



# Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

[www.trinitylutheran.ca](http://www.trinitylutheran.ca)

April 28, 2024  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Easter

## Announcements

**Spring Scrubbing** is set for 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 4. Volunteer to help declutter and clean Trinity as we prepare for the summer months and make room for the changes that are to come. Sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board in the Narthex or just show up.

## Coming Services

**May 12** - Music Sunday. The Trinity Band and choir will help lead the congregation in song as part of the Mother's Day service. As well, Trinity musicians and singers will provide liturgical music during portions of the service, such as the offering and communion.

**May 15** - Pentecost Messy Church, 5 p.m. A mid-week session that includes a meal, activities and a devotional. All are welcome!

**June 16** – Healing & Belonging Service. This is an affirmation worship service to mark Pride Month. The service is intended to recognize the past wounds caused by the greater church on the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and to foster healing and belonging with the community. Assistant to the Bishop Adam Snook is scheduled to preach and assist at the service. A potluck follows the service.

### **We Remember in our Prayers**

**In Residence:** Cordelle, Dorothy, Katie, Margaret, Sharon, Vern.

**Members:** Bunny, Donna, Ed, Joan, Susan, Evelyn, Connie, Judith.

**Friends & Family:** Anna, Asdis, Audrey, Dot, Jean, Mary, Michelle, Randy, Roger, Rose, Frank

## **Introduction to the day**

*This Sunday's image of how the risen Christ shares his life with us is the image of the vine. Christ the vine and we the branches are alive in each other, in the mystery of mutual abiding described in the gospel and the first letter of John. Baptism makes us a part of Christ's living and life-giving self and makes us alive with Christ's life. As the vine brings food to the branches, Christ feeds us at his table. We are sent out to bear fruit for the life of the world.*

Inshallah # 40 God welcomes all  
ELW # 377 Alleluia! Jesus is risen!  
ACS # 965 The rice of life  
ELW # 367 Now all the vault of heaven  
resounds

### Prayer of the day

O God, you give us your Son as the vine  
apart from whom we cannot live. Nourish  
our life in his resurrection, that we may bear  
the fruit of love and know the fullness of  
your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior  
and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and  
the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**AMEN**

### First reading: Acts 8: 24-40

<sup>26</sup>An angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up  
and go toward the south to the road that  
goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This  
is a wilderness road.) <sup>27</sup>So he got up and  
went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch,  
a court official of the Candace, queen of the  
Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury.  
He had come to Jerusalem to worship <sup>28</sup>and  
was returning home; seated in his chariot,  
he was reading the prophet Isaiah. <sup>29</sup>Then  
the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this  
chariot and join it." <sup>30</sup>So Philip ran up to it  
and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah.  
He asked, "Do you understand what you are  
reading?" <sup>31</sup>He replied, "How can I, unless  
someone guides me?" And he invited Philip  
to get in and sit beside him. <sup>32</sup>Now the  
passage of the scripture that he was  
reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,  
and like a lamb silent before its  
shearer,  
so he does not open his mouth.

<sup>33</sup>In his humiliation justice was denied  
him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the  
earth."

<sup>34</sup>The eunuch asked Philip, "About whom,  
may I ask you, does the prophet say this,  
about himself or about someone  
else?" <sup>35</sup>Then Philip began to speak, and  
starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to  
him the good news about Jesus. <sup>36</sup>As they  
were going along the road, they came to  
some water; and the eunuch said, "Look,  
here is water! What is to prevent me from  
being baptized?" <sup>38</sup>He commanded the  
chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and  
the eunuch, went down into the water, and  
Philip baptized him. <sup>39</sup>When they came up  
out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord  
snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him  
no more, and went on his way  
rejoicing. <sup>40</sup>But Philip found himself at  
Azotus, and as he was passing through the  
region, he proclaimed the good news to all  
the towns until he came to Caesarea.

### Psalm 22: 25-31

<sup>25</sup>From you comes my praise in the <sup>l</sup> great  
assembly;

I will perform my vows in the sight of  
those who <sup>l</sup> fear the Lord.

<sup>26</sup>**The poor shall eat <sup>l</sup> and be satisfied,  
Let those who seek the Lord give  
praise! May your hearts <sup>l</sup> live forever!**

<sup>27</sup>All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn <sup>l</sup> to