

May 2, 2021

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Living and Giving

Why do we treasure nurturers among us like mothers and fathers, teachers, pastors, artists, poets and writers who stir up our minds? Because nurture keeps us alive and allows us to function. A baby dies without proper nourishment, and children can stop learning without watchful instruction.

Jesus, the true vine, gives us, his branches, two primary teachings about nurture. The first is that in order for the branches to stay alive they must draw daily nourishment from him. The second is to bear fruit and give away gifts of love as easily as we breathe. Living and giving are central to the Christian life; God's people live to give as they gather around water, word, bread, and wine.

To avoid becoming dead branches we cling to Jesus for life. This is the one who trampled death underfoot to give us life, and though death still whistles an alluring tune that none can resist, Christ rose from the dead to trump its rule and wrest us from its grip. We live daily in Christ's life and eternally in his resurrection.

Our joy each day is to complete the cycle of living and giving. As we lean on Jesus we produce much fruit and avoid the pruner's shears as they cut dead shoots. Because the Vine provides our very life, we are able to share our fruit freely with others. Giving away fruit completes the circle of life that Jesus pumps into us; sharing our works of love and faith is part of his new creation.

It is said that the dash on a tombstone represents a person's lifetime between birth and death. This short stroke can also symbolize the life of a Christian who depends on the Vine for sustenance and shares fruit with the poor, unloved, and downcast among us. A faithful branch receives life from the Vine--life that blossoms into loving action for the sake of the world.

First St. John Lutheran Church

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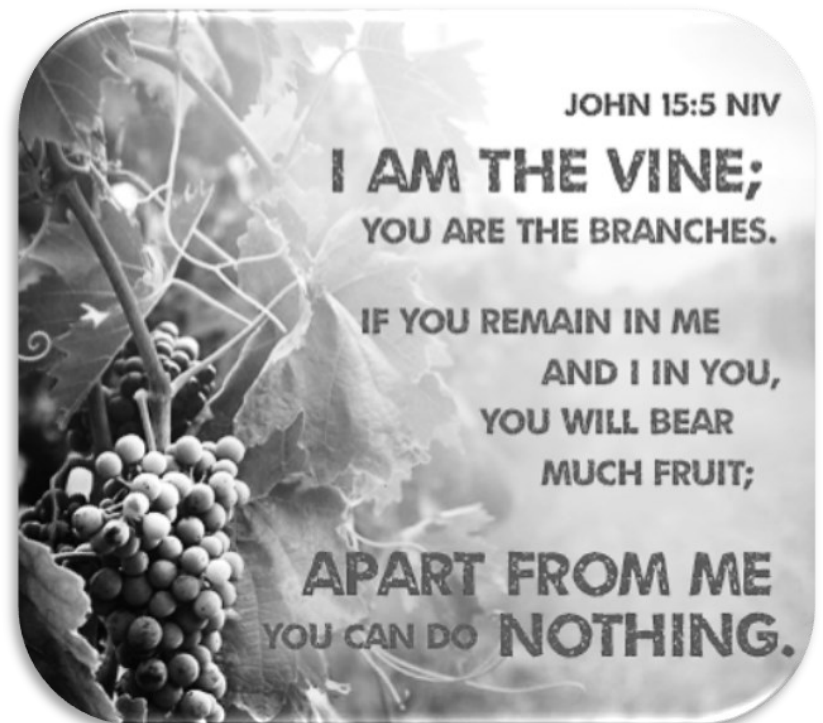
www.firststjohn.com

Rev. Jerald K. Rayl

Annette Slater - Music Director

Dr. Anthony Pattin - Organist

Toni Wilbarger - Secretary



Called through faith; Gathered in worship; Serving the community

May 2, 2021 - 10:15 am

May 2, 2021

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Welcome to First St. John Lutheran Church! Please review some of our guidelines below.

Masks must be worn. We have some available to take if you don't have one. Some are cloth masks and can be taken home to wash and reuse. There are also disposable masks.

Please do not congregate in the Narthex (entrance area) either as you arrive or leave.

To minimize direct contact, we will use the outside aisles only for entry and exit. The center aisle will be used for communion, special needs, or emergency exit.

Ushers will fill the pews from the front to the back of the church and dismiss from the back to the front. Please follow their directions. We are sorry everyone cannot have their usual seat.

