



FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 2, 2021

We are the body of Christ as we continue to navigate this time of world-wide crisis. While we cannot all be together in person around our Lord's Table, we hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer as we join our hearts and minds for worship today.

This Sunday's image of how the risen Christ shares his life with us is the image of the vine. Christ the vine and we the branches are alive in each other, in the mystery of mutual abiding that we read of in the gospel and the first letter of John. Holy Baptism makes us a part of Christ's living and life-giving self and makes us alive with Christ's life. As the vine brings food to the branches, Christ feeds us with his word and at his holy table. We are sent out to bear fruit for the life of the world.

The North German prelude is an essay in sound that can be said to be "about" a certain key or tonality. These two preludia are lighter examples of the genre, not only because of their length, but, even though these composers observed the rules of counterpoint and harmony, they tended to treat them a little more liberally. There is some evidence that J. S. Bach knew Böhm and may have studied with him between 1700 and 1702.

Prelude

Praeludium in A Minor

Georg Böhm
(1661-1733)

Thanksgiving For Baptism

*Alleluia! Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!*

Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in Christ, let us give thanks for the gift of Holy Baptism.

*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.
Make us one, risen Christ.
Cleanse our hearts.
Shower us with life.
To you be given all praise,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God,
now and forever.
Amen*

Hymn

Thine Is the Glory



1 Thine is the glo - ry, ris - en, con-qu'ring Son; end - less is the
2 Lo, Je - sus meets thee, ris - en from the tomb! Lov - ing - ly he
3 No more we doubt thee, glo - rious Prince of life; life is naught with-



vic - t'ry thou o'er death hast won! An - gels in bright rai - ment
greet thee, scat - ters fear and gloom; let his church with glad - ness
out thee; aid us in our strife; make us more than con-qu'rors,



rolled the stone a - way, kept the fold - ed grave - clothes
hymns of tri - umph sing, for the Lord now liv - eth;
through thy death - less love; bring us safe through Jor - dan



where thy bod - y lay.
death hath lost its sting! Thine is the glo - ry, ris - en, con-qu'ring
to thy home a - bove.



Son; end - less is the vic - t'ry thou o'er death hast won!

Text: Edmond Budry, 1854–1932; tr. R. Birch Hoyle, 1875–1939
Music: JUDAS MACCABAEUS, George Frideric Handel, 1685–1759

Easter Acclamation and Apostolic Greeting

Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

Prayer of the Day

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 Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

WE GATHER AROUND THE WORD

First Lesson - Acts 8:26–40

Led by the Spirit, Philip encounters an Ethiopian official who is returning to his African home after having been to Jerusalem to worship. Philip uses their encounter to proclaim the gospel to him, which leads to the Ethiopian's baptism.

²⁶An 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.

Psalm 22:24-30

This psalm is a song of praise to the Lord who rules over all and cares for the downtrodden.

My praise is of him in the great assembly;
I will perform my vows in the presence of those who worship him.

²⁵The poor shall eat and be satisfied,
and those who seek the LORD shall praise him:
"May your heart live forever!"

²⁶All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations bow before him.

²⁷For kingship belongs to the LORD;
he rules over the nations.

²⁸To him alone all who sleep in the earth bow down in worship;
all who go down to the dust fall before him.

²⁹My soul shall live for him; my descendants shall serve him;
they shall be known as the LORD's forever.

³⁰They shall come and make known to a people yet unborn
the saving deeds that he has done.

Second Lesson - 1 John 4:7–21

We love God and others because God first loved us. We cannot say we love God, whom we have not seen, while hating others whom we regularly see. Love toward God is to be matched by love toward others because the essence of God is love.

⁷Beloved, 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.

Holy Gospel - John 15:1-8

On the night of his arrest, Jesus of Nazareth taught his disciples about the relationship they would have with him. Those who abide in his word and love will bear fruit. Apart from him, they can 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."



Sermon

The headline read, "Resilient redwood forest a beacon of hope for California." Featured in the newspaper article was a close-up picture of a burned, charred hole in a tree, through which could be seen a park ranger making her way through the Big Basin Redwoods State Park in Boulder Creek, California. That area of Northern California was scorched last summer after lightning sparked about 650 fires. As you may know, the towering redwoods – stretching hundreds of feet toward the sky – have a very shallow root system, often only five or six feet deep. However, redwoods do not survive alone. They form "tribes" or "communities" as their roots grow outward up to 100 feet from the trunk, intertwining and fusing together, providing each other strength and support to withstand the forces of nature as they live in the embrace of one another.

