

26th September 2021

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service set out below.

Opening Prayer: 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.**

Song:

We plough the fields and scatter
The good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered
By God's almighty hand;
He sends the snow in winter,
The warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine,
And soft refreshing rain.

*All good gifts around us
Are sent from heaven above;
Then thank the Lord,
O thank the Lord, For all His love.*

He only is the Maker
Of all things near and far,
He paints the wayside flower,
He lights the evening star;
The winds and waves obey Him,

By Him the birds are fed,
Much more to us, His children
He gives our daily bread.

3. We thank Thee, then, O Father
For all things bright and good,
The seedtime and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food;
Accept the gifts we offer,
For all Your love imparts,
We come now, Lord, to give You
Our humble, thankful hearts.

Read: John 15:1-17

God our Friend - a summary of the talk given by Rev Jonathan Rooke.

The really good news of this passage is that Jesus tells his disciples that they are no longer to think of themselves as his servants. He tells them that he regards them as friends. Jesus talks of the closeness that he wants to have with them as his friends.



Jesus describes himself as the true-vine. The disciples will know that the Jewish nation itself was described as vine which God delivered out of Egypt. The house of Israel was known as God's own vineyard. God had a special purpose for Israel , his vineyard, to reach out to the whole world, to heal it and restore it to his love. But the vineyard lost its way and became disconnected from God's purpose for it. Jesus now says that he is the new true-vine, pulsing with the love and life of his Father because he is so intimately connected and he

is going to take up God's mission instead of Israel.

Jesus says, I love you, you are my friends and you are like the branches of the vine. You are closely connected to me. My life will pulse through you, healing, enabling, explaining and because of that you can have joy of living with me. Jesus wants us to abide in him. When Jesus says to us, he wants us to abide with him, he means to commune with Jesus, depend and submit to him, to remain with him and to persevere. The branches of the vine are not self-centred, self-sufficient or independent: they draw life not from themselves, but from the vine to which they belong.

We need to keep Jesus' commandment to love one another as he has loved us.

Jesus whole life is a lesson in how we can love one another. It is a sacrificial love of laying down bits of our lives for others. This helps us stay as branches attached to the true-vine. He tells his disciples that if they remain in his love as branches on Jesus' vine and let the love and life of the Father pulse through them then anything they ask for in prayer will be answered and he can say this because when we, the disciples, are in harmony with God, we are in

harmony with His purposes and our prayers will be for things God wants.

A good gardener, Jesus says, prunes away the bits of the vine that are useless, dried or withered. Jesus says he will have to prune and clear away parts of the disciples' lives that are not helpful so that they can bear the fruit that will fulfil his Father's purposes. When Jesus does that it can hurt but, though it is hard, when the harvest of fruit comes, we will be glad for it. I think this submission to God's will can be difficult for us. Tom Wright talks about the pruner's knife cutting away some of our goals and ambitions to make room for the fruit.



It's worth just reminding ourselves about the fruit. We can think of fruit as outcomes. In Ephesians 5 we are told: 'Live as children of the light, for the fruit of light can be found in all that is good and right and true'. In Galatians 5 we are told that 'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control'. The fruit is also the growth

of the Kingdom of God where we live. Theologian, Bruce Milner, says a life bearing fruit can be characterised by pain, submission, dependence, communing and obedience. Jesus, however, promises us joy as well.

I think we can hear this good news and respond as individuals. I like to believe that Jesus might consider each of us as his friend and a branch attached to him, the true-vine, connected to the life force of God. It is really helpful and humbling and his promises reassure us that we can pray and draw on his love in fair and difficult times because we are connected and abiding in him. We do well to remember that Jesus was talking about the disciples as a community, as a body of Christ fulfilling his Father's purpose to love the whole world into God's kingdom.

Let's pray:

Father, thank you for the good news that you call us friends and the joy you promise. Thank you for grafting us onto the true-vine so the love of the Father can flow into our lives. Please open our hearts with honesty and submission so you can prune those branches which get in the way of your love and purposes for ourselves and your mission to love the whole world.

Amen

Prayers: Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:4-6)



- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

Collect: 17th after Trinity: Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; 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. Amen.



The Lord's Prayer: 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.

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, COGS, the communities around us and our whole nation. ‘The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.’ (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

The Notices: We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am, 9.30am & 7pm. And we are now live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment but will now become available the week after the service, rather than the week before.

This week and next week, we are taking a harvest collection for Tearfund.

Further information is on our website or by ringing our vicar, Howard. 01420 563344.