NOTE: We can now sing the hymns and speak the congregational responses behind our masks. Annette Slater will lead the hymns. The service will be recorded and published to the website. We are now live streaming the service on our church website, www.firststjohn.com

Elders will wear gloves. You can get a bulletin at the check-in table when you walk in. Please do not leave your bulletin in the pew when you exit; take it home or put it in the recycling bin at the front door.

There is a small wooden church just to the right of the main door when you come in. It has a slot for your offering.

Restrooms are in the church basement. Go to the Narthex (lobby) and take the left set of steps down. The ladies room is at one end of the hallway, and the men's room is at the other. Return to the Narthex using the opposite set of stairs. Please, one person only in the restroom area.

Diaper Changing: A diaper changing table is available in the ladies restroom in the basement of the church.

Flowers: If you would like to sign up for flowers for a Sunday, please call the church office during the week to check on availability.

Because He Lives

Writer: Gloria Gaither, William J. Gaither

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God sent His son, they called Him Jesus.
He came to love, heal and forgive.
He lived and died to buy my pardon.
An empty grave is there to prove my savior lives.

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.
Because He lives, all fear is gone.
Because I know, I know He holds the future
And life is worth the living, just because He lives

How sweet to hold a newborn baby
And feel the pride and joy He gives.
But greater still the calm assurance
This child can face uncertain days, because He lives

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow
Because He lives, all fear is gone
Because I know, I know He holds the future
And life is worth the living, just because He lives.

And then one day, I'll cross the river.
I'll fight life's final war with pain.
And then, as death gives way to victory
I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He reigns.

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.
Because He lives, all fear is gone.
Because I know, I know He holds the future
And life is worth the living, just because He lives.

I can face tomorrow
Because He lives, all fear is gone.
Because I know, I know He holds the future
And life is worth the living, just because He lives.

Blessing

P: 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.

C: Amen.

Dismissal

P: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

C: Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

P: Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!

C: Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

Closing Hymn *"Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us"* No. 789

(led by Annette)

Postlude Dr. Pattin

PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

ELDERS

Darold Henninger, Kevin Ruedy

HYMN LEADER

Annette Slater

SOUND BOARD

Andy Hodges

ORDER OF WORSHIP—10:15 am

Prelude

Dr. Pattin

Ring of the Bell

Opening *"Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing!"* No. 385
(led by Annette)

The Invocation

P: In the name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Thanksgiving for Baptism

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

C: Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

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

Water is poured into the font as the presiding minister gives thanks.

P: 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.

C: Make us one, risen Christ. Cleanse our hearts. Shower us with life.

P: To you be given all praise, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Prayer of the Day

P: The peace of the Lord be with you all.

C: And also with you.

P: 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.

C: Amen.

Announcements

FIRST READING: Acts 8:26-40

Philip and Stephen were among the first deacons chosen for service in the early church. After Stephen was martyred, Philip and the rest were scattered but continued to preach. In this encounter, reflection on scripture leads to baptism into the body of Christ.

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.)

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.

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

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,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again 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.

The Offering *(As you exit, please place your offering in the wooden church in the Narthex if you have not already done so.)*

Musical Offertory

Dr. Pattin

Offering Prayer

P: God of love, you call us beloved children and welcome us to your table. Receive our lives and the gifts we offer. Abide with us and send us in service to a suffering world; for the sake of your beloved Child, Jesus Christ.

C: Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

P: Hear us, O Lord,

C: your mercy is great.

The Lord's Prayer *(prayed by all)*

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.

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

(Please stand)

Gospel Acclamation *(led by Annette)*

*Alleluia. Lord to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life.
Alleluia. Alleluia.*

Gospel Acclamation

P: The Gospel according to St. John Chapter 15 .

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

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 would bear fruit, for apart from him, they could 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. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

Gospel Response

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

(Please be seated)

SERMON
Sermon Hymn

"Because He Lives"

Pastor Rayl
Lyrics on Screen
(led by Annette)

(Please stand)

Apostles' Creed

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

PSALM: Psalm 22:25-31

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

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

²⁶ **The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD.
May your hearts live forever!**

²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;
and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.

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

²⁹ 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.

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

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

SECOND READING: 1 John 4:7-21

This letter is a commentary on Jesus' command to "love one another." Love is the mark of God's abiding presence, because God is love. Love gives itself away in service to those in need.

Beloved, 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. ⁹God'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. ¹²No 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. ¹⁹We 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.