

The Vine at Home
Fifth Sunday of Easter – Year B - Vocation Sunday

Sunday 2nd May 2021

Call to worship

Praise God in his holy house of worship; praise him under the open skies;
Praise God in our homes, praise him in our schools and on our streets, and at our work.
Praise him for his acts of power, praise him for his magnificent greatness;
Praise with a blast on the trumpet, praise with music through our headphones
Praise him with big noises, praise him in quiet whispers
Let every living, breathing creature praise God! Hallelujah! Amen.¹

Hymn: 317 STF – At the name of Jesus

Opening Prayers

In the beginning, God made everything and saw that it was good.
God of all, we come before you today just as we are,
We lift to you the joy of being alive,
We praise you that we are part of your amazing Creation.
Plant in us an ever-growing love for you,
Let worship and praise burst from our hearts,
Let the fruitfulness of our lives bring glory to you. Amen.

A prayer of praise.

Creation glorifies you in a million shades of green.
Heavy Hawthorn, bending with bloom witnesses to your extravagant love.
Blossom blesses with opulent abundance, freshness of petrichor evokes the fragrance of
new life.

And heavy heat rises - reminding us of the reality that your Presence is tangible and close.

Swathes of grass sway and praise
And show the flow of breeze
Breathe on us in this Pentecost
In this Holy Spirit season.

Warm our hearts, Inspire us with your magnificence, Quicken our spirits to respond to you.
Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

Reading: John 15:1-9 Jesus the True Vine

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ² He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes³ to make it bear more fruit. ³ You

¹ Call to Worship written by Alison Ransome

² Opening prayers written by Charlotte Rumble

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have already been cleansed⁴ 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 become⁵ my disciples. ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.³

Reflections on the reading

It is interesting that Jesus chooses imagery of the vine. In the Old Testament the vine is sometimes used as a symbol of the Messiah, a sign of hope, and sometimes it is used as a metaphor for Israel when the people have been found lacking in terms of their Godliness; when there is a need for change.

What we read in John chapter 15 is both hopeful whilst making it clear that we need to change.

It is hopeful because we are reminded that we are interconnected with the Spirit of God through our relationship with Jesus. The words that spring to my mind are love, fruitfulness, joy, abundance, connection and abiding with. What words come to your mind when you think of being connected through the Holy Spirit, with Jesus?

What do you think it means to abide with Jesus? If I play a word association game I go from abide, to live with, then I think of home, then of rest, then of safety, to family, to friends and to love. To abide in Jesus is all of that and more; we are invited to abide in all that Jesus is. If we are to abide in all that Jesus is, then we will be fully alive, we are nourished with the same life giving Spirit, we are loved, just as Jesus is loved by the Creator.

What do you think are the abundant fruits of a life lived like this? If we were to list them, they might be characteristics like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Today is Vocations Sunday and I think a vocation that is nourished in the life giving Spirit of God would have fruit like this list – let's hear them again; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

However, words like calling and vocation can scare us sometimes, so I think of it like this, the primary call of a Christian is to follow Jesus, and the journey that emerges from that, for each of us, is our own unique vocation. Do you see your journey with Jesus as a vocation? Or do you think that vocations are just for Ministers, and nurses and teachers?

There is a story about a student who loses the watch he inherited from his granddad, in his room; he cannot find it anywhere as the room is a mess. So he goes to his neighbour's room to look for it there, as it is easier to find things in a tidy room. His

³ e Text is from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved

teacher passes by and asks him 'why are you looking for something where it is not?' Do we sometimes look for a sense of vocation where it is not? The Bible reading today suggests that the abundant fruit will grow where we are most connected to The Vine. So on Vocations Sunday, I wonder, what happens if we look at where our life is bearing fruit and ask, 'could this be evidence of my vocation?'

Pause a minute and ask yourself: Where in life, at the moment, are signs of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control? As mentioned earlier, this Bible reading also speaks some tough words about us needing to change, to be pruned.

It might be that things that were once bearing abundant fruit, that were once our vocation, are not anymore.

How do we know if some of our vocational branches are ready to be pruned? Are there things you are doing, possibly in the name of God and church, that are actually now a burden, a chore, that bring a sense of gloom, and sadly either don't bear any fruit or the fruit is no longer abundant and juicy? If so, it might be time for change, time to have those branches pruned.

Vocations Sunday isn't just about you and me as individuals and our own vocations; it is also about the vocation of the church.

Where is the abundant fruit in the life of your church? And what needs to be pruned? As we emerge from lockdown, this is the time to ask, what is the vocation of the church in the time and the place we find ourselves? Is it the same as it was in 2019? Or has that which was fruitful now dried up? We possibly have some hard decisions to make as church communities.

My brother-in-law lives on a vineyard in France, and when the tractors come to prune the vines it looks brutal, but it is necessary if the vine is to grow new and delicious fruit.

Our God is a God of love and a God of invitation. God waits patiently in our lives. As we work out our vocations, individually and as a community, God is waiting, but God isn't waiting like the vacuum packed grapes in the supermarket, waiting for us to open the packet and let the fruit out. God is waiting and is active. The invitation is to look, and to notice where God is at work, where there is evidence of the fruit of God's Spirit. That's where we join in.⁴

What are you being called to?

We are all called to worship God, and to serve others, to care for people and the planet, to learn and grow in faith and to share this Good News with others.

At the moment, we are in worship together. Think about a time when you experienced the presence of God vividly in worship.

What was it that made that a special time?
In what ways did that change you?

⁴ Reflection written by Alison Ransome

[Hold the space for people to reflect – perhaps with some quiet music playing]

Prayers of intercession

Abiding God, we lift our world to you, holding in our hearts places where lives are crushed by injustice, torn up by conflict, trampled by the greed of others.

May justice germinate and righteousness ripen. That all may know your abundant love.

Let us lift our prayers for the world to God. [Silence]

Re-root us in you

That your kingdom may grow through us.

Nurturing God, we pray for our communities, holding in our hearts places where isolation has laid waste, deprivation has parched, dreams have withered.

Flow afresh through these places, that all may know Your promise of fullness.

Let us lift our prayers for our communities to God. [Silence]

Re-root us in you

That your kingdom may grow through us.

Life-giving God, we pray for our Church where apathy diseases: Plant in us a dis-ease with all that stifles Your Spirit. Where lack of vision is causing your people to perish: Graft us into Your limitless love. Where weariness withers: Revive us with the Light of Jesus.

Let us lift our prayers for the Church to God. [Silence]

Re-root us in you

That your kingdom may grow through us.

We pray for ourselves and the concerns of our hearts, let us lift our prayers for ourselves to God in the stillness. [Silence]

Prune us to be ready to respond to You. Re-wild us with Your ever-flowing grace. Graft us to You, that we may bear much fruit.

Re-root us in you

That your kingdom may grow through us. Amen⁵

Hymn: 409 STF – Let us build a house where love can dwell

Blessing

May each tree you see this week be a reminder of the connection you have with the

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Charlotte Rumble

Creator of that tree. May each piece of fruit you eat can be a reminder of the goodness of the Spirit of God nurturing you. Go in peace to bear fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Amen.⁶

⁶ Additional prayers by Alison Ransome