

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, April 28th, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Abide in Me
Fifth Sunday of Easter
John 15:1-8

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise God in the heights!

Praise God, all you angels; praise God, all creatures high and low!

Rulers of the earth and all peoples, praise God's holy name!

Young men and women alike, old and young together!

With voices united, let us praise the Lord!

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Holy God,

the first and the last, beginning and end of all things,

you are worthy of praise from all your creation.

Sun, moon, and stars praise you.

Earth, sea, and sky praise you.

Every living thing praises you in its own way.

And so we praise you

joining our varied voices with all your creatures in heaven and on earth.

You fill our lives with the wonder of your love in Christ Jesus.

Your Spirit moves throughout the world

to reveal your purposes for every living thing.

Receive our prayers and praise this day,

for you are the Source of our life and our hope,

Holy God, ever Three and Ever One. **Amen.**

Children's Hymn: "This Little Light of Mine"

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

Loving God,
Jesus commanded us to love one another
so the world would know we follow him.
Yet we confess we do not always love one another,
not the way Jesus loves us.
The world has seen our squabbling,
our history of hypocrisy,
and our lack of compassion for those who don't measure up.
Loving God, forgive us.
Lord Jesus, continue to love us.
Holy Spirit, fill us with love,
so that the world will witness your love in our words and actions. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus,
we are assured that there is no sin so terrible
that God cannot forgive,
no hurt so terrible that God cannot heal.
God accepts, God forgives, and God sets free.
Receive the forgiving love of God.

The Lord's Prayer

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 the Evil One.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn #433: "All Creatures of our God and King"

All creatures of our God and King
lift up your voice and with us sing:
sing praises, hallelujah!
O brother sun with golden beam,
O sister moon with silver gleam,
sing praises, sing praises,
hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Wild rushing wind, unbounded, strong,
 high clouds that sail in heaven along:
 sing praises, hallelujah!
 New rising dawn in praise rejoice,
 kind lights of evening, find a voice:
 sing praises, sing praises,
 hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Deep flowing water, pure and clear,
 make music for your God to hear:
 sing praises, hallelujah!
 Fierce fire, so masterful and bright,
 pierce now the dark with heat and light:
 sing praises, sing praises,
 hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Dear mother earth, who day by day
 brings forth your blessings on our way:
 sing praises, hallelujah!
 All flowers and fruit that in you grow,
 let them God's glory also show:
 sing praises, sing praises,
 hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Let everyone of tender heart,
 forgiving others, take their part:
 sing praises, hallelujah!
 All who long pain and sorrow bear,
 give God your burdens and your care:
 sing praises, sing praises,
 hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Let all things their Creator bless,
 and worship God in humbleness:
 sing praises, hallelujah!
 Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
 and praise the Spirit, Three in One:
 sing praises, sing praises,
 hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Responsive Reading

Psalm 22:25-31

²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great congregation;

my vows I will perform before those who fear him.

**²⁶ The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD!
May your hearts live forever!**

²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD,
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before you.

**²⁸ For kingship belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.**

²⁹ All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
even the one who could not keep himself alive.

**³⁰ Posterity shall serve him;
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;
³¹ they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn,
that he has done it.**

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

John 15:1-8

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Sermon

‘I am the vine’ is the last I am statement made by Jesus in the book of John. He makes this statement after he has entered Jerusalem for Holy Week. As he had entered into the city the people had gathered along the roadsides, hailing him as the king. They were calling out,

'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' Yet as the week progresses from that point Jesus spends his time teaching his disciples a very hard truth, that his earthy ministry is coming to an end, and they will carry the weight of his message after he is gone.

On Thursday, Jesus takes the disciples to the upper room to participate in the Passover Feast. He washes their feet, telling them that he is setting an example for them on how they are to humble themselves and serve others. He explains that they are to be servants, in the same way that Jesus had come as a servant. Finally, Jesus institutes the Last Supper, telling the disciples that they are to continue to participate in this meal in remembrance of Him.

During the conversations that take place that evening, Jesus explains that one of them will betray him, and that Peter will deny him. He clearly explains that he will be with them just a short while longer, and he promises them that a helper will come, the Holy Spirit, which will be a guide and an advocate for them, leading them into the truth of God's Word.

