

Sermon for The Fifth Sunday of Easter

Date: May 2, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

First Reading: Acts 8:26–40

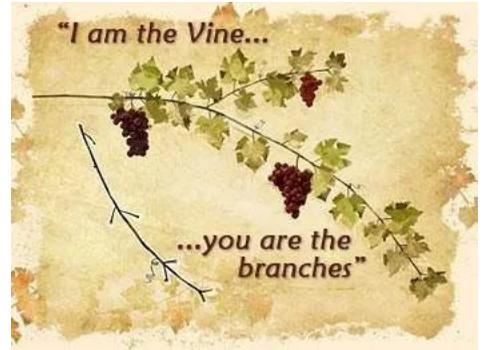
Epistle Reading: 1 John 4:1–11

Gospel Reading: John 15:1–8

Sermon Text: John 15:1–8

Sermon Title: Vine and Branches

Introit: Psalm 145:1–2, 8, 10, 21; antiphon: John 16:16



Hymns:

LSB 474 - Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen

LSB 595 – O Blessed Spring

LSB 919 – Abide, O Dearest Jesus

LSB 680 – Thine the Amen, Thine the Praise

LSB 540 – Christ the Word of God Incarnate

Liturgy:

Divine Service I, p. 151

Songs:

Another In The Fire

Raise A Hallelujah

Wake Up Sleeper

Agnus Dei (MW Smith)

All Who Are Thirsty

The Blessing

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: John 15:1–8

[Jesus said:] “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. 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. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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Grace and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen

Spring is busting out all over! Fields are being prepared and planted. Gardens are getting tilled. Soon will come the work of tending to our fields and gardens. We do this with a hope for the future. We look forward to the harvest: the sweet corn, wheat, tomatoes, carrots, and potatoes. God's glorious creation at this time of the year brings out a small glimpse of Jesus' words, "Behold I am making all things new."

The Word of God we read today, (whether or not we've ever done any farming or gardening) speaks to each of us. We know what Jesus is talking about. God's Word is clear. Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. God has created us, the branches, to bear fruit. His Word is clear about how that happens. God is the one who enables, empowers and equips us to produce fruit. He does that through our connection to the Vine. The Vine is Jesus. If Jesus is the root of our lives as Savior and Lord fruit will appear.¹

After explaining all of this Jesus quickly adds this warning:

Apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.²

People who have big trees in their yards will tell you, along with the blessings of big trees: their beauty, the curb appeal, the shade, they also make a mess. Seeds, leaves, twigs, and branches all fall to the yard below. Many of us know the growing pile somewhere on the property. The use as kindling in a backyard fire pit may be the only future for those branches, or maybe a trip to the city dump.

In our lives, as the people of God, we don't want to become like those dead branches, destined for disposal and fire. How do we prevent such a thing, when it comes to our relationship with God and bearing fruit for Him? Jesus makes it clear. The key to being vital living branches, and not dead branches, in the kingdom of God is to remain connected to, grafted into, the Vine, Jesus and to receive life from Him.

1 Galatians 5:22-24

2 John 15:5-6

That's why Jesus came, to bring and to give life. Before Jesus came with His life-giving work, we and all humankind were worthless dead branches whose destiny it was to be thrown into the pit of fire. We were lifeless, fruitless, worthless, dead-in-our-sin branches. Yet even when we were lifeless, fruitless, worthless, dead-in-our-sin branches, Jesus came to this world to give us new life, new roots. Jesus is the Divine Vine, who came to bring new life.

Our heavenly Father had a plan to bring us life through the Divine Vine. The plan for life would require death as the primary ingredient. Jesus would have to be cut off from God the Father, suffer, die and be buried. Jesus said:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.³

Three days later, His spring had come. He rose from the dead. Now Jesus, the living Lord of life, the Divine Vine has grafted you into Himself in Holy Baptism, and nourishes you through His faith infusing power in Holy Communion. Through His Holy Word He keeps you connected to the Vine, giving you, and keeping you in, saving faith. By this we bear fruit. The fruit of God. What grace! What a blessing! By God's power, through the mighty life-giving message of Jesus Christ, you and I remain connected to the Vine and we live forever!

This love of God, for you, ought to be so precious that we let nothing get in the way of it. Regular worship, the study of God's Word and imbibing the infusion of Jesus sacred Body and Blood, gives us life. That is what we learn from the Word of God today. Life comes from the Vine. Death comes when we are broken off from the Vine.

This is not a new message, or only a New Testament message. It is the message from the beginning. The prophets of old testify to the same thing. The prophet Ezekiel records the very Word of God, who says:

I have no pleasure in the death of anyone declares the Lord God; so turn, and live.⁴

3 John 12:24

4 Ezekiel 18:32

God's Word proclaims:

Faith comes from hearing
and hearing through the Word of Christ.⁵

This faith connection to Jesus brings more benefits that flow into us. These benefits are centered in the way His Words shape our wills to align us to what He wants for us. That happens in two very important ways:

The first is prayer. Jesus says:

If you abide in Me
and My Words abide in you
ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.⁶

Jesus invites us to pray a very special kind of prayer. A prayer aimed at carrying forward the work of Jesus. This is prayer based on God's Word, enlivened with God's presence in us. This is prayer that walks with Jesus as He says, "Not my will, but thine be done."⁷ This is the prayer that says, "Thy will be done."⁸ This is prayer that trusts a loving, living, and life infusing Lord to provide for our needs.

That is the first benefit. The second is faith. Faith enables us to glorify God by our fruit-bearing life. Jesus says:

By this My Father is glorified,
that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my
disciples.⁹

Jesus makes us His followers through His Word. We in turn show we are His through our fruit, our life, our attitudes, words and actions. Knowing Jesus, and living in Him affects how we talk about others, where we go, what we do and how we spend our money. We live with purpose and hope. Our lives become a living "thank-you" to God, as we honor Him with our words and deeds.

5 Romans 10:17

6 John 15:7

7 Luke 22:42

8 Matthew 6:10

9 John 15:8

People will notice we are a different. They will wonder why. We can say we are different because of Jesus. He is our Savior and God, who make us children of our loving heavenly Father. That fruit always in season. There's always a harvest. Jesus the faithful Divine Vine, connects us to Him through faith, through which He promises we will be fruitful.

God grant this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people