This image of an intertwined root system captures the essential meaning of the vine and the branches in our gospel reading today. Jesus of Nazareth is gathered with his disciples for a final supper together before he goes to his death. He and they have been through intense times in the preceding months and years, and the handwriting is on the wall that his radical message about God's love and grace and a new way of living in the world is leading to a confrontation with the occupying Romans and powers-that-be that will result in his execution on a cross. The words we hear in today's reading are some of Jesus' final and urgent farewell instructions to his friends and followers: "Abide in me as I abide in you. . . 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."

This is an extraordinary image for the life of faith. His followers are to “abide” in him as he abides in them, forming a community to provide strength and support as they live in the embrace of one another like so many redwood roots intertwined together. To “abide” means to dwell with, to stay connected, to be with, to hang-in with. His followers are to be parts of his own life – branches from the vine of his life and Spirit – receiving the life and love flowing from him into and through them. They are called to stay connected to the vine so that they may bear much fruit, because apart from their Lord they can do nothing.

Today’s gospel provides us with a mirror into which we can look as we consider where and in whom **WE** are abiding. What and where is our rootedness? Are we truly abiding in our Lord? Are we letting him abide in us? These are difficult questions if we are truly honest with ourselves. Our abiding may seem fruitful, our vines may appear healthy, and they might even be producing “grapes.” However, they may be rotting grapes, or underdeveloped grapes, or grapes that are unable to produce the wine of the kingdom. They may be grapes of self-importance and self-righteousness, grapes of a self-centered worldview in which God only loves those whom we love and dislikes those whom we dislike. They may be grapes of our participation in structures and systems that perpetuate bias, individualism, greed, discrimination, and inequity. They may be grapes that keep us from paying attention to the needs of others, or grapes that keep us from putting ourselves in the place of the “other” so that we may live alongside them like a “tribe” or “community” of redwood trees.

The Good News of the gospel is that our Lord cuts us from our rootedness in sin and death – the unhealthy roots of the human condition – and gives us new life in Word and Sacrament as we are joined to and made branches of the vine of his resurrected life. He becomes our root and vine – tending us so lovingly and, yes, pruning when necessary – so that we may bear fruit and be his flowering, visible presence in the fields of God’s kingdom in the world. Bearing fruit means engaging ourselves as individuals and as a congregation in those activities and tasks that recognize and invest in the goodness of God’s love by spreading that love to the neighbor whom we are called to love.

Our gospel reading today proclaims that God is the life that flows through everything that is. God is the energy, the peace, the love buried in the depths of our lives. We as Christians know this God as revealed in a wandering Jewish teacher, prophet, and mystic who hung on a cross out of love for us as a revelation of God’s pure, unbounded, saving love for the world.

This self-giving, sacrificial love is a tall order. Jesus puts it bluntly: “Apart from me you can do nothing.” That may sound like an exaggeration, but love is not easy. At every turn, our world, our culture, our human nature conspire together to urge us to think only about ourselves and our own happiness. The truth is that we can’t bear fruit on the vine without God’s life, without Christ’s Spirit, opening our eyes, stirring our desire to care and to respond, deepening our awareness that we aren’t in this alone. We need the vine; we need the love and energy that come from God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – if we’re going to abide in love ourselves and bear kingdom fruit for God and others.

That’s why we come together week after week – be it virtually or in-person – to abide on the vine together, to be a “community” in Christ like so many intertwined redwood roots. We provide one another strength and support to withstand the forces of daily life as we seek to live in the embrace of one another and our loving God. We are all branches connected to one risen Lord, taking in the life-giving and life-sustaining scriptures, and sacred meal, and music, and prayers, and fellowship that are Christ’s lifeblood to us and through us for the sake of the world that God loves so very much. Amen

Hymn of the Day

Alleluia! Jesus Is Risen!



1 Al - le - lu - ia! Je - sus is ris - en!
2 Walk - ing the way, Christ in the cen - ter
3 Je - sus the vine, we are the branch - es;
4 Weep - ing, be gone; sor - row, be si - lent:
5 Cit - y of God, Eas - ter for - ev - er,



Trum - pets re - sound - ing in glo - ri - ous light!
tell - ing the sto - ry to o - pen our eyes;
life in the Spir - it the fruit of the tree;
death put a - sun - der, and Eas - ter is bright.
gold - en Je - ru - sa - lem, Je - sus the Lamb,



Splen - dor, the Lamb, heav - en for - ev - er!
break - ing our bread, giv - ing us glo - ry:
heav - en to earth, Christ to the peo - ple,
Cher - u - bim sing: O grave, be o - pen!
riv - er of life, saints and arch - an - gels,



Oh, what a mir - a - cle God has in sight!
Je - sus our bless - ing, our con - stant sur - prise.
gift of the fu - ture now flow - ing to me.
Clothe us in won - der, a - dorn us in light.
sing with cre - a - tion to God the I AM!