It is at this point that Jesus leads his disciples out of the upper room and towards the garden of Gethsemane. Perhaps as he was walking along the route, he saw some vines and they inspired him, or perhaps they walked by the temple and saw the golden vine decorations that were intricately laid into the temple walls. Whatever it was, Jesus began to teach his disciples once again, telling them 'I am the vine.'

The message is clear, 'Abide in Me.' Jesus is telling his disciples stay in me, remain in me, follow the path that I have set out before you. Jesus is saying do not veer to the left or to the right, stay the course. Abide in me.

Jesus was explaining to his disciples that if they were to continue in the path that he had laid out for them, if they were to continue his ministry that they would have to continue to trust and obey him. They would have to remember all that he had taught them over the three years he had walked with them, and they would need to stay the course, and abide in him if they were going to be successful. Jesus likely was doing this because he knows human nature, we tend to live by the philosophy of 'out of sight, out of mind.'

We have to admit that this is true. When someone we know moves away, or when we move somewhere new, even if we are best of friends with someone, a gap begins to appear. When we lived near them it was second nature to call them, do things with them, share life events with them. Yet, once there is a physical distance between us and them, that close relationship suffers, and that physical distance begins to appear in a distance in our relationship as well. Human nature means that we tend to get focused on the here and now, and we begin to think less and less about those we used to be so close to.

Jesus is reminding his disciples that even though there may be a physical distance in their relationship, they need to stay close to him spiritually. They need to hold his teachings close to their hearts. He tells them, 'abide in me,' 'remain in me' stay true to the teachings and the work I have given you.

Jesus tells his disciples this because in order to accomplish the great works that he is leaving with them, to 'bear fruit' as he puts it, is to 'Abide in Him.' And it is vital that they bear fruit, it is vital that they carry on his ministry and show the world that they are followers of Christ, because if they remain in Christ they will bring Glory to God in their lives.

John 15:8

⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Every aspect of Jesus's ministry while he walked on earth was to bring Glory to His Father who was in Heaven, and Jesus is passing that task over to his disciples as he walks the path to Gethsemane. When he says I am the vine, he is telling them that they are now the ones who are given the task of bringing Glory to God in their ministries, and they can only do so by staying close to God's son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ. If they do that, if they abide in him, they will bear much fruit for the Kingdom of Heaven.

We all know that when something is repeated in the Scriptures it is important, and in this short piece of Scripture we are examining today, Jesus repeats the words 'abide in me' and 'fruit' multiple times. The message is clear, the task of the faithful, is to abide in the teachings of Jesus Christ and Bear fruit in this world as they bring glory to God.

Jesus does not just tell us to abide in him and be fruitful though, he explains that if we are to bear fruit in this world there are some aspects of our life that may need to be removed.

John 15:1-3

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

While Jesus is the true vine, God is the vinedresser. God removes the branches that produce no fruit. We all understand this, especially those of you who finished the Book of Revelation this week. There are only two possibilities in this world being part of God's vineyard or not.

Yet the part that is usually skipped over is the statement that he prunes the branches that bear fruit.

Anyone who has ever gardened understands this immediately. When you want a plant to be more productive you need to prune away the non-productive parts of the plant. When you cut the bad growth it results in the good flourishing, because it receives more of the nutrients needed to grow, in essence it gets more nourishment from the vine.

This is what happens in the life of a true follower of Christ. God prunes their life.

The minute that we profess a true faith in Christ the Holy Spirit baptize us. It enters us and begins its work of changing us to be a better follower of Christ through the process of sanctification.

Our baptism in water is symbolic, it signifies the blood of Christ washing us clean and justifying us in the eyes of God. It is also the start of our sanctification process, a complex relationship with God through the Holy Spirit in which we are slowly transformed from the people we once were into the people that God is calling for us to become.

Our salvation through faith in Jesus Christ is through the grace of God, and it is our faith, repentance, confession that begin to wash away the old sinful person that we were, people who lived in this world and celebrated in the nature of this world, into people who are made anew, reborn, and no longer crave the things of this world, but instead seek to glorify God in our thoughts, words and deeds.

We become a new creation 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us.

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

We are in Christ, Christian. If you are a true Christian you need to be in Christ, you have to remain in him, abide in him. The first step of this is accepting Him as your lord and saviour, because you cannot remain in something unless you are part of it to begin with. So, to be 'in Christ' there needs to be a cleansing, a pruning away of the dead things of this world, a cutting out of the bad and unproductive in our lives.

