



**Ardoch and
Blackford Parish
Churches
Sunday 2nd May**

**The Fifth Sunday
of Easter**

Like last week, we're looking at Jesus starting a statement with "I am." This week he calls himself "the true vine." In looking at this phrase we are looking for clues on how to live as people who are changed by Easter and what our relationship with the Risen Christ looks like in practice now.

Last week it was the Moderator who visited and led the service, This week it's back to auld claes and porridge (Gordon's words!) with Gordon Roy providing these notes, leading a recorded service on the Blackford website and face-to-face in Ardoch Parish Church.

In honour of that 10:00am start, our opening hymn encourages us to raise our song of praise to God early in the morning.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the eye of sinfulness thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed trinity!

Let's pray

Lord God Almighty, our song rises to you from our hearts if not our lips this morning, this afternoon, this evening, as we bring you our praise and our worship.

We join with Christians across the country and around the world on this Lord's Day to and we join with the heaven beings—cherubim and seraphim—who spend eternity falling down before you. We bow our heads, our hearts and our stubborn wills if not our knees to offer you praise, to acknowledge that you are hear as I read this at home as much as when it is spoken out in church or online.

We set this time aside to appreciate that you have called us to dwell with you, to live with you, stay with you, remain with you, abide with you. To live in a relationship with you that is characterised by vines and branches.

Thank you that you want to feed us and nourish us, refresh us and bring growth and fruit. Open us up to your pruning through your word as we read what you say to us through John's Gospel and letter. Open our minds to that still small voice that prompts us to grow in you as we pause and take time with you. Amen

We say 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 evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen

Our Bible readings this week were both written by one of Jesus' closest followers—the Apostle John. Firstly from his Gospel and then from one of his letters to the churches years later.

John 15:1-8 (The vine and the branches)

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If

you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

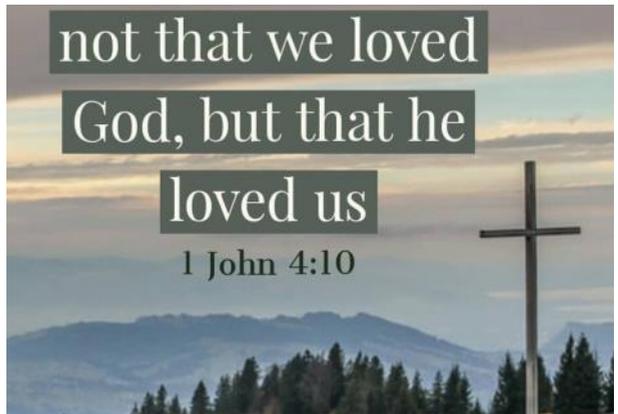
1st John 4:7-21 (God's love and ours)

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: he sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.



¹³ This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. ¹⁵ If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶ And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷ This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: in this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. ²¹ And he has given us this command: anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

Our second hymn pick up the key term from the Bible readings in the word “abiding” from the first verse. By slowing down to do that, the 18th Century writer, Anna Waring took her shyness and fears to God and returned with confidence wherever God may guide her—which included prison visits.

In heavenly love abiding, no change my heart shall fear;
and safe is such confiding, for nothing changes here:
the storm may roar without me, my heart may low be laid;
but God is round about me, and can I be dismayed?

Wherever he may guide me, no want shall turn me back;
my Shepherd is beside me, and nothing can I lack:
his wisdom ever waketh, his sight is never dim,
he knows the way he taketh, and I will walk with him.

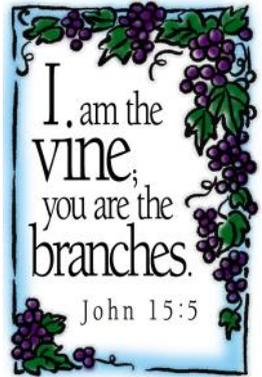
Green pastures are before me, which yet I have not seen;
bright skies will soon be o'er me, where darkest clouds have been;
my hope I cannot measure, my path to life is free;
my Saviour has my treasure, and he will walk with me.

Our sermon this week is again presented in bullet points to read and think through at your own speed

- I went to Glencoe this week not to climb a munro but in my role as a Trustee of the Christian Outdoor Centre there. On the way back I sat on the A82 for 90 minutes as part of the queue of traffic waiting for the emergency services to deal with a clear up a road traffic accident. I had to deal with my frustration at having to *remain* there for an unknown length of time until I remembered that this is the very theme of our Bible passages today.
- Remember John wrote in Greek, so the words that each translator choses reflects the variety with which we might talk about staying, remaining, living or abiding. But one way or another that's what we're talking about today.
- Jesus said, “I am the true vine” so as branches you need to stay connected and remain in place. What we need to survive and thrive comes from him. Nourishment, encouragement, forgiveness, purpose, identity, fruitfulness and much more. What are you looking for? Are you looking to Jesus? Are you connected to him?
- Sometimes we do a *clean up* and sometimes we do a *clean out*. Judging by the charity shops or the Blackford car boot and table

sale planned for the 15th of May a lot of *cleaning out* has been done. There's a play on words in John 15:2 that we don't really get between *cleaning up* and *cleaning out*. The clue is in verse 3 when our translation says, "you are already clean." Are we giving God enough hope for his pruning of us to be a clean up to bring fruit or will we be cleaned out as unfruitful to allow others to thrive?

