

## Morning Prayer 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2021

### The Fifth Sunday of Easter

### Morning Worship with Daphne Norwood



#### Personal preparation before the service begins.

Please take time to remember where you are,  
and why you are here.  
Give thanks and become still  
in the presence of God

#### Prelude: Amazing love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avJ4IDnZWRU>

I'm forgiven  
because you were forsaken  
(and) I'm accepted,  
you were condemned

(and) I'm alive and well  
your spirit is within me  
because  
you died and rose again  
(2x)

Amazing love  
how can it be  
that you my king would die for me

Amazing love  
I know it's true  
It's my joy to honor you

In all I do I honor you

I'm forgiven  
because you were forsaken  
(and) I'm accepted,  
you were condemned

(and) I'm alive and well  
your spirit is within me  
because  
you died and rose again

Amazing love  
how can it be  
that you my king would die for me

Amazing love  
I know it's true  
It's my joy to honor you

In all I do I honor you

(we sing) You \_\_\_are my king  
(and) You \_\_\_are my king  
Jesus you \_\_\_ are my king  
Jesus you \_\_\_ are my king

Amazing love  
how can it be  
that you my king would die for me

Amazing love  
I know it's true  
It's my joy to honor you  
(2 x)

In all I do I honor you  
In all I do I honor you

CCLI 2456623

Grace, mercy and peace  
from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ  
be with us.  
This is the day that the Lord has made.  
**Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

## Let us pray with words from Psalm 22

Praise the Lord, you that fear him; ♦

**O seed of Jacob, glorify him;  
stand in awe of him, O seed of Israel.**

For he has not despised nor abhorred the suffering of the poor;

neither has he hidden his face from them; ♦

**but when they cried to him he heard them.**

From you comes my praise

in the great congregation; ♦

**I will perform my vows**

**in the presence of those that fear you.**

The poor shall eat and be satisfied; ♦

**those who seek the Lord shall praise him;**

**their hearts shall live for ever.**

All the ends of the earth

shall remember and turn to the Lord, ♦

**and all the families of the nations shall bow before him.**

For the kingdom is the Lord's ♦

**and he rules over the nations.**

How can those who sleep in the earth

bow down in worship, ♦

**or those who go down to the dust kneel before him?**

He has saved my life for himself;

my descendants shall serve him; ♦

**this shall be told of the Lord for generations to come.**

They shall come and make known his salvation,

to a people yet unborn, ♦

**declaring that he, the Lord, has done it.**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Spirit,

**As it was in the beginning,  
is now and shall be for ever.**

## **Song: Beauty for brokenness**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MO1G-o7Yj-c>

Beauty for brokenness  
Hope for despair  
Lord, in your suffering  
This is our prayer  
Bread for the children  
Justice, joy, peace  
Sunrise to sunset  
Your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives  
Cures for their ills  
Work for the craftsman  
Trade for their skills  
Land for the dispossessed  
Rights for the weak  
Voices to plead the cause  
Of those who can't speak

God of the poor  
Friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts  
Let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love  
From a spark to a flame

Refuge from cruel wars  
Havens from fear  
Cities for sanctuary  
Freedoms to share  
Peace to the killing-fields  
Scorched earth to green  
Christ for the bitterness  
His cross for the pain

Rest for the ravaged earth  
Oceans and streams  
Plundered and poisoned  
Our future, our dreams  
Lord, end our madness

Carelessness, greed  
Make us content with  
The things that we need

God of the poor  
Friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts  
Let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love  
From a spark to a flame

Lighten our darkness  
Breathe on this flame  
Until your justice  
Burns brightly again  
Until the nations  
Learn of your ways  
Seek your salvation  
And bring you their praise

God of the poor  
Friend of the weak  
Give us compassion we pray  
Melt our cold hearts  
Let tears fall like rain  
Come, change our love  
From a spark to a flame

CCLI 1236690

## **The Collect for today, the Fifth Sunday of Easter**

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.  
**Amen.**

## The reading is taken from 1 John 4:7-21

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God  
**Our hearts and our minds are open**

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

This is the word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

### **Song: Let there be love**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEuS7Ut7kql>

Let there be love  
shared among us,  
let there be love  
in our eyes.

