

The Fifth Sunday of Easter YEAR C April 24, 2016

The power of Easter lies not just in the life it offers us, but also in the way we are recruited to be life-bringers. This week, the role of love in leading us to life – and enabling us to bring life to others – stands out in the Lectionary. Love is never easy, it is always messy, unpredictable and scandalously inclusive. But, if we seek to follow Christ, we cannot avoid the privilege and the responsibility we have to be people of love.

May your worship lead into this love of Christ, and into his life, a little more this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

The First Reading - Acts 11: 1-18 or Leviticus 19: 1-2, 9-18

Acts 11 : 1-18

These Acts are those of the risen Christ in and with his church. The Jerusalem church here calls on Peter to justify his eating and preaching among Gentiles, and they realise that the new life in Christ is not restricted to a privileged few.

The Psalm - Psalm 148

A psalm exhorting all of creation and all peoples to praise God.

The Second Reading - Revelation 21: 1-6

Our weekly readings are giving us some of John's visions of the glory of the risen and ascended Christ, worshipped in heaven by all the faithful. At the end of this age, John believes, there will be a new heaven and a renewed world, and God's presence will fill them both.

The Gospel Reading - John 13: 31-35

The Gospel takes us back to the night of the Last Supper. Judas has gone out to betray Jesus, who now speaks of his own destiny not as failure but as glory, fulfilling to the uttermost God's way of love.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Acts%2011:%201-18%0A%2BOR%0ALeviticus%2019:%201-2,%209-18%0A%20Psalm%20148%0ARevelation%2021:%201-6%0AJohn%2013:%2031-35

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O Almighty God,
who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men;
Grant unto thy people,
that they may love the thing which thou commandest,
and desire that which thou dost promise;
that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world,
our hearts may surely there be fixed,
where true joys are to be found;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Lord of all life and power,
who through the mighty resurrection of your Son
overcame the old order of sin and death
to make all things new in him:
Grant that we, being dead to sin
and alive to you in Jesus Christ,
may reign with him in glory;
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit
be praise and honour, glory and might,
now and in all eternity.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Presider or deacon

Baptized with the Holy Spirit, let us offer prayers for all those God loves.

Deacon or other leader

For the whole world and all the churches of God.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For this holy gathering and our sacrifice of praise.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For NN and all the baptized whose faces shine with the light of Christ.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all who minister and for all the holy people of God.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all nations, peoples, tribes, clans, and families.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, prisoners, captives, and their families, the hungry, homeless, and oppressed.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the dying and the dead.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

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For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

Glory and praise to you, O living God.

Remembering our most glorious and blessed Virgin Mary, N, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. To you, O Lord.

Presider

Blessed are you, God of glory, who gave us your Son. Hear the prayers we offer this day, come among your people, and wipe away every tear from their eyes; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

Here is a prayer of commitment for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, but it would work well in many other situations as well.

Holy God, may we hear your voice
In the stillness of night, in clatter of day
You call us, and we respond,
Here I am!
May we follow you and
May we love as you love.

Holy One, through trials and turbulence
Make us steady, your hands
Holding strong the fragile and weak
May we love as you love.

Gracious God, may the fruits of our lives
be food for the hungry, bread
clothing, shelter, fire, water, Word
May we love as you love.

God of justice, remove the barriers
Of our lives that keep us from
One another, barriers we construct
Based on skin color, religion, or gender
May we hear, and follow, graciously.
May we love as you love.

Loving God, take this day our fears our
Worries, distractions, and all
Turn them into grace and mercy,
And, following the example of Martin Luther King, Jr.
and all your Saints,
May we love as you love.

Amen.

POST COMMUNION

Eternal God,
in word and sacrament
we proclaim your truth in Jesus Christ and share his life.
In his strength may we ever walk in his way,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

PRAYERS

Into your presence we come,
God of Grace and Peace,
who was, and is and ever shall be
the eternal One.
Into fellowship we come,
bound together in the love
that died and rose again for us,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

Lord God, in this short time together, open our ears and our eyes to see your vision for this place and our part within it. Teach us, hear our prayers and enable us for service wherever you might take us, to your praise and glory. Amen.

Praise the Lord, all the heavens
Proclaim his name, from mountain peak and valley floor
Praise the Lord, sun, moon and stars
Proclaim his name in summer skies and rainbow hue
Praise the Lord, all creatures upon the earth
Proclaim his name, in Eagle's wing and Lion's roar
Praise the Lord, all rulers and kings
Proclaim his name, who creates all things from new
Praise the Lord, whether young or old
Proclaim his name, whose gracious love extends to all
Let all things that have breath within them
Praise the Lord.

