

Swaythling Parish

Sunday 2 May 2021

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Welcome

Below is a service sheet for you to use at home. You can also find our Sunday morning reflection on YouTube channel, available at 10am on Sunday, (and afterwards). Please search for "Swaythling Parish" on YouTube to find and view it.

*If we can support you in any way at the present time, or you would just like to chat, do please get in touch: 023 8055 4231
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Introduction from Rev Peter Dockree

Welcome to our service today, however you are joining us. This Sunday is the fifth Sunday of Easter, and we will be thinking about pruning and cutting back.

Greeting

Grace mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
And also with you.

The Lord be with you,
And also with you

Prayer of Thanks

When we get to socialise again, one of the questions that we ask ourselves is
"how are you?"

and often we give a fairly non-committal
"fine"
when asked that question.

If we are asked a slightly different question,
"on a scale of 1-10 how are you?"
then that would be likely to demand a perhaps more meaningful answer. One of the reasons why in our services we try to take time for saying thankyou and sorry is to give us time to reflect more deeply on the blessings and the struggles of our lives. So let's begin by looking at the blessings, the things that give us joy, the things that keep us going, the people who we are lucky to have around us.

Lord God
For joy
For beauty
For wonder
For love and grace
We give you thanks.

Prayer of Confession.

Take a moment to own the things we have done that we wish we have not, said that we regret and thought that we should not have thought.

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

May the God of love
Bring us back to himself,
Forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Finally let us take time to own the hurt and pain that so often holds us back, and give it to God.

Lord God
We offer to you our wounds and our pain, and ask that we may carry them together. **Amen**

The Collect

Risen Christ,
your wounds declare your love for the world
and the wonder of your risen life:
give us compassion and courage
to risk ourselves for those we serve,
to the glory of God the Father.

Hymn: And can it be

I And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood
Died He for me, who caused His pain
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

- 2 'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!
 Who can explore His strange design?
 In vain the firstborn seraph tries
 To sound the depths of love Divine!
 'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
 Let angel minds inquire no more.
 'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
 Let angel minds inquire no more.
- 3 He left His Father's throne above
 So free, so infinite His grace
 Emptied Himself of all but love
 And bled for Adam's helpless race
 'Tis mercy all, immense and free
 For O my God, it found out me!
 Amazing love! How can it be,
 That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
- 4 Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
 Fast bound in sin and nature's night
 Thine eye diffused a quickening ray
 I woke, the dungeon flamed with light
 My chains fell off, my heart was free
 I rose, went forth, and followed Thee
 Amazing love! How can it be
 That Thou, my God shouldst die for me?
- 5 No condemnation now I dread
 Jesus, and all in Him, is mine
 Alive in Him, my living Head
 And clothed in righteousness divine
 Bold I approach the eternal throne
 And claim the crown,
 through Christ my own
 Amazing love! How can it be
 That Thou my God, shouldst die for me?

C Wesley (1707-1788), T Campbell (1777-1844)

Readings

Acts 8: 26-end

Philip baptises a Gentile, whose affirmation of faith is an early form of the creed.

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Get up and go towards 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.

I John 4: 7-end

Love for one another springs from recognition of God's generous love for us.

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.

John 15: 1-8

Jesus the vine, whose fruit we are expected to bear.

'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. 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.



I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

JOHN 15:5

A Reflection by Rev Peter Dockree

I am not the best gardener, perhaps it is lack of dedication to the task, or something else. One thing I have learnt though is that sometimes gardening involves getting rid of things before the rest can grow well. Taking the drastic action sometimes required to make the garden grow well. I look at the been plants and it always feels counter intuitive to remove a healthy look stem, because it is growing in the wrong place, but I know now it is necessary. It always feels wasteful when thinning out the beetroot to pull out lots of good plants so that

the others have space to grow. I am always amazed too when those more experienced than me will trip bushes or trees and for a while it looks so brutal until they flourish again stronger and better than ever. I struggle even more with paperwork and emails. I don't like deleting or throwing just in case I might need it again even although to not do so results in cluttered rooms and inboxes.

In today's reading Jesus is speaking into that very dynamic, but he isn't talking about gardening or clutter, not really, he is talking about the deeper things in all our lives. The things that we do simply because we always have, that we don't want to lose not because they are contributing much valuable anymore but because we fear the effects of losing them. The trouble is though if you are anything like me it's all very well to hear a talk about this, but it can be impossible to identify these things. Like me with gardening when I dug up all the strawberry plants thinking I was removing the weeds. Here is where Jesus's example guides us. The pruning doesn't just take place as some random act, if it were, we may prune the very things that actually have the potential to give us and others life, because we somehow believe they need to go. It is not us that prunes, but God, and it is only when we are rooted to God that this may become clearer. All too often people end up trying to dig up the very things that bring life to them. They have had to deny the very things that make them who they are because they find themselves shamed by them, perhaps its sexuality or disability, perhaps it's their

creativity or wonderful ideas that might be all too easily crushed for being too wild, perhaps it's their strength of character or determination that might too easily be misdirected but could be a great trait.

In connection with God and through spending time on that connection my prayer is that for all of us the things that need to be pruned can be pruned and the things that we need to allow to flourish can do so too.

Prayers

Let us pray for our world, our community and those in need around us. You may wish to light some candles as you pray.

At this time where in one hand we hold the new possibilities and in another the pain that has been, may we follow your guidance, seek your grace and know your love.

For those still reeling from all that has been. We pray for those in India for whom the pandemic has taken a darker and even more challenging turn, for those sick with covid 19, for those working in the hospitals and struggling to deal with the influx of patients, and for all seeking to get oxygen to those who most need it.

For those unsure of the possibilities ahead. Those nervous of taking new steps or making fresh starts. Those fearful of going out or of being in company again. Those whose mental health has taken a big hit and who need

support to find fresh footing. May we as individuals, as a society and as world, be empowered to support each other into a new place of hope.

We pray for the sick the grieving and the hurting at this time, and we name people in our hearts now.

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

Hymn: Lord Jesus Christ

1. Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us
You are one with us, Mary's son.
Cleansing our souls from all their sin
Pouring your love and goodness in
Jesus our love for you we sing,
Living lord.

2. Lord Jesus Christ, now and every day
Teach us how to pray, Son of God.
You have commanded us to do
This in remembrance Lord of you
Into our lives, your power breaks through,
Living lord.

3. Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us
Born as one of us, Mary's son.
Led out to die on Calvary,
Risen from death to set us free,
Living Lord Jesus, help us see
You are Lord

4. Lord Jesus Christ, I would come to you
Live my life for you, Son of God.
All your commands I know are true,
Your many gifts will make me new,
Into my life, your power breaks through,
Living Lord

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Closing Blessing

Thank you to everyone for worshiping with us today.

May we find and nurture our connection to the Vine of God, and released to be who we are made to be.

May the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among us and remain with us always.

Amen

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