May now Your love  
sweep this nation,  
cause us O Lord \_\_\_  
to arise.

Give us a fresh  
understanding  
of brotherly love  
that is real

Let there be love  
shared among us  
let there be love

(repeat once)

CCLI 35483

### **The reading is taken from John 15:1-8**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to  
John

#### **Glory to you, O Lord**

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“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. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Homily

Today we celebrate the fifth Sunday of Easter. Today’s message once again explains to us how our lives can be different because of the Resurrection of Christ. Christ powerfully returned to life after his death on the cross. We now share in this resurrection power and energy which enables us too to be reborn into a life with Christ as Lord and savior.

The new texts we read today are both authored by John, widely believed to be the beloved disciple John. John was the disciple who was closest to Jesus and he is the one mentioned as leaning on Jesus at the last supper. His message is consistently strong about the nature of Christ and what it means to be a Christian. In John and First John emphasis is placed as to how the Christian life appears to others. For John it is important that the world sees Christians as lives that demonstrate Christ’s love for them.

In the first letter of John the word love occurs 46 times and in the book of John 57. It is very clear why I John is called the letter of love. For John the proof of your relationship with God is in the evidence of your ability to love. The text speaks for itself and doesn’t need much explanation. The Gospel of John supports this in 13:35 we read “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” and in 3:16 we read that sending Christ God shows his love for us.

We will now move to the Gospel passage in John. John's Gospel is in many ways different than the other three Gospels. Matthew, Mark and Luke share many of the same parables and words of Jesus whereas John does not include one parable in his Gospel. John's audience is also more inclusive and spoke more to those without a Jewish background. That is why till today the Gospel of John is recommended as where new believers should begin their Bible reading. You don't need a knowledge of the Old Testament to understand most of John's writings. John also writes in the simple Greek of the common man. Today's reading is an example of this. A Jewish background is not required to understand the meaning of the passage. The illustration of a vine and its branches would have been something the readers had all seen in the surrounding areas they lived in. Living in a wine growing area we have probably all at some time walked through a vineyard. I am a lover of plants and trees and this is a passage I repeatedly come back to in the time I set aside to learn and pray. I have often painted trees and I have pictures of some of my favorite trees I have met in my lifetime. It is not difficult for me to imagine myself as a branch attached to the vine. I imagine the roots, the leaves, the fruit and my solid connection to the vine. I recommend this short form of meditation when you are in the woods taking a short rest. Believe me God can speak to you through a tree or the many vineyards in our area.

The Gospel of John is also theologically important in its support of the trinity and the different roles of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Each of the three are given specific roles that they play in the life of a believer. In this passage the Father is the Gardener or the one who carries out the judgement of which branches need to be removed for lack of fruit. Jesus is the vine that provides the nourishment and life for the branch which symbolizes a believer. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener."

Verse 3 tells us who the branches are. "you are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you." Those who have heard and accepted Christ's

message are ready and fit to bear fruit The message John shares with us is that we are the example of Christ to the world in the way we treat our fellow man.

Our lives have the power to call others to Christ. It calls us to evaluate our lives and what our surroundings receive from us in our daily lives. The branch does not consume its fruit but the fruit is produced to be enjoyed by others. The promise Christ gives us in the beginning of verse 4 is an assurance that we should repeat daily. "Remain in me, as I also remain in you" The word remain is a "state of being" verb, there is no motion involved in remaining. It is like laying on a rubber raft in the water. If I am laying on a raft, the raft is keeping me afloat. Without the raft my arms and legs would be working hard to keep me afloat. With the raft there is no exertion needed, the raft does the work for me. Each of us struggles in our own way to be a better person. A healthy person is also one that does self examination and takes the time to evaluate how our life effects others. The problem here is that we try to change ourselves to please other people or to cause other people to like us. This as most of us know has the potential to become a big problem.

