful Father we asks that you accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

Confession

and Absolution:

God is love and we are his children. There is no room for fear in love.

We love because he loved us first. Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Silence

**God our Father, we confess to you
and to our fellow members in the Body of Christ
that we have sinned in thought, word and deed,
and in what we have failed to do.**

We are truly sorry.

Forgive us our sins,

and deliver us from the power of evil.

For the sake of your Son who died for us,

Jesus Christ, our Lord.

(May) God, who is both power and love, forgive us and free us from our sins, heal and strengthen us by his Spirit and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Peace:

We meet in Christ's Name let us share his peace.

Offertory hymn:

Judge eternal throned in splendour

Communion Prayer:

God of infinite mercy. We thank you for Jesus our Saviour who feeds his people and gives them eternal life. Though we cannot consume the gifts of bread and wine we thank you that we do receive Christ's saving presence, the forgiveness of sins and all other benefits of his passion. Grant that we may continue for ever in the risen and ascended life of our Saviour. Amen. (This prayer is said during the online Provincial service).

The Lord's Prayer:

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, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Communion hymn: For the beauty of the earth

Concluding Prayer: **God of love, in this eucharist we have heard your truth and shared in your life. May we always walk in your way, in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.**

Blessing: The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Dismissal: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Recessional hymn: At the name of Jesus

7pm Candle Prayer

**Lord our God,
We listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd,
For he is the One who will guard us and keep us
And lead us safe home.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.**

**Lord our God,
We listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd,
For he has spoken to us throughout all our days
And still he speaks, even amidst the clamour of the day.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.**

**Lord our God,
We listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd,
For he has nurtured and provided for us
And lifted us up, even when we have fallen.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.**

**Lord our God,
We listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd,
For he is the One who has laid down his life for us
In order that we might have life, even in the face of darkness.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.**

**Lord our God,
We listen for the voice of the Good Shepherd,
For your goodness and mercy still follows us
And you shall lead us safe home, even at the end of our days.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.**