

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster  
Sunday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Easter V  
Acts 8:26-40, Psalm 22:24-30, 1 John 4:7-21, John 15:1-8.

The baptism right away, when we talk about back to church Sunday it is the first 30 seconds people decide whether they will come back to church or not. The rest of the time will either confirm the assessment or contradict maybe change their mind. And our faith and belief are not a one-time decision doubt and questions and wondering about God as well as ourselves.

Part of our relationship with God is expressed in relationship with others it is taking the love God loved us and passing it on. This is following the metaphor of the vine and the branches the love of God in the vine being passed on through the branches.

There seems to be a caveat, bad news, you cannot bear fruit unless you abide in me says Jesus, whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers thrown into the fire and burned. The question comes to mind, can anyone who does not abide in Jesus that is not a branch connected to the vine keep the commandments? Can they love? I believe so when the challenge in love is for all of us to look beyond ourselves therefor the true love takes us beyond our own concerns. And those who do not abide can also receive love. In the next verse this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you therefore the branches don't get thrown away none of us get thrown away.

The point is God's love comes first. And not expecting us to change before the ultimate act of love. Jesus dying for us all on the cross before expecting us to change. Judas betraying him and Peter denying being one of his followers three times.

Judas did not give Jesus a chance to forgive him, but Jesus gets to forgive Peter though. The thought, Jesus asking Peter three times if he loves him. Forgiving him three times for each of the denials. But the dialogue is interesting. When Jesus asks Peter if he loves him, and Peter says yes, what does he answer? Go to church and sing hymns to glorify me and show your love for me? No, he says to feed or tend to the sheep and lambs. In other words, live our being the branches to me the vine, passing on the love to others. And I think he says it three times not only because of the forgiveness of Peter's three denials, but because the three are different types of feeding but related. Because they are not specifically articulated there is no particular order, but still....

The most basic feeding and the most literal is making sure people have food to eat, and their other physical needs.

Feeding also involves emotional and intellectual needs, like belonging, being loved and having a purpose and value.

And not surprising feeding them so their spiritual needs are met. That we help them with their relationship with God in Christ.

And let us not forget, we need those we meet to help us as well.

But the point of the branches and the vine is to bear fruit. And I have said before we are called not to be successful but faithful because the success belongs to God, although we have a part to play.

Therefore, not get ahead of God or on a different path. John the Baptist calling for making His paths straight.

And in a few moments, we will say the Lord's prayer where yes, we will ask for our daily bread and forgiveness and not be tempted but this is between Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And for thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.

Is also interesting the Jesus says I am the vine. Last week he said I am the Good Shepherd. Jesus using the term I am makes me think of Moses and the burning Bush. The Lord saying I am. I was, I am, I will be.

And the question who are you and who am I? It's an ongoing question because it can be answered in different ways at different times and is complicated. And the difference and the connection between being and doing. The temptation seems to be on focusing on doing. When we meet someone, we don't know for the first time don't we seem to focus on asking what they do for a living or some similar way of addressing that question? Maybe this seems to be a way of getting to know people in this culture at this time. Yet in some cultures the question seems to be more who are your parents, or who are you related to? I think this difference added to the stress of First Nations students coming South for post secondary education where they left the community who knew who they were knew who their parents were to a larger community without that connection and without any sense of others understanding their identity.

Maybe the reality is both and and not either or. Earlier a difference but maybe a connection between who we are, being, and doing. Being informs what we are called to do, and doing can be an expression of who we are and how we fit in the community.

There is definitely a need for a relationship between the vine and the branches, but there's also a need relationship between the branches, and how we treat each other. What kind of branch are you?

Rightly or wrongly when people treat us fairly or unfairly it often comes back to God's love or lack thereof. Something to think about what we say or how we act in relationship with others.

## Amen

May the path that you walk  
be ever guided by justice and light

By the truth that you stand.

May it show, into the land.

May the words of Christ

disturb you all your life.

The road you've chosen is not easy

– yet, here you stand!

*(from the song, The Path, by Jason Mann, adapted*