You love us without questioning,
heal and bring wholeness
without prejudice,
embrace us
as a parent would their child.
Forgive us when we forget,
feel isolated and alone,
don't know where to turn.
Forgive us when we fail you,
choose those we minister to,
do not listen to your Word.
You love us without questioning,
may we bring compassion,
healing and peace,
without prejudice,
to all those to whom you lead us. Amen

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Alpha and Omega, First and Last,
glory outshining all the lights of heaven:
pour out upon us your Spirit
of faithful love and abundant compassion,
so that we may rejoice in the splendour of your works
while we wait in expectation
for the new heaven and the new earth you promise
when Christ shall come again. Amen.

Your commands are not burdensome,
your way of life our example,
your footsteps there to be found.
'Love one another; care for children,
brothers, sisters and outcasts.
If you are my disciples,
then show the world,
demonstrate your discipleship
and love both lovely and unloved.
Show God's Grace to this world!'
And as we open our hearts and lives,
and follow as you have shown,
others discover you through our words,
and by the life we share.
For the love you have given us,
and the blessings you have shown us,
we thank you, God of Love and Grace. Amen.

Following the example of Jesus, let us bring our prayers before God our heavenly father.

Heavenly Father,
We thank you for those whose influence has led us to come to worship in this place this morning. We remember family members, teachers, church leaders, friends and colleagues who have encouraged us to follow in the Christian way. We give thanks for the fellowship which we find in this church which supports us as we seek to put our faith into practice in our daily lives. Strengthen us, Lord, in your service, so that we, in our turn, may be an encouragement to others.

O Lord, hear our prayer

Heavenly Father,
We pray for your church at Keep before us the vision of church communities where people of different church backgrounds will work and worship together harmoniously and where those who seek to know more about the Christian faith will find a welcome. Give us a clear understanding of the work you have set before us and a fresh commitment to your service in the coming year. Give wisdom to our ministers and the Leadership teams at this time, and may our witness in Brickhill and in Putnoe continue to grow.

O Lord, hear our prayer

Healing Lord,
We pray for people who are suffering in mind or spirit

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those facing long and incurable illness
those depressed by the cares and sorrows of daily life
those who are homeless, those who are lonely,
those who have disturbed or troubled minds
those who are unemployed and see no future for themselves
those who are persecuted for their beliefs

We pray for families in need.

We pray for families who are suffering, either from their own mistakes or from the mistakes of others:

- for children separated from one parent and cut off from grandparents
- for parents who see their children for only part of the week
- for families who have many problems and lack hope
- for husbands and wives who no longer find joy in each other
- for families struggling to make ends meet
- for the unemployed who feel hopeless and unwanted

Help us to be good listeners when friends and neighbours need us. Give us the right words and help us to know what simple acts of kindness may help someone else.

O Lord, hear our prayer

Heavenly Father

We pray for people who are frightened because they are ill. Reassure them that because of the knowledge that you give to men, many diseases can now be cured. Help them to have confidence in those with medical knowledge to diagnose illness and care for the sick. Give them courage, hope and peace, and the knowledge that you are present in their weakness, pain and suffering.

We pray for those whose hearts have been saddened by the death of someone close and dear to them, for members of our families who have died and whose anniversary we recall. Give strength to those who are left to grieve and to those who still miss the companionship and care of those dear to them.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world, a light which no darkness can quench. We remember before God those who have died, and light a candle to symbolise the light of Christ which eternally shines and brings hope. Today we remember

You turn our darkness into light,
in your light shall we see light

LECTIONARY NOTES

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

The Easter message shifts this week from Jesus' offer of life to us, to the way we seek to live out that life as we follow him – and it's a startling message of inclusivity and love. Jesus' new commandment is frequently sung and quoted, but the "one another" that Jesus' calls us to love is often limited to Christian believers. Now, in the lectionary, as the Gospel is laid aside the other readings, we realise that this "one another" goes much further. In Acts, we discover that the previously excluded Gentiles are now included in God's Kingdom. In the Psalm, all of creation is included in this "one another" as the entire creation is exhorted to offer praise. And in John's Revelation vision, we discover that God

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so includes all, that God moves God's dwelling place ("heaven") into our earthly neighbourhood. There can be no greater, all-encompassing statement of love for all from God. We have no more excuses for turning the Gospel into an exclusive message!

