

## Worship Resources - *Fruitful*

<https://youtu.be/i0HWcl5npvU>

**Easter 5, Year B,**

2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2021

**1 John 4:7-21 CEV / John 15:1-8 CEV**

**Prelude**

***Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather***

Everett M. Stowe and Tokuo Yamaguchi,

played by Annie Center,

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<https://youtu.be/jjjomw3KINo>

## **Intro / Call to Worship**

Beloved, let us love one another,

**Because love is from God;**

Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

**Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.**

Beloved, since God loved us so much,

**We also ought to love one another.**

No one has ever seen God; if we love one another,

**God lives in us, and God's love is perfected in us.**

Come, worship God, who is love,

**And follow Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.**

**As we gather today, as a way of passing the peace of Christ, let's reflect on how we share love and peace in our daily lives, and who we would like to reach out to in the following week to share our shalom with, as we listen to the following musical interlude.**

**Reflection Video**

***Here in This Place,***

Marty Haugen, Gather, played by Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/j77a5DgIEI0>

## Invocation

Author of Life, You have written love into the beginning of our stories. You have written love into the blood that flows in our veins, into our very DNA, for we are made in Your image and You are love. We have strayed from the story You intended for us, so help us find our way back. Open our hearts to love more deeply. Open our minds to seek Your wisdom and to grow beyond what we know. Open our lives to recognize that Your Beloved Community is beyond the people of our family unit, beyond our friends and neighbors and churches, but the whole world. Help us to live into ways that sustain and nourish this planet and all Your children, and remind us that You are the Author of our lives, in whom we find our beginning and ending. Amen.

**We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. *(light candle)* Amen.**

**In our epistle reading today, we hear of the relationship between love and our Creator, who is the embodiment of love. As we listen to these words from 1st John, let's reflect on what role love for others, and ourselves, plays in our own lives.**

## Epistle Reading      1 John 4:7-21 CEV

My dear friends, we must love each other. Love comes from God, and when we love each other, it shows that we have been given new life. We are now God's children, and we know him.

God is love, and anyone who doesn't love others has never known him.

God showed his love for us when he sent his only Son into the world to give us life.

Real love isn't our love for God, but his love for us. God sent his Son to be the sacrifice by which our sins are forgiven.

Dear friends, since God loved us this much, we must love each other.

No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is truly in our hearts.

God has given us his Spirit. That is how we know that we are one with him, just as he is one with us.

God sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. We saw his Son and are now telling others about him.

God stays one with everyone who openly says that Jesus is the Son of God. That's how we stay one with God

and are sure that God loves us. God is love. If we keep on loving others, we will stay one in our hearts with God, and he will stay one with us.

If we truly love others and live as Christ did in this world, we won't be worried about the day of judgment.

A real love for others will chase those worries away. The thought of being punished is what makes us afraid. It shows that we have not really learned to love.

We love because God loved us first.

But if we say we love God and don't love each other, we are liars. We cannot see God. So how can we love God, if we don't love the people we can see?

The commandment that God has given us is: "Love God and love each other!"

## **Scripture Video      1 John 4:7 21      *Loving One Another***

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/wDJBVfzTlp8>

## **A Time of Prayer**

**Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: [vicarglenn@gmail.com](mailto:vicarglenn@gmail.com), and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.**

## **Joys and Concerns**

This morning, let's continue to keep JoAnn and Bill Shoemaker in our prayers as they continue to struggle with the changes JoAnn's illness has brought to their lives.

We take joy and give thanks this morning for Susanna Thill's successful surgery and pray for a swift healing and recovery.

Let's also pray for our secretary Anita's stepdaughter Joli, as she prepares for surgery and chemo for an aggressive cancer. May her treatment be successful and may God comfort and strengthen her and her family as she undergoes these procedures.

This morning we lift up Laura Munro and her daughter Caitlin as she struggles with an ulcer and the discomfort that causes.

We also remember George and Betty DeBon as they continue to struggle with illness and tough transitions.

We are thrilled and give thanks that we were able to offer our sanctuary to our Orthodox sisters and brothers to celebrate their Easter worship in a beautiful space, as well as some of us who were fortunate enough to share in the wonderful food they provided.

Let's bring these concerns and others in our lives to God together in prayer.

## Pastoral Prayer

**Vine of life**, in Your branches we are nestled taking shelter and sustenance in the shade of Your strength. With thanksgiving we celebrate the growth and hope we have found in placing our roots in You, for in life You nourish us and Your Holy Spirit encourages us to reach our full potential in the gifts we have been given that others may know of Your love.

Lord, make us more than sour grapes and unripe olives. In the hardships of the world may we look beyond the bitter politics and divisions to find Your love at the core of our relationships. There may all people work with what we have in common that we might grow to be a people of respect and trust.

May our branches bow with the weight of the fruit you have bestowed. Help us to look beyond our own needs, to recognise those who are hungry for food, love and justice. May we offer others the shelter needed under the weight of Your branches so they find a rest from the cold and darkness, the hatred and loneliness of this world. Instead may Your Spirit enable us to value the gifts and talents of all.