Christ offers us an easier and more productive way to selfimprovement. Remaining in Christ and letting Christ be the one providing our nourishment through the roots of the vine our lives will be changed outwardly. Picture the roots of a tree and the solid foundation a tree grows upon. Try to visualise the flow of nourishment that is extracted through the roots and travels its way through the vine and into the branches, This is a picture of Christ who nourishes each of us as branches on his vine. Christ like the raft allows us to passively remain in him. Remaining in Christ is not an action or a physical activity. Remaining means the opposite. It means to stay put. Stay put and rest in the knowledge that Christ the giver of Life is a strong foundation and when we stay connected to him, our branch will bear fruit. This fruit is not a secret but will be evident to all who are part of our lives. The longer we remain in Christ the more we stop trying to produce our own fruit or in other words trying to give an appearance of being a great

person. We become what others need and demonstrate who Christ is to those around us.

Galatians 5:22 has a list of what are some of the fruits that can grow on our branches. "22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness," These are things that will become evident in our lives as we remain in Christ. When your friends, family, neighbors, coworkers, fellow shoppers experience these fruits after being with you, you can be sure of your relationship with Christ. Remember there is a process to blooming and becoming a ripe fruit. Anyone who has a fruit tree or vine in their garden knows there is a process that every apple, peach, grape, kiwi, cherry, strawberry goes through to become a ripe fruit ready to be enjoyed. The same process occurs in our spiritual life. A good example in my life is patience, maybe also in yours. Children are notorious impatient. Have you ever gone a long trip with a child that involved sitting still for hours? I'm sure you remember the question "how much longer"? As an adult on a 8 hour flight I've learned to be patient, which doesn't necessarily mean I'm enjoying every minute. I have learned there is great reward at the end of the flight. I know even though I am exhausted my destination will bring me joy. I will see love ones or perhaps arrive at a destination I have waited years to visit. The first step in remaining is committing ourselves to Christ and trusting Him to change us.

If we stay on that raft our arms and legs will not be flailing . If we try to change ourselves we will flail but if we remain in Christ and all he is rooted in we will be changed. Our branch will be productive and produce fruit which can be shared with many others. As typical humans we like to have control and most of us would like to pick out the fruit we would like growing on our branch. At least in my life when I think I need to work on self control Jesus might think it is time that I grow peace. Two days later someone needs that peace that has grown out of my life. The biggest challenge for many of us is to let Jesus decide the when, where and

what we need to share to this world. It's sort of like an Überraschung Ei,

This passage in John begins and ends with a warning. "He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit" and again in vs."If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned" I do not read these verses as a threat but as a reminder there are things in my life that I can not do on my own. We live in a world that values self improvement with emphasis on self. Christ tells us "remain in me" and you will experience improvement.

Some ways to help you remain on the raft and also help you return to that raft if you fall off and start to flail.

- Fellowship, stay connected with other believers. Naturally this happens on Sunday mornings but there are many other ways to fellowship during the rest of the week Use your phone and email to stay connected. When the covid restrictions go for a walk or meet up for coffee.

- Bible reading, Stay connected with God's word. It can be as simple as having one verse for the week or in a daily Bible reading plan. —Prayer, These prayers can be your own spontaneous prayer or a prayer written by someone else. There are prayers for every occasion - spiritual music,

- Music is a great and strong way to stay close to God. There are many types of music to strengthen and comfort. I enjoy a mix of contemporary worship music, classic church hymns, Taize, Bach or even Hildegard von Bingen.

In closing let us look together at a vine and its branches. Choose a branch that is you and imagine yourself connected to the vine. Imagine the fruit produced on your vine. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.....