This begins at our baptism and continues throughout our lives. Anyone who has gardened knows that you do not just prune a plant once and you are done forever, you have to prune it continuously for it to be the most productive.

This is what God does as the vinedresser, God slowly works away at us, pruning away the bad branches in our lives, our sinful nature, our world focus, all the things that distract us from bearing fruit for his kingdom. It is not a one and done, it is a slow process, and it is different for every person depending on the condition we start in and how aggressively God prunes away the different aspects of our life. Yet he never gives up, he continues to prune away all of the old sinful branches of our life, so that new branches can grow and produce good fruit.

So, if we are to abide in Christ we have to begin to live in Christ, to trust and obey in his teachings, knowing that it will require changes in our life as the old sinful aspects of our life are cut away. We have to accept that there may be pieces of our life that we are enjoying right now that might need to be removed so that good fruit can grow in their place.

Once we have accepted Christ in our lives, and the Holy Spirit has begun its work in us, we need to stay the course, abide in him, in all aspects of our lives. Abiding in Jesus means doing what he says, it means obeying the Scriptures, even the parts we might not like and the parts we might not be comfortable with.

That is our challenge, after all not a single one of us is able to abide in Jesus fully, not a single one of us can go without sinning in this world. We all have our own particular guilty pleasure that draws us away from God in this world. Yet we are aware that at some point in our lives the vinedresser may happen across that branch and decide that it is time that it is pruned from our lives so that we can produce more good fruit.

This is the Christian conundrum. We all want to abide in Christ fully, but we also do not want to give up the things in this world that we enjoy. We want to do what he says, we do want to obey his teachings and commandments, even the ones that go against our own will. However, we can never actually do it, we seem to always get dragged back into sin, in some aspect of our lives.

This is why Jesus told the disciples to abide in Him. The only possible way to overcome the old sinful self, the only possible way to cut the bad out of your life is to Abide in Jesus Christ.

The only possible way to overcome the world and its influence in our lives, the only possible way to obey the teachings of the Scripture is by trusting and obeying in Jesus Christ, by placing our faith in His guidance, by staying so close to him that the Holy Spirit can speak to us in every trial, tribulation, and temptation that we face in this world.

1 John 5:1-5

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴ For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

So, what are you going to do the next time you are tempted to take part in a juicy bit of gossip that is spreading around town? What are you going to do when you begin to get angry with a coworker, family member or a friend? What are you going to do the next time someone cuts you off in traffic and a not safe for church word comes to mind? What are you going to do when you are tempted to lie or cheat to get ahead?

Abide in Jesus. Stand so close to him that his Holy Spirit can intervene, and you do what God says. Stay so close to the vine that all of its life-giving nourishment is flowing through your veins

constantly and you are able to stand up in trials, tribulations, and temptations instead of letting them drag you down into your old sinful nature.

Abide in Him, 1 Corinthians 7:19

1 Corinthians 7:19

¹⁹ For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.

To abide in Christ means that we live our life according to His Word, that we trust and obey His Commands and that we take part in the pruning of the sinful aspects of our life. Anyone who fails to abide in Christ become a useless branch on the vine, one that will be cut off and burned in the fire because it only steals nutrients from the branches that produces good fruit. Jesus repeats this message over and over in the Gospels, a useless branch, salt that loses its saltiness and a light that is hidden all serve no purpose and will be discarded from the kingdom of heaven.

As a Christian if we are to bear fruit, we need to first come to know Christ as our lord and saviour, to be in Christ, and then we must remain in him in all aspects of our life. Once we can do that, we will begin to bear fruit for the kingdom.

What fruit do we bear, the Fruit of the Spirit. The book of Galatians shows us the difference between the fruits of the flesh and the Fruits of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:19-24

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If you are abiding in Christ, the Fruits of the Spirit will be evident in your life. They will be evident in your thoughts and evident in your character. The truth is that whatever is on the inside will eventually be on the outside.

So, what do people see when they look at you? Do they see that you are abiding in Christ? Do they see the fruits of God's vine, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control?

Or do they see something else?

Do they see hatefulness, jealousy, a short fuse, a foul mouth, or selfishness?

The truth is that if you are abiding in Christ, it will be evident to the people around you because of how you live your life.

Colossians 1:9-14

⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹ being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Walk in the ways of the Lord. Live a life that is worthy of the blessings He has given you. Know that you are saved by the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ and go out and proclaim it to the world around you by the way you live.

