

Sheffield United Reformed Churches
Team Ministry an act of devotion for individual or families
Sunday 9th May 2021 at 10:30 am
6th Sunday of Easter

Opening words

Jesus said: 'No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.'
So, let us join together as friends - Jesus' friends,
To worship and serve the one who, because of his great love, gave his all for us.
Come let us worship, our resurrected Lord.

Opening Hymn R&S 413

What a friend we have in Jesus all our sins and griefs to bear.
What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer.
Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged. Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend, so faithful, who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness - take it to the Lord in prayer!

Prayer of Worship

Mighty God,
In whom we know the power of redemption, you stand among us in the shadows of our time.
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,
Uphold us with knowledge of the final morning
When, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,
We will share in his resurrection, redeemed and restored to the fullness of life
And forever freed to be your people.

Creator of the universe,
You made the world in beauty, and restore all things in glory
Through the victory of Jesus Christ.
We pray that, wherever your image is still spoilt by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love, and peace,
To the glory of your name.

Faithful God,
Make our hearts bold with love for one another!
Pour out your Spirit upon all people, that we may live your justice
And sing in praise the new song of your marvellous victory. Amen.

Readings



Psalm 98 - O sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvellous things.

John 15: 9-17- This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Acts 10:44-48- While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word.

I John 5:1-6 - For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments.

Reflection

Last week Simon shared the first part of the reading about the vine drawing our attention to the following: -

Firstly, we are taught to “abide, or remain in the vine” (John 15, v 4, 5 etc). As a vine branch draws its life from the stem so we draw our wisdom, our direction, and our strength from the one with whom we are in relationship.

Jesus is leaving no room for doubt that he is the living source of wisdom and power for us as his disciples.

Secondly, we are warned that those who are serious about discipleship will be “pruned” just as a vine is cut back so that it bears even more fruit (John 15, vv1-2). Those who bear no fruit are fit only for the fire but even those who bear fruit will experience the challenge and pain of pruning.

The Father, who is the vinedresser is gentle, but He is also serious about those purposes. Even a really nice, gentle man like Monty Don on *Gardener’s World* recommends pruning when appropriate!

Finally, everything is aimed at making the branches fruitful. How will the branches of the Vine bring glory to God and show the world that we are true disciples of Christ? By bearing much fruit (John 15 v8), a branch joined to the True Vine will bear the “fruits” of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5, 22-23).

Jesus goes on to remind those who abide in the vine that they do so not at their own choice. In Jesus time a disciple would choose his own rabbi or master and willingly and voluntarily join his school. But with Jesus, the initiative lay entirely with him, Simon and Andrew, James and John, Matthew, Philip, and the others – all were personally called to follow Him, leaving all else behind.

They were chosen by Jesus, these were the ones God had given Him. When we see ourselves as disciples who have been handpicked by Jesus this should transform all we are and how we respond to this call. Malcolm Muggeridge said ‘I’ve never wanted a God or feared a God or felt under any necessity to invent one. Fortunately, I’ve been driven to the conclusion that God wants me.’

How does it feel to be chosen by God? Once we get over the shock that this is so we can feel unworthy or daunted by the prospect. Yet Jesus has promised that ‘you will ask for anything you wish, and you shall have it.’ (John 15 v7). This of course is dependent on remaining in the True Vine. Jesus offers us the power of the Holy Spirit all you need do is ask and you will receive. In this way we can stay connected to the True Vine, in this way you are able ‘to love one another as Jesus loves us.’ (John 15v12).

In this way we are called ‘friends’ not ‘servants’ for a servant does not know what his master is doing. (John 15v15). We are Jesus’ friends because he has shared ‘everything I heard from His Father’. (John 15v15).

You are chosen to bear fruit, so that the Father may be glorified (John 15v8,15). You are empowered by God as soon as you ask (John 15v7,16). You are chosen and special the branches of the True Vine, tapped into the life-giving Holy Spirit that God will pour out into those who ask that His church may bear much fruit.

In these days between the Resurrection and His Ascension to heaven I believe Jesus spent much time with His disciples teaching them these simple Truths. I believe He wants to teach us the same Truths, you are chosen, you are special, you will bear much fruit, the Fathers waiting to pour out His Holy Spirit so that you will know and be empowered by Him.

‘The Father will give you whatever you ask of Him in my name,

Song for Reflection

Holy Spirit, how I love you, Holy Spirit flood my soul.
Holy Spirit take me over, Holy Spirit lead me on.

You're the Strength that helps me in my weakness,
You're the Friend who comes to walk beside,
You're the Peace that passes understanding
As You reign in my life.

Prayers of Intercession

Lord Jesus, you have called us to be your disciples and to bear much fruit that our Father in heaven may be glorified.

Lord we find this daunting, so as we again confess our faith as Jesus our Lord and Saviour,
We pray that you will send your Holy Spirit now upon your people.

Fill us with your power and send us into a troubled world
As bearers of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Father God, we thank you for your Church and seek your guidance as to the direction in which we should move forward in these difficult times.

Help us to trust you and place our future in your hands alone.

We pray for those who carry the burdens of illness and injury.
We pray for those who carry the scars of prejudice and injustice.
We pray for those who feel unloved, uncared for, unwanted, unknown.

We pray for those who are abused, neglected, who see no hope; who share no love; who know no joy.

Almighty God, may the love of you we know reach out to all these for whom we pray.

(Pray for the world and one another....name those people and circumstances on your heart now...)

Receive these prayers, O God, and transform us through them,
That we may have eyes to see and hearts to understand
Not only what you do on our behalf,
But what you call us to do
So that your realm will come to fruition in glory. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer.

Hymn

You Are the Vine, we are the Branches - Keep us abiding in you
You Are the Vine, we are the Branches - Keep us abiding in you

And we'll go, in your love, and we'll go, in your name that the world, will surely know,
That you have the Power to heal and to save

You Are the Vine, we are the Branches - Keep us abiding in you
You Are the Vine, we are the Branches - Keep us abiding in you

Blessing

Lord Jesus, we rejoice that you have chosen us to be your friends.

Help us to be a friend to you by obeying your commands.

As we go about our daily lives, help us to live a life that reflects your love,
By being a friend to others. **Amen**