



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 2 MAY 2021 – 5th Sunday of Easter

COLLECT

Risen Christ,
your wounds declare your love for the world
and the wonder of your risen life:
give us compassion and courage
to risk ourselves for those we serve,
to the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

Psalm 22.25-end

25 From you comes my praise in the great congregation; ♦
I will perform my vows
in the presence of those that fear you.
26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied; ♦
those who seek the Lord shall praise him;
their hearts shall live for ever.
27 All the ends of the earth
shall remember and turn to the Lord, ♦
and all the families of the nations shall bow before him.
28 For the kingdom is the Lord's ♦
and he rules over the nations.
29 How can those who sleep in the earth
bow down in worship, ♦
or those who go down to the dust kneel before him?
30 He has saved my life for himself;
my descendants shall serve him; ♦
this shall be told of the Lord for generations to come.
31 They shall come and make known his salvation,
to a people yet unborn, ♦
declaring that he, the Lord, has done it.

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Acts 8.26-40

26 Then 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.) 27 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 28 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." 30 So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 32 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. 33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." 34 The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" 35 Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36 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?" 37 38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. 39 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. 40 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.

John 15.1-8

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. 2 He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. 3 You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. 4 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. 5 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. 6 Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

Reflection – this week from Peter

When you think about it St John's Gospel makes quite a lot of wine. There's that wonderful occasion in Chapter 2 when Jesus provides gallons of wine for the wedding party that had run out; and here, in Chapter 15 Jesus takes the image of the vine to describe his relation to God the Father, and also his relation to us.

He begins by saying, "I am the true vine and my dad is George!!" Well perhaps not exactly. Our English translation says "I am the true vine and my Father is the vine-grower" - and the greek word for vine-grower is the same as the word for farmer, literally 'worker of the land' in Greek georgos - our word George. This makes a wonderful picture: God the Father is portrayed as the

hard-working farmer, out in all weathers, ceaselessly tending the vine; and the vine is God the Son, who responds to the Father's care by producing fruit, ripe grapes. But it doesn't stop there. Jesus goes on to say to his hearers, "You are the branches..." Jesus is the living framework, the structure that holds everything together and provides the nurture needed for growth - and we are the branches, the tendrils that emerge, the bearers of those delicious grapes. What an amazing way to talk about our relation to God! By God's own choice, we are as intimately and intricately related to him as grapes to the vine that produces them. And God is our dedicated gardener: never ceasing in his loving care. So, at the heart of creation is God the creator, gently caring for everything, pruning, trimming, nurturing. Then God the Son is here shown as the one who provides the shape, the structure that enables us and all creation to flourish - not something rigid like prison walls, but living and growing like a vine. We, and all the creatures God has made, are not then struggling to make our own way in a vast wilderness, but gently growing and becoming fruitful - just as the world around us is producing new growth all around us. It is this relationship, this interconnectedness that underlies what Jesus says three times in this part of the Gospel: "ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you!" This doesn't mean that if I ask for a pony one will turn up on my doorstep tomorrow. Rather it tells us that when we have begun to understand just what a wonderful gift it is to be so intimately held and loved by God, then we begin to know both who we are, and who God is - and we begin to ask in a new way, and the Spirit answers by giving us what we most truly long for.

Peter cr