May our leaves soak up Your light. When we meet those who are worn down with illness, loneliness, grief and abandonment, may the light of Your presence shine in the encounters they have with others that all might know Your compassion.

Gardener of all life, as You trim and shape us for Your purpose may we place our prayers into Your hands and trust that new seeds may grow from tired and empty thoughts. Amen.

**In our Gospel reading this morning, we hear the powerful metaphor of the vine bearing fruit. As we listen to these words from John, let's reflect on what fruit we bear, as individuals and as part of the greater vine.**

### **Gospel reading      John 15:1-8 CEV**

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

He cuts away every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit. But he trims clean every branch that does produce fruit, so that it will produce even more fruit.

You are already clean because of what I have said to you.

Stay joined to me, and I will stay joined to you. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit unless it stays joined to the vine, you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me.

I am the vine, and you are the branches. If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit. But you cannot do anything without me.

If you don't stay joined to me, you will be thrown away. You will be like dry branches that are gathered up and burned in a fire.

Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you. Then you can pray for whatever you want, and your prayer will be answered.

When you become fruitful disciples of mine, my Father will be honored.

## **Scripture Video     John 15:1-8     *Jesus Is The True Vine***

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/2dCSoiD4bg0>

### **Message - *Fruitful***

How many of you have had experience pruning a grape vine? It can be pretty precise work, can't it? When grape vines bud and grow, they send out shoots all over the place and will really take off if you let them. I used to trim my grandmother's vine when I was younger. In the fall, she would encourage me to prune the vine almost entirely back to the main branch. By that point, it was probably at least 20 years old and had a thick, gnarly trunk growing from a single root system in the middle of the arbor. When I was done, it didn't look like anything could possibly recover from a hacking like that. Yet, if I cut it way back as she taught me, it would be loaded with juicy grapes every year, which translated into many a jar of my grandmother's homemade jelly. With grapevines, the age is not as big a factor as is the proper pruning. Grapes do well when they stay close to the main vine so they can get the greatest concentration of essential nutrients to develop and ripen.

In fact, the world's longest grape vine is at Hampton Court Palace in England. [SLIDE] It is over 120 feet long and at its base is 13 feet around, as well as being 250 years old this year. Yet it has been expertly trimmed all those years and is still laden with the sweetest grapes each and every season.

A seasoned gardener can make a grapevine produce no matter how many years it has put behind it. It all comes down to the closeness of the main vine. It's about being tapped into the source of the best energy for growth.

There's a story about a missionary in Africa who lived in his central mission which had a small generator to supply current for his church and a small rectory. Some natives from an outlying mission came to visit the pastor. They noticed the electric light hanging from the ceiling of his living room. They watched wide-eyed as he turned the little switch and the light went on. One of the visitors asked if he could have one of the bulbs. The priest, thinking he wanted it for a sort of trinket, gave him one of the extra bulbs. On his next visit to the outlying mission, the priest stopped at the hut of the man who had asked for the bulb. Imagine his surprise when he saw the bulb hanging from an ordinary string. He had to explain that one needed to have electricity and a wire to bring the current to the bulb. We

may share an understanding smile at the innocence of the African native, but we may not be much better.

In our text for today, Jesus tells a story about the importance of our connection to the true source of life. He uses the analogy of the vineyard of the vine and the branches. Just as the electricity provides the power necessary for the bulb to produce light, so the vine provides the life necessary for the branches to produce fruit.

In our gospel story today, Jesus likens us to those shoots that emerge from the main vine in Spring and stresses the importance of the fruit we bear. There's a lot we could unpack from the imagery these metaphors provide. First of all, there's the vital need for the branches to be close to the vine.

How much of our lives are guided by Jesus? It's easy to think that we go through the necessary faith motions: we show up for church every Sunday we can, we tithe regularly, we may even have a regular routine of bible study and prayer in our lives. And don't get me wrong, those are all wonderful practices and activities. But is the routine, the "going through the motions," what makes us valuable branches? Or does it involve a little more? Too often, we make our faith just another part of our daily, or weekly lives. We schedule it in our day like we would a trip to the grocery store; on Sundays it's another errand we have to run. We give it attention in the time we allot for it, then go about the rest of our lives.

As Americans, we tend to be fiercely independent folks. We are individuals first, and our personal priorities take precedence. Maybe it's our pioneering history that creates this sense of individualism, of doing for ourselves and focusing on our own individual priorities and journeys.

In telling this story, though, Jesus is stressing that our faith is not something that we work into our schedules. We are to "remain in him and he in us, or abide in him," as other translations word it. That is a 24/7 arrangement, not something we parcel out. So what does it look like to be an active branch on the vine? What does this mutual abiding look like? What does bearing full, juicy fruit really mean? It doesn't mean we allot a set time to our faith like every other aspect of our lives. Our faith should permeate and guide every aspect of our lives. Let's remember that God is the vine grower. God is the one pruning those branches that bear fruit, and cutting away the ones that don't.

Our epistle reading this morning goes to great length to tell us what is important to God, what God is all about. "God is love, and those who live in love live in God, and God in them." We only truly know God when the love of God flows through us. God's love is self-sacrificing.