Je - sus is ris - en and we shall a - rise.



Give God the glo - ry! Al - le - lu - ia!

Text: Herbert F. Brokering, b. 1926
Music: David N. Johnson, 1922-1987
Text © 1995 Augsburg Fortress.
Music © 1969 *Contemporary Worship 1*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

Duplication in any form prohibited without permission or valid license from copyright administrator.

The Prayers

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

God of all fruitfulness, you abide in your Church and your Church abides in you. Cleanse us by your word and give yourself to the whole Church on earth so that it bears fruit as it witnesses to your love.

You have created the heavens and the earth. As we contemplate the wonders and beauty of all that you have made, teach us to honor and maintain the bountiful earth that you intend for us and future generations.

You rule the nations with justice and love. Give world leaders assurance of your abiding presence, that they lead not by fear but with love for those they are called to serve.

You call humankind to live in love with one another. Bring peace to nations, to neighborhoods, and to homes. Help us protect the oppressed and the vulnerable, and show us the path to nonviolence in all things.

You have loved us so that we can love others. We pray for all in need of your love: those who are poor, lowly, outcast, weak, hungry, sick, dying, or fearful. Help us provide for their needs.

We remember those who have died in the faith. As you have promised to bring your people into your strong and tender embrace, preserve us until we enter with all the saints into your everlasting mercy.

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

WE WORSHIP WITH OUR OFFERINGS

The needs of Holy Trinity's mission and ministry are ongoing during these times of upheaval and turmoil. Many of our outreach ministry partnerships are facing increased requests for services. May we be faithful and generous as we support our mission "to care actively in the name of Jesus Christ."

Offerings may be mailed to the church or dropped off at the church office.

You are also encouraged to use the online giving portal on our website.

Go to www.holytrinitylynchburg.org and click on "Give."

You may also download the "GivePlus Church" app for your smart phone from Apple or Google.

Offertory Prayer

Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us – our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

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

Blessing

Almighty God, Father, ✙ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. Amen

Easter Acclamation and Dismissal

*Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!
Our service now begins. Go in peace. Serve the risen Lord.
Thanks be to God.*

Postlude

Praeludium in A Minor

Vincent Lübeck
(1654-1740)



*Today, a candle is lit in the Globusleuchter in memory of Chris Mount who died on Saturday.
We give thanks for his life and witness and keep his family in our prayers.*



*The altar flowers are given to the Glory of God
by Wilma and Les Beebe
in memory of Les' parents, Hilda and Clarence Beebe.*



*The candles are given to the glory of God
by Sally and Jeff Schneider
in memory of their mothers,
Katherine M. Parrish and Marjorie A. Schneider.*

THIS WEEK AT HOLY TRINITY

**Sunday,
May 2**

Worship Service (via YouTube)
8:30 a.m. Outdoor Service of Holy Communion (reservations required)
10:30 a.m. Outdoor Service of Holy Communion (reservations required)
11:30 a.m. Virtual Coffee Hour (via Zoom)
5:00 p.m. Church Council (via Zoom)
5:30 p.m. Holy Trinity Youth (Fellowship Hall, with masks and distancing)

**Thursday,
May 6**

9:00 a.m. Parish Nurse available in office (until 10:00 a.m.)

**Sunday,
May 9**

Worship Service (via YouTube)
8:30 a.m. Outdoor Service of Holy Communion (reservations required)
10:30 a.m. Outdoor Service of Holy Communion (reservations required)
11:30 a.m. Virtual Coffee Hour (via Zoom)

Our Mission: "To care actively in the name of Jesus Christ."

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
1000 Langhorne Road
Lynchburg, Virginia 24503**

Ministers: The People of Holy Trinity

President: Michael D. Rooney
Organist-Choirmaster: J. William Greene
Parish Administrator: Carol Dee Robertson
Parish Nurse: Gail Midkiff

Pastor Emeritus: Stephen J. Schulz
Director of Youth and Campus Ministries:
Susan H. Williams
Sextons: Linda Woody and Patricia Wiggington

Pastor: Dennis S. Roberts

Church Office: 434-384-8441

e-mail: office@holytrinitylynchburg.org

www.holytrinitylynchburg.org