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: One of the big questions of our generation is "who is in and who is out?". Global economic and trade regulations are designed to favour some (who tend to be the wealthy) and disempower others (who tend to live in third world countries). Political conversations are always being drawn in partisan ways with clear lines indicating who is on which side – and woe betide those who try to cross those lines. Religious communities and power structures, equally, have tended to focus on who is with us and who is against us. From geographical to economic to political to religious to racial to sexual to generational lines, our world is built on defining who is in and who is out. The prophetic Church, the Church of the resurrection, of love, of the God who lives among us, must be a Church that blurs every line, and invites everyone into the grace and love of God – and a Church that challenges the lines that exclude and oppress. This is what Jesus calls us to when he instructs us to love one another, and it is what is demonstrated in Peter's willingness to minister to the Gentiles in Cornelius' house, and in God's gift of the Spirit to these "outsiders". In practical terms, then, we are called to be those who will reach cross the lines to welcome and embrace those who believe, think, dress, behave and live in ways that we would consider different.

LOCAL APPLICATION: In recent years the worship of the Church has been strongly divided along stylistic and generational lines. More and more churches are discovering, though, that any church or service that is built on division or exclusivity is bound to fail. Increasingly we are witnessing that the most healthy, vibrant and growing communities are those that include – that bring diverse people together to worship, to learn from each other and to learn to love one another. This is not easy, but if we seek to reach people who are not part of any church, if we seek to make an impact on our wider community, then we need to demonstrate that we can live the message we preach, and that those we seek to reach will be included and loved and brought into contact with a loving and inclusive God – not judged or condemned in the hopes that the fear of hell or God's rejection will scare them into the Kingdom. It also means that, as the people of God, we need to learn to love one another across denominational, theological and practical boundaries. Furthermore, this love must extend out from the church to include those of other faith and cultures. This is the challenge we must face in our worship this week.

SERMON OUTLINE

John 13:31-35 When he had gone out...

Jesus had just washed the disciples' feet & proceeded to talk about his betrayal at the hands of Judas... Abruptly Judas left the room & *when he was gone v31 Jesus said....* He continues The Upper Room Discourse – preparing the disciples for what lay ahead...

1. The Comment 31-33: *Jesus said, Now the Son of Man has been glorified* – despite knowing the horror ahead...

a) Judas' darkest hour – as he slipped away from the Upper Room & *went out - & it was night* – into the darkness of the night – with darkness in his soul....

b) Jesus' finest moment - *God has been glorified in him. ³²If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself & will glorify him at once.* He would soon be returning to the Father - *I am with you only a little longer..*

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2. The Command 34: *34I give you a new commandment, that you love one another.* – at the heart of the Gospel...

Tertullian – early Xian writer:- *See how these Christians love one another* – still the command of Christ!

3. The Commitment 35 – that is required then & now...

a) Loyalty to Christ - *everyone will know that you are my disciples* – as you put my teaching into practice daily...

b) Love for others – the core of Christ's teaching...

St Jerome tells of John's old age when a favourite expression of his was *Little children, love one another.* Questioned why he kept saying this, he said: *Because it is the precept of the Lord & sufficient if only it is done...* May we be enabled to put that teaching into practice!

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Peter's vision

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2013/04/06/5-easter-c-2013/>

Peter's Invisible Fence, the Rev. Richard P. Game, Day 1

http://day1.org/4751-peters_invisible_fence

The Repentance that Leads to Life, the Rev. Marshall Jolly, Sermons that Work

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2013/04/06/5-easter-c-2013/>

As I Have Loved You

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/c-ea05su.php>

Encountering other religions - Day 1

http://day1.org/1940-encountering_other_religions

CHILDREN

Sit Here By Me, On the Chancel Steps, children's resources by Frances Woodruff

<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2013/04/15/table/>

He Loves Us All

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/c-ea05su.php>

Worship for Kids - Carolyn C Brown

<http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/article/entry/3776/worship-for-kids-april-28-2013#axzz2Qe7QfRcP>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Come Let Us Sing Of a Wonderful Love
Love Divine All Loves Excelling
Praise To The Lord, The Almighty
All Creatures Of Our God And King

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Everyone Belongs

You Are

God Of The Moon (YouTube video)

Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace

Servant Song (Brother, Sister Let Me Serve You)