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Sunday 2nd May 2021 Fifth Sunday of Easter

Collect

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect; through Jesus Christ our risen Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever

Amen

First Reading: Acts 8: 26-end

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.) 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.

Second Reading: 1 John 4: 7 - end

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 Saviour 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 judgement, 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.

The Gospel: John 15: 1-8

Jesus said; "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."

Post-communion prayer

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. **Amen**

Reflection

Jesus is leaving the disciples. Soon they will be on their own.. Soon they will feel frightened and abandoned. What will they remember? Perhaps only the fear and pain of seeing Jesus ripped away from them. Despair is what they will feel.

Is it all therefore fruitless? Did Jesus' words to them mean nothing?

If we step away from our knowledge of knowing what was to come and the resurrection reality, we are left with a story being told by John of Jesus opening the eyes of His disciples to truths that they need to hear and understand.

"I am the true vine..." (John 15.1) Jesus tells His disciples. Pilate in a little while would pose a plaintive question in his questioning of Jesus, "What is truth?" (John 18.38) The truth questions had been there from the very beginning for Jesus. **Who is He? What does He want?"**

The image of the vine was powerful for the Jews and signified the nationhood of Israel coming out of Egypt and captivity and being planted in freedom in the promised land. A loving God in an eternal relationship with the people of Israel. Jesus claims that He is that true vine. In Him we see the God of Israel, fruitful, loving and secure in their midst. What a shock therefore, when that true vine is ripped, torn and nailed to a cross of destruction.

Do you need to be a gardener to understand the picture Jesus was painting about the need for pruning to keep the vines healthy and fruitful? I think that the disciples would have understood very well. What they might not have understood was what the message had to do with them. Why was Jesus telling them this now?

In just a short while the disciples, when faced with the choice of remaining with Jesus in solidarity as He faced His trials, chose to desert Him. A vine cannot thrive with the limbs taken away. The disciples leave Jesus and alone He must die.

The key point that Jesus was making in John 15 was that divided, both the disciples and the nation of Israel would be forever vulnerable and weak. Divided there can no purpose, no focus and no goal. There can be no community, except one loosely held together by self interest, self preservation.

Then he said to them all, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. (Luke 9.23) Jesus is clear that to follow Him there is sacrifice and that sacrifice starts with making a choice. **What matters most in my life?**

The focus for Jesus in these last moments of freedom before His capture, was to remind the disciples that their choice to follow Him was about to have consequences. Together they would form a community of believers, with first hand knowledge and experience of their Lord and teacher, Jesus the Christ, the Saviour of the world. There could be no going back, no renouncing of their belief and trust in Jesus. Even Peter, with his denial, would learn to be strong and bind himself to this community of believers.

The vine, as an image and symbol remains central to what it is to be the body of Christ. Stronger and healthier together, we are in the hands of God, who nurtures and tends us throughout the ages.

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. (John 15.5)

Revd Ian Gardner

Intercessions

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray to the Father.

As the eunuch asked Philip to guide him in understanding the scriptures, guide us, Lord, as we come to you in prayer.

We pray for peace in the World, for refugees and all who seek a better life away from conflict. Guide all Nations to work together to heal differences.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for the people of India as they face the devastation of the Coronavirus pandemic. We pray that the medical supplies they need will be delivered and that vaccines will be made more widely available. Guide those working to alleviate the suffering, comfort those who suffer and those who are bereaved.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Guide our Bishops Rachel and Robert, and our Clergy as they lead our worship week by week within the benefice.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for all children now back at school, that they will rekindle a love of learning after months of disruption. We think particularly of the youngest children who have missed so much in learning to communicate, cooperate and share with others. We give thanks for their teachers working and guiding them in developing these skills. We pray that soon we will be able to resume Open the Book at Dursley Academy, which is such a good way to introduce Bible stories to the children.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We give thanks for the gradual lifting of restrictions out of the lockdown, and pray that we will soon be able to meet and hug our loved ones. We give thanks for the continuing extension of the vaccine programme to provide protection for all.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We give thanks for new growth in Spring, in our gardens, parks and open spaces, enabled, as in the Gospel, by pruning. Help us to grow in our faith, so that we may bear good fruit.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We pray for those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit, and those who are caring for them, especially for those who are ill Emily, John, Dave, Sue, Lynne, Mary, Frances, Norma, Joan, Jean, Jack, Len, Frances, Phil and Janet Be with them in their suffering, support and comfort them and give them peace of mind in times of trouble

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

We remember those recently bereaved, remembering particularly the family and friends of Roland Newman, John Flood, Josh Hall and Kathleen Hill. Give comfort and peace to all who mourn, and assurance of life to come.

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

"Let all creation join in one
To bless the sacred name
Of Him who sits upon the throne
And to adore the Lamb"

Merciful Father **accept these prayers for the sake of your son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen**

Liz Byrne

If you would like someone who is currently unwell or in particular need of prayer to be named on the weekly pew sheet, please email the parish office giving the person's name and also your name as the contact

Service Sheet for Worship at Home

If you are unable to join the Sunday services, please do make use of the reflective service for use at home alongside the prayers and readings for the day which can be found on this pew sheet.

If you would like a copy please contact the office
ewelmeeparishoffice@gmail.com

Pastoral Care

Please continue to let Canon Michael (546459), Revd Ian Gardner (546895) or Revd Jane Wood (07983 623525) know of those who need to be contacted or those who need to be contacted or are in hospital and we will get in touch. Marion Kee (860364) or Pat Jones (860696) are happy to be contacted for Uley, Owlpen and Nympsfield

Please continue to check the Ewelme Family Facebook page and the Benefice website www.ewelmebenefice.co.uk regularly and if there are members who you know do not use any of these media, please let them know what is going on.

