

Sunday 5 May 2024

The Sixth Sunday of Easter



Sermon and prayers of intercession © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. Please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

HYMN 1 Love divine, all loves excelling
Love divine all loves excelling

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

[\(different version of the hymn\)](#)

The Preparation

All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us.

Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil
and confess our sins in penitence and faith,
firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments
and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect for the Sixth Sunday of Easter

God our redeemer,
you have delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us
to eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

While Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, 'Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' So he ordered them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

Acts 10:44-end

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the First Letter of John

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth. *1 John 5:1-6*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 4 Love one another
Love one another

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)
[\(Iona community version\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

[Jesus said], 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.' *John 15:9-17*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Today's Gospel reading is full of astonishing promises. Jesus chose us. Jesus calls us friends. Jesus has made everything known to us. Our joy can be made complete. And all of them are bound up in love and abiding.

But to fully understand these promises, we need to recall the previous installment of Jesus' long prayer. We heard it during [the service last week](#), where Jesus described himself as 'the true vine' with us being 'the branches'. This should be a powerful metaphor but it often gets lost a little as few of us today properly understand agriculture. Jesus is saying that we are ingrafted into him.

We start at the beginning: you must drink if you are to live. If you live in a hot, arid country, then you can't drink the water because there may be none, or it's dirty. So you drink wine—fruit juice that has fermented slightly to stop it going off. And if you need wine, you need grapes; and if you need grapes, you need vines: you need vines to live. When Jesus says he is a vine he is saying he is vital to life.

It gets better. He is the vine and we can be the branches, so he is offering that life to us but to do so we must become a part of him. It's about ingrafting, which was used often in Palestine and other nearby countries, particularly in the vineyards, because it increased the yields of fruit and therefore increased the amount of wine produced.

The idea is simple enough: take a plant, make a small incision into its stem, and inserting a cutting into it. Bind it together to stop infection. And, if successful (if done properly), the cutting draws goodness and nutrient from the larger host stem. It then grows and altogether becomes a part of the larger plant ... and more fruit, more wine, more life. It works because the goodness of the vine flows through the stem, and thence to the branches, including those new, ingrafted branches.

It's a continual theme in John's Gospel. At the beginning, in John 2, we have the wedding at Cana, gallons and gallons of wine from water; slightly later, in John 10, Jesus is promising abundant life; later he *is* the life. In other Gospels we hear parables concerning vineyards. Jesus is wanting us to have life, *but it's spiritual life*.

It's now time to look at today's Gospel reading in which Jesus instructs us to abide in him. He's saying that we must remain ingrafted into him because otherwise the flow of goodness can't get from the stem—Jesus—to us—the branches. Read this way, and the rest of today's Gospel reading makes perfect sense.

Jesus starts by saying 'abide in me'. Note that it's not a matter of stay in contact, occasional connection. The ingrafted stem will wither if it's taken out of the stem. It must stay there. Indeed, the longer it stays there the more organic the join and the better the transfer of goodness from the vine to the branches.

Jesus then explores the benefits and the consequences. This time, we look through a different lens, which comes from today's second reading, from the first letter of John. It says that God *is* love. The central metaphor of vine and branches centres on the goodness of God flowing via Jesus and into us as ingrafted disciples. We know a tree is an apple tree because its sap goes through the branches into the fruit, which becomes an apple; we know a pear tree is a pear tree because its sap flows from trunk through branches and produces pears. And we know a Christian is truly ingrafted into Jesus the vine because the spiritual sap is God. And because God is love, that flow of goodness in a Christian's life will look like love. *If we are ingrafted into Jesus so the love of God flows through our spiritual veins.*

Next, we need to be clear about the love that comes from ingrafting. The Bible employs a great many words for love—love of family, love of friends, love in a sensual way, and so on. But for the Bible, when it talks about God, there is only one form of love. The word is almost untranslatable: it's *agapé*, which is the love that comes from God and (yes, you guessed it) is God. In all of this morning's passages, when Jesus or St John tell us to love, they are saying that we must let God live inside us, flow within us, and the outworking of that God indwelling in our soul will be the kind of *agapé* love that God desires and commands.

Taken together, God is *agapé* love and *agapé* love is from God. Let's explore with that identity in mind. God says that He wants his love to flow through us like sap through a stem. So today's first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, describes the Holy Spirit coming from Heaven and, having been filled with God, they are different people than they were before because God's love flows through them.

Many other Bible passages make better sense when viewed in these ways. First, Jesus' summary of the Law, to love God and love neighbour is not so much a mechanical command 'Do this because I say so!'; rather, it's a diagnostic test: 'if you are indeed ingrafted into the God who is love, the evidence of that good sap flowing through your spiritual veins is the way you demonstrate that love, directing it toward God and toward neighbour: that love is God in action'. The commandment to love God becomes a command to remain ingraft into God: to let God flow through our spiritual veins. But Jesus got there first, for he says, 'abide in me'.

Think next of the so-called fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 'The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace and so on' becomes, 'When truly ingrafted into God, that flow of God through our spiritual veins looks like *agapé* love and godly joy and God-filled peace': that Christian love is part of our spiritual *being*. It's also part of our spiritual *doing*: this time, think of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12 or Romans 12: this spiritual flow of God looks like 'Love in action, healing, gifts of

prophecy, and encouragement and so forth'. Again, being ingrafted into Jesus means God flows through us and yields godly ways of doing.

To recap, today's Gospel passage is full of astonishing promises. Jesus calls us friends. Jesus has made everything known to us. Jesus chose us. Our joy can be made complete. And all of it is bound up in Jesus' command to abide in his *agapé* love—to ingraft and stay ingrafted and not withdraw. If we do, the spiritual flow of spiritual goodness will be love because God is love. No wonder his new commandment is to love. Jesus says, 'Abide in me'.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.
We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

In response to the New Commandment, we commit to loving God. Empower us to love You so that we become entirely identified with You.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

In response to the New Commandment, we commit to living as a Church that works to build a new heaven here on earth. Empower us to living the love of Jesus so that Church becomes entirely identified with him.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

In response to the New Commandment, we commit to building a new earth. Empower us as we care for it and mend it. In love, help us to care for the people of the earth so that everything about our planet becomes entirely identified with You.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

In response to the New Commandment, we commit to love one another as Jesus loves us. Empower us to wash one another's feet and explore every means of love.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

In response to the New Commandment, we commit to loving the Lord. Empower us to move from living in this world and start living in the next. We pray for those whose earthly phase of being has ended and the new begun.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Come down O Love divine (please click on this link to hear the hymn)
Come down O Love divine (instrumental version)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

HYMN 4 A new commandment (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The Dismissal

The God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood of the eternal covenant,
make you perfect in every good work to do his will,
working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight;
and the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ.
Amen.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed!
Alleluia!

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, you made the world and love your creation.
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.
And so we gladly thank you,
with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

God our Father,
whose Son Jesus Christ gives the water of eternal life:
may we thirst for you,
the spring of life and source of goodness,
through him who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.