The Greek word used for God in this passage is "agape." Unlike our English language, Greek has four distinct words for love. Agape is the one that is used to mean caring for the good of another. Like shalom, it's chief concern is the well-being of the other. It's putting our own interests aside. There's a reason our meal at love feast is called the "agape meal." We eat that meal after we have humbled ourselves in service to others.

Likewise, God has shown this self-sacrifice in his love for us, even to death on a cross. This “love of God” that is to abide in us is the antithesis of fear. We often think of hate as the opposite of love, but hate has fear as its underlying core. When we think of hate groups and discrimination, at their core is fear. The fear of change, of losing importance, of losing one's privilege and status in the culture. That fear becomes anger and hate towards what is perceived as a threat to one's “normal way of life.” Yet in 1 John, we are told that “there is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear...” So if we abide in the love of God, we cannot abide in hate and fear. Do our actions support that? Do we still fear what's different from us, what may challenge what we consider to be “normal?” Do we find ourselves thinking less of those who are different than us: those whose culture or religious practices, skin color, or identities are different from what we've always considered the norm?

That brings me to the second item we can unpack from this metaphor of being branches on the Christ vine. As all being branches sprouting from the love of God through Christ, the walk of faith we are called to is inherently a communal walk. What we do affects the other branches on the vine.

John tells us in our epistle reading this morning that the one thing we can't do is to claim to love God while refusing the love the sister or brother in front of us. Love and hate cannot mix. Here John points us to the two great parallel commandments: love God and love your neighbor. These two are tied together, John tells us. Not only must we obey them both; it is impossible to obey the first without also obeying the second. We are all branches of the same vine, all the fruit we bear supports the vine, the body of Christ. Ours is a faith founded on community, not individualism.

When we allow ourselves to become too stuck on the modern idea of the sovereign individual, we can too easily see our life in community to be outside the central places of our lives. The church and our faith become something we are “part of”, apart from our major spheres of life in the world, at home, at work, in our families, etc. The imagery of the vine suggests otherwise. It is the nourishment we get from our faith walk together that should drive all other aspects of our lives.

Part of the problem is we have come to see “the church” over time, as tied to a building and the events that transpire there. That is why the early Brethren resisted having church buildings for a long time. The church is the people, the community of believers, not the events in a building. It is the body of Christ in the world, the vine in our story.

What we have to ask ourselves is what we are called to as branches on that vine? How do we make sure our branches produce juicy fruit instead of dried up raisins? From our epistle reading, it is clear that love is the core of whatever measurement we have for success. Are we abiding in God as God abides in us? Does God's self-sacrificing love flow through us? Do we feel fear and hate or have we allowed God's love to drive that from us? We bear fruit in works of love and following the example of God's self-sacrificing love. We love those who are hard to love, those who make themselves unloveable. Those who are different from us, those who we are told we should fear and hate. Whether we like the idea or not, they too

are branches on this vine. They are God's children as well. If we cannot find it in our hearts to allow God's love flow from us, we should expect some pruning from the gardner, the vine grower. I pray it is only a pruning, and not being trimmed and cast aside. May we all strive to be the branches that bear abundant fruit. Amen.

## **Call to Serve.**

Today we are invited to become deeply attached, close, and loyal as branches who are connected with Jesus Christ, our vine. In other words, we are to bear fruit with a spirit of love by helping each other, reaching out to each other, and encouraging each other in our daily faith pilgrimage. As it is written in the wisdom book of Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, that “Two are better than one, because if they fall, one will lift up the other; but for the one who is alone and falls, there is not another to lift that person up.” So, let our offering lift up one another in God’s love that abides in times of sadness, loss and grief. Let our offering lift up one another in God’s love that abides in times of hopelessness, brokenness and failure. Let our offering be a thanksgiving of God’s love that abides within us times of hopefulness, forgiveness, unity, and peace. And let us accept God’s invitation to be ever-present in times of deep despair, and in times of great joy. Now, let us offer ourselves in gratitude and with generosity, as fruits representing the abiding goodness of God.

**As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. Today as we listen to this old hymn performed by our Mennonite cousins, let’s reflect on how we can work together to be the branches of God’s vine that produces real fruit.**

## **A Time for Reflection**



## Reflection on the Word [Video]

## *Thou True Vine, That Heals*

(HWB 373), performed and posted to  
YouTube by the Mennonite Congregation of Boston

<https://youtu.be/8oMGfYrinC4>

## The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Generous God. We offer you the fruits of our time, talents and resources in celebration of all that we have been given. Loving God, we give you thanks for all that we have and ask a special blessing on the fruits we have given back to help meet the needs of your beloved community. May the gifts nourish and strengthen the community to grow spiritually, emotionally, and physically. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

## Blessing/Assurance

The steadfast love of God endures forever. There is no limit to God's grace. You are God's beloved. You are forgiven and restored. Love one another deeply as God has loved you, and you will know the peace of Christ in your hearts. Amen.

As we extinguish this candle, carry its divine spark into your lives this week, sharing God's love and light with all you encounter. Amen.

## Postlude

## *The Heart of Worship*

Matt Redman, played by Annie Center,  
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<https://youtu.be/dZPkNePt58Q>