

May 2, 2021
Fifth Sunday of Easter

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PRELUDE

In Celebration (Thompson)

GREETING & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Prayer requests may be typed into the Facebook comment box at the start of worship, or emailed to the church office by Saturday morning. During the weekly prayer time, you will be given space to speak aloud or silently in your heart – your prayer concerns as well. As a gentle reminder, remember that these prayer concerns will be heard by anyone who watches the recorded worship service. Therefore, please be mindful of people’s privacy when using last names and in offering details of their circumstances. A good practice is to ask: What is NEEDED to be known for people to pray appropriately for someone and what does not NEED to be known and what would the person whom I name wish for me to share and NOT share?
- Pentecost is Sunday, May 23rd. This will be our HOMECOMING SUNDAY – a day of CELEBRATION. On this day we will celebrate in thankfulness and welcome new members into the fellowship and life of this congregation. As is our tradition too, on Pentecost, one of the ways we celebrate the LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT is by offering an additional monetary donation towards the purchase of Red Geraniums, which are used to beautify the gardens around the church entrance – that serve to remind us to be thankful for the Spirit of God. Last year, Claire Moore’s Girl Scout troop graciously planted them and Brian Clemens, our custodian, maintained them. They were stunning! I hope you’ll consider a special CELEBRATION OFFERING on Pentecost.
- The summer worship schedule (9 AM start time) begins on June 6, 2021.

INTROIT

We Have Come into His House

(Troy will sing through the introit once. We will then, all join to sing it through TWICE)

We have come into his house and gathered in his name to worship him.

We have come into his house and gathered in his name to worship him.

We have come into his house and gathered in his name to worship Christ the Lord.

Worship Him - Christ The Lord.

OPENING PRAYER

Pastor: Heavenly Father, whose love knows no limits, we have gathered as your beloved children. Comfort us. Surprise us! Stretch us. Strengthen and sustain us. Give us courage in the face of fear. Then, Holy Spirit, lead us forward in the way of Christ-like love, standing on the promises of God, our Savior. Amen.

HYMN

Standing on the Promises

Bulletin, Last TWO Pages

FIRST READING - 1 John 3:1-7 and 1 John 4:7-21

Our second reading, recorded in First John speaks to the love of God and what it means to be children of God. The author moves us to consider why does this type of encounter with God or this sacred relationship make a difference in how we see ourselves and others in the world? This is chapter 3, verses 1 through 7 AND chapter 4, verses 7 through 21. John writes:

See what great love the Father has lavished on *us*, that *we* should be called children of God! And that is what *we* are! The reason the world does not know *us* is that it did not know him. ² Dear friends, now *we* are children of God, and what *we* will be, has not yet been made known. But *we* know that when Christ appears, *we* shall be like him, for *we* shall see him as he is. ³ All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

⁴Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. ⁵But you know that he appeared so that he might take away *our* sins. And in him is no sin. ⁶No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

⁷Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

⁷Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does *not* love does *not* know God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that God loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we *also* ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, *God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

¹³This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶And 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. ¹⁷This 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.* ¹⁸There 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.

¹⁹We love because God first loved us. ²⁰Whoever 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. ²¹And God has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

This the Word of the Lord. Let all the people say, "Thanks be to God."

GOSPEL READING – John 15:1-8

Vineyard and vine imagery are frequently used throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament, however, this is typically a negative image. For example: Israel (or the people of God) are described as a vine or vineyard and God as a judgmental vine-dresser – hacking off those branches that are degenerate and unrighteous. In the first century, vineyards would've been very familiar to Jesus' disciples too, passing them as they walked from place to place. In this passage, the job of pruning is referenced. While pruning may seem cruel, it actually renews the vine's vitality. In this passage, Jesus tells a story using the metaphor of vines and gardeners, to describe the relationship between his followers and God, which move us to ask: Where is our church here? Is it a fruit bearing branch of Christ or is it an unfruitful branch which withers and dies? No longer useful, the branch is eventually removed and tossed into the fire. This is the 15th chapter of John, verses 1 through 8. Jesus said:

¹"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²God cuts off every branch - in me - that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, God prunes so that it will be *even more* fruitful.

³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain 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.

⁵"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.

⁶If 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. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

This is the Good News of Christ, let all the people say, "Praise be to Christ."

SERMON & PRAYER

Rev. Laura C. Bair

OFFERING INVITATION¹

PRAYER OF DEDICATION & THE LORD'S PRAYER

All: *Generous God, we offer you the fruits of our time, talents, and financial resources in celebration of all that we have been given. We give you thanks and ask a special blessing on the fruits we give back to help meet the needs of your beloved community. May the gifts nourish and strengthen this church and the wider community to grow spiritually, emotionally, and physically. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who also taught us to pray: Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.*

HYMN

They Will Know We are Christians By Our Love

Bulletin, Next Page

BENEDICTION

Pastor: May God's extravagant love consume you.
May Christ's life and passion inspire you.
May the Holy Spirit compel you to do ordinary things with extraordinary love.

All: *Amen.*

POSTLUDE

The Light of the Lord is Upon Us (Little)

¹ **Abiding in Love: Service Prayers for the Fifth Sunday of Easter Year B**, was written by the Rev Dr. Sheila Harvey Guillaume, pastor of Union Congregational United Church of Christ in West Palm Beach. (adapted)

2223 They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love



1. We are one in the Spir-it, we are one in the Lord,
2. We will walk with each oth-er, we will walk hand in hand,
3. We will work with each oth-er, we will work side by side,
4. All praise to the Fa-ther, from whom all things come,



we are one in the Spir-it, we are one in the Lord,
we will walk with each oth-er, we will walk hand in hand,
we will work with each oth-er, we will work side by side,
and all praise to Christ Je-sus, God's on-ly Son,



and we pray that all u-ni-ty may one day be re-stored:
and to-geth-er we'll spread the news that God is in our land:
and we'll guard hu-man dig-ni-ty and save hu-man pride:
and all praise to the Spir-it, who makes us one:

Refrain



And they'll know we are Chris-tians by our love, by our



love; yes, they'll know we are Chris-tians by our love. —

1. Stand - ing on the prom - is - es of Christ my King,
 2. Stand - ing on the prom - is - es that can - not fail,
 3. Stand - ing on the prom - is - es of Christ the Lord,
 4. Stand - ing on the prom - is - es I can - not fall,

through e - ter - nal a - ges let his prais - es ring;
 when the howl - ing storms of doubt and fear as - sail,
 bound to him e - ter - nal - ly by love's strong cord,
 lis - tening ev - ery mo - ment to the Spir - it's call,

glo - ry in the high - est, I will shout and sing,
 by the liv - ing Word of God I shall pre - vail,
 o - ver - com - ing dai - ly with the Spir - it's sword,
 rest - ing in my Sav - ior as my all in all,

stand - ing on the prom - is - es of God.
 stand - ing on the prom - is - es of God.
 stand - ing on the prom - is - es of God.
 stand - ing on the prom - is - es of God.

Sing the REFRAIN next - between each verse (On NEXT page)

Refrain

Stand - ing, stand - ing,
Stand - ing on the prom - is - es, stand - ing on the prom - is - es,

stand - ing on the prom - is - es of God my Sav - ior;

stand - ing, stand - ing,
stand - ing on the prom - is - es, stand - ing on the prom - is - es,

I'm stand - ing on the prom - is - es of God.