Printed copies of the weekly pew sheet are available to pick up from the porch in St James from Friday lunchtime. The porch will be left open every day. For those who can't come into Dursley, especially from Nympsfield or Uley, please do contact the office if you know of someone who would appreciate a printed copy.

Churches are still open for private prayer

We are extending the opening times so that St James in Dursley will be open each day between 9.30am and 5pm and St Giles in Uley will be open each day between 10am and 3pm. St Bartholomew's in Nympsfield will continue to be opened on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Access to all areas of the church buildings will still be restricted as these openings are for private prayer and not for general visiting.

Live stream Service for Sunday 2nd May Easter 5

The Service of Holy Communion at St James on Sunday 2nd May will be live streamed. To join the stream, click https://youtu.be/LXvw_8nq0OY or go into YouTube and search 'Ewelme Benefice'.

Please note - the stream will start at about **9.50am**; the service starts at 10am. After the service the stream will convert to a recording which can be viewed from about 12noon.

To hear this service by phone through Zoom, dial 0131 460 1196 or 0203 481 5237

Meeting ID: 810 7824 9198 Passcode: 496334

Morning Prayer in May via Zoom

9.00am: 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th May

To join the Zoom Service click:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82211320140?pwd=Q2NrK3FzZ0c1MzIxY1bUZRVXplZz09>

Meeting ID: 822 1132 0140 Passcode: 137079

To join by phone, dial 0131 460 1196 or 203 481 5237

Evening Prayer via Zoom

There will be a short 20 minute service of Evening Prayer via Zoom on Mondays and Wednesday at 6pm. Joining details for this week are:

Topic: Evening Prayer for 3rd and 5th May, 2021. To join, click:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81175734717?pwd=bVJqaGcyT1pidnNFVlFm5Um5QUt09>

Meeting ID: 811 7573 4717 Passcode: 015603

To join by phone, dial 0131 460 1196 or 0203 481 5237

Meeting ID: 811 7573 4717 Passcode: 015603

Holy Communion on Thursdays

This has now resumed and there will be a service of Holy Communion at 10am every Thursday in St James, Dursley. We will continue to follow the Covid guidelines and so face coverings must be worn please and social distancing observed.

Morning Prayer will be said in St James at 9am on Thursday mornings.

Kathleen Hill RIP

Kathleen regularly attended St James, latterly on Thursday mornings, until she moved into Stinchcombe Manor. Kath sadly died on 10th April aged 99.

Her funeral is on **Friday 7th May at 10.30am** at Gloucester Crematorium. If you would like to attend, especially as there will not be any family mourners, please speak to Revd Ian Gardner.

On **Thursday 6th May** at the 10am service of Holy Communion in St James, we will give thanks for Kath's life

Next Sunday 9th May 6th Sunday of Easter

10.00am Holy Communion in St Giles

10.00am Holy Communion in St James, Dursley

CHANGE OF DATE FOR Uley Annual Meetings

Government legislation does not currently permit meetings to be held in church buildings. This is expected to change as we move to Step 3, but not before 17th May!

The date of the Uley APCM has been changed to Sunday 20th June at 11.30am in St Giles.

The Electoral Roll for Uley, Owlpen and Nympsfield is still open for revision and names can be added. If you want to check whether you are already on the Roll, or if you would like an application form, please email Charles Drewett (Electoral Roll Officer) on

charlesdrewett@hotmail.com

Dursley's APCM

will, hopefully, still be held on Sunday 23rd May, 11.30am at St James. **The electoral roll** is now open for revision. If you want to check whether you are on the Roll, or if you would like an application form, please email Chris Raffle (Electoral roll Officer) on rafflechristine@gmail.com

Nomination forms for Churchwardens and PCC representatives are now available in both churches or on request from Parish Office

Food Bank

The Food Bank is now operating and donations are welcome. Uley village shop and both Tesco's and Sainsbury's have food donating points which can be used. Please continue to donate.



Christian Aid Week

10th – 16th May

Bishop Rachel writes in the Gloucester Diocese Bulletin:

“As you and your family members are vaccinated, I would like to encourage you to show your thanksgiving by making a donation to the work of Christian Aid. Whilst the cost of vaccination in the Global South is being met, organisations such as Christian Aid are working with communities where the impact of Covid has added further pain, struggles and challenges to those which already existed, amid poverty, injustice and lack of resources.”

Canon Michael says;

‘I have had my first vaccination and made a donation to Christian Aid to give thanks for the skill of those who have developed the vaccine.

Click this link to donate

<https://www.gloucester.anglican.org/2021/generosity-in-thanksgiving-for-vaccinations/>

Parish Office is closed

During the current lockdown, Clive will be working from home. You can email him on ewelmeeparishoffice@gmail.com He will also check for any messages left on the office answer machine.

Visit us on Facebook :  Ewelme Benefice Family

Stewardship, Parish Giving Scheme, gifts and donations

Very many thanks to all members of our church community who have helped us financially by registering for the Parish Giving Scheme, increasing contributions through the Parish Giving Scheme, sending cheques to the treasurers or making bank transfers into our parish bank accounts.

These acts of generosity are really, really appreciated.

Please visit our website for quick and tax efficient online ways of giving -

<https://ewelmebenefice.co.uk/coronavirus/>.

You can also donate directly via on-line banking:

Uley account:

Barclays 20-33-83 A/C 43042057

Dursley account:

Lloyds 30-98-29 A/C 02391588

Dursley PCC