## Song: Faithful one

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PjSO5IhI0M>

Faithful one, so unchanging  
Ageless one, you're my rock of peace  
Lord of all I depend on you  
I call out to you, again and again  
I call out to you, again and again

You are my rock in times of trouble  
you lift me up when I fall down  
All through the storm  
Your love is, the anchor  
My hope is in You alone  
(repeat once)

CCLI 465840

## Intercessions (by Christine)

When I was pondering the passage from the gospel of John on Thursday, lots of situations popped throughout the day up that connected to the reading. They shall inspire our prayers this morning.

*On Thursday morning, after taking my son to the bus stop, I met my neighbour and she told me about all that is happening in her family's life right now: the recent passing-away of her father, their planned move to a different town and the wedding to her partner this coming Saturday.*

Christ, your parable about the vine & the branches show, how close joy and sorrow sometimes are. Please be with all who have to deal with ambiguous situations and be present with them. Help them to endure and even embrace the tension, and to sense the sacred within all of it, just as my neighbour does.

Lord, in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer.**

*Later that morning I took the train from Waldkirch to Freiburg and noticed the people harvesting asparagus on the fields below the vineyards in Buchholz.*

*Jesus said: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener." ...God himself as the gardener! Wow! This image stands in stark contrast to modern-day agriculture, doesn't it?*

Christ, we are saddened at hearing about the appalling work conditions of the mostly eastern European workers on farms and other places. May these precious people not only harvest our beloved local delicacies, but let their presence also sow and nurture the seeds of concern and repentance in society and in us individually.

God, you great gardener, please look after and nurture all ill-treated labourers that pay the price for our comfortable lifestyle - those exploited in this country and around the world whilst producing our food, making our clothes and so much more. Let your redeeming love become manifest in the way we treat others and this planet. Strengthen and grant success to all who work towards equality and justice.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

*"...like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."*

*There are times when we become painfully aware of those lives that appear to be just that: thrown away, withered and burned. This happened to me on Thursday, once I arrived in Freiburg. On the tram I had no choice but overhearing the telephone conversation of an elderly lady, pouring out her heart, with tears in her eyes. She was worried sick about her child's family*

*struggling badly with mental health, homeschooling, addiction and more.*

Christ, we bring before you all whose lives are a contestant battle. Bring relief and hope.

Awaken us to the needs of those around us and help us to listen to your still small voice prompting us into love and action.

Please be especially with the people of India and other countries, that suffer worst from this pandemic right now, and give peace to the nation of Myanmar.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

*The tram took me past Johanneskirche with its huge banner proclaiming 'God describes something far greater than us.'*

Thank you, God, for all that proclaim Christ to this world.

We pray for your church. Help us to direct our efforts and resources, so that we may be a vine that bears much fruit of peace, love, faith and hope. Jesus said: "Every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." Help our own congregation and the Church worldwide to grow into the direction you have in mind for us and let us be open to your sometimes painful, but always loving acts of pruning.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

*Once I was back home from Freiburg, I headed out again - you guessed it - to the hairdresser. Changing my hairstyle is one thing, but many face small and big changes in their own lives.*

Christ, please provide guidance and wisdom to all confronted with big decisions and give courage and faith to those who are called to step out into the



O what peace we often for - feit!  
O what needless pain we bear!  
All because we do not car - ry  
ev'rything to God in prayer!

Have we tri - als and temptations?  
Is there trouble anyhwere?  
We should never be discou - raged;  
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so fai - thful?  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness;  
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy la - den,  
Cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Saviour, still our re - fuge;  
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?  
take it to the Lord in prayer;  
In His arms He'll take and shield thee,  
thou wilt find a solace there.

CCLI 6542519

## The Blessing

The Lord bless us and watch over us,  
the Lord make his face shine upon us  
and be gracious to us,  
the Lord look kindly on us and give us peace;  
and the blessing  
of God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with us now and always.

**Amen.**



## **The Conclusion**

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,  
and keep us in eternal life.

**Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **Postlude**