- There is a real contrast in the end result and its not to strike fear or anxiety into us but to encourage us to hold onto Christ whose work—in the hands of the gardener brings fruit. Our efforts just bring leaves; remaining in Christ brings fruit. Jesus responds to us.
- Saying that he was the true vine would have shocked his Jewish disciples; Old Testament teaching would have taught of a vineyard that had God's blessing and his chosen people were planted there. Now Jesus is saying, being within a vineyard is not good enough; are you attached to the vine? Being Jewish was no longer good enough; being brought up in the Church of Scotland—or any other church—is not good enough. Being attached to the Vine is what Jesus calls for. What are you relying on?



- It's put another way in Romans 11, Paul writes that his readers are branches that have been grafted in. Have you been grafted in? Are you aware of being accepted by Christ despite feeling you didn't belong, and then being part of a new living, growing structure that connects, feeds and nourishes you and others and produces fruit for more people to appreciate.
- There's nothing to fear or assessment to pass in coming to Christ; John wanted the readers of his letter to get this. Jesus loved us *long* before we loved him or even noticed him. It's his nature. It's what defines him. The love that the Father and Son share for each other is the love that they have for you and me. Wow!
- Love is therefore a very significant fruit of this relationship .but don't think that means it's all about emotion; the pruning is through the Word of God; our growth is in God's strength our motivation is God's glory. This Christian life involves heart, soul and mind.
- Sap takes time to move through a plant or flower stem. The experiment below with cut flowers in water coloured by food dye takes time.. Pruning and trimming of cut flowers speeds up the

process and prolongs life—just as God’s pruning is purposeful for us. Heat helps to draw water through the stem. Were you hoping to live a chilled out life or will you welcome the heat to bring growth and the colour of Jesus to the surface of your life in the hands of a loving heavenly Father. Will you remain?

To think or talk through our service today:

- How well connected are you to Christ?
- How does the word of God prune you?
- As God looks at you would he be thinking of a clean up or a clean out?
- What evidence of your relationship to Jesus comes to the surface?



Our prayers for others

Lord, we are in times of choices and decisions. Guide, Lord, we pray.

As we respond to your word which wants to clean us, feed us and bring fruit as we take time to abide, to stay, to live, to remain with you. Guide, Lord, we pray.

As our country opens up and options increase, give us wisdom, sensitivity, hope, expectation, security to use these options wisely. Guide, Lord, we pray.

As family and friends become within reach, guard and protect them, for those this week who had accidents, bad news or worries difficult to share, bring healing and new life. Where there is uncertainty or anxiety for the future, plans are difficult to make, hope is difficult to share, peace is difficult to establish, the truth is difficult to find. Guide, Lord, we pray.

As we are able to share times of celebration and refreshment, encouragement and renewal of relationships, help us to show your fruit, your colour, in lives lived with you. Guide, Lord, we pray.

As we go to the polls on Thursday and vote for those who will lead us and represent us for the coming years, open our eyes to the issues that challenge you, policies that honour you, people who trust you, parties who will respect you. Guide, Lord, we pray.

Amen.

Our final hymn was written by William Featherstone of Montreal in 1862 when he was 16 years of age. In particular this morning verse 2 picks up the theme of 1John 4v 10, “not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine;
for thee all the follies of sin I resign;
my gracious Redeemer, my Saviour art thou;
if ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I love thee because thou hast first loved me
and purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree;
I love thee for wearing the thorns on thy brow;
if ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I'll love thee in life, I will love thee in death,
and praise thee as long as thou lendest me breath,
and say when the deathdew lies cold on my brow:
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

In mansions of glory and endless delight,
I'll ever adore thee in heaven so bright;
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow:
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

**Now go in peace to live and abide
in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the love of God the
Father and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Amen**



Intimations

We warmly welcome Gordon Roy who is conducting our Service today. The 10:00am live service from Ardoch will also be recorded and available on our website later in the day. Gordon has pre recorded his Blackford Service and it will be posted on their website on Sunday morning.

Kirk Session meeting this Wednesday 5th May on Zoom at 7.00pm.

Next Sunday, 9th May we are live on a Zoom Joint Service at 11:00am for Communion and the launch of both Christian Aid Week. And Thy Kingdom Come. More details to follow.

On Sunday 16th May both the Ardoch and Blackford Church buildings will reopen for worship. **10am** at Ardoch and this will remain the time for the rest of 2021.

The Guild will meet on Zoom this Thursday, 6th May at 2.00pm when the speaker will be Rev Mairi Perkins, our minister. "Come See, Go Tell" is the title of her talk describing her experiences in the Holy Land.

The digital version of the Link will be posted on the website and sent out by Charles. Paper copies will be distributed to the usual recipients.

If you are relying on the BBC for teaching and hymn signing, here's this weekend's programme:

11:15 BBC1 **Reflections at the Quay** is led by former moderator the Very Rev Dr Lorna Hood.

12:00 BBC Scotland **The Service** Fr Andrew Kingham leads the worship from the Parish of Our Lady and St Andrew in Galashiels.

1:15 BBC1 **Songs of Praise** Claire McCollum marks the Partition of Ireland and formation of Northern Ireland 100 years ago, meeting Christians from across the denominations to discuss the past and their hopes for the future.

Ardoch Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC000139

Ardoch Parish Church, CCLI Licence Numbers:
8326, 709991, 2287040, 1028468

Blackford Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC005594
Blackford Parish Church, CCLI Licence Number: 880762