Go out and do good works in his name. Knowing that the works are not what get us into heaven, but they reflect Christ in us.

James the Brother of Christ teaches us.

James 2:14-17

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? ¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

If we are in Christ we cannot avoid doing good works. If we claim to have Christ in our lives but there is no evidence of that in the way that we live, we are indeed living a dead faith.

Christ himself said that.

Matthew 7:16-20

¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

The people of this world will know if you are follower of Christ by the way that you live, by the Fruits of the Spirit that you exhibit. When people see love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, they know that you are abiding in Christ.

One last thing happens when we abide in Christ. We praise him! We praise him for all he has done in our lives.

Hebrews 13:15-16

¹⁵ Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. ¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

When we abide in Christ, we praise His name, we proclaim his glory from our lips in worship and in conversation. If we are connected to the life-giving nutrients of the One True Living God through the vine, we cannot help but share that with the people we care about.

When we abide in Christ we find his presence in every aspect of our life, in the trial, tribulations and temptations, and in the calm, pleasant and joyful moments when we experience his blessings and in each, we glorify his name because he is with us.

So, as we leave here today let us all abide in him and walk as the Salt and Light of his word in a world that is desperately in need of the life-giving nutrients of the One True Vine, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Let us Pray,

Govern, Guide, Comfort, Lead and Uphold Us through Your Holy Spirit

Lord Jesus Christ,
 Son of almighty God,
 send your Holy Spirit
 into our hearts through your Word,
 that he may govern and guide us
 according to your will,
 comfort us in all afflictions and misfortunes,
 lead and uphold us in your truth against all error,
 so that we may stand firm in your love
 and offer ourselves to do good works,
 and through the certain hope of
 your free grace be blessed forever;
 with the Father and the Holy Spirit
 you live and reign, as the One True Living God
 now and forever.

Amen.

Hymn: "Grace"

Your grace that leads this sinner home from death to life forever,
And sings the song of righteousness by blood and not by merit.

Your grace that reaches far and wide to every tribe and nation,
Has called my heart to enter in the joy of Your salvation.

CHORUS

By grace I am redeemed by grace I am restored,
And now I freely walk into the arms of Christ my Lord.

Your grace that I cannot explain not by my earthly wisdom,
The Prince of life without a stain was traded for this sinner.

Chorus

Let praise rise up and overflow my song resound forever,
For grace will see me welcomed home to walk beside my Saviour.

Chorus**Invitation to Offering****Offering****Offertory Prayer****(Congregant Prepared)****Closing Hymn #670: "Amazing Grace"**

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed.

Through many dan gers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,

and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me:
His word my hope secures;
God will my shield and portion be,
as long as life endures.

What thanks I owe you, and what love
a boundless, endless store
shall echo through the realms above
when time shall be no more.

When we've been there a thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise than
when we'd first begun.

Pastoral Prayer

Lord our God,
you have given us so many wonders in this world you created.
We thank you for spring sunshine and refreshing rain;
for colours exploding in blossoms opening,
grass greening, and gardens sprouting.
Thank you for all the signs of new life around us
Make the earth fruitful in this growing season,
so that food will be plentiful for the hungry.

God of the small and insignificant as well as powerful and influential,
we thank you for our families and friends
who offer us love and encouragement as we move through life.
We pray for those families and communities
whose lives have been disrupted by war and conflict,
who worry about safety each day
and what the future will hold for them.
Guide all those with decision making power
to consider the lives of the vulnerable as very precious,
and make policies that protect the future for them.

God of the vulnerable,
we pray for all those whose future is uncertain:
for those are facing illness or waiting for treatment,
for those mourning the loss of someone dear,

and those who feel lonely or discouraged.
We pray for those who are homeless or unemployed,
for all who know hunger or despair,
and for those facing danger or discrimination every day.
Empower us with your Spirit to reach out to those in need,
in this community and in places distant from us,
so that we can make your love tangible in their lives
in Jesus' name.

God of our Lord Jesus Christ,
We thank you for this community that gathers in Jesus' name,
for the warmth and welcome offered here,
for friendship and faithfulness discovered,
for learning and leadership shared with each other.
Thank you for the hope that rises in us
through the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ.
Make us expressions of that hope to each other
and to the world you love for his sake,
as we join our voices with his followers around the world,
in prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit as the One True God,
now and forever. **Amen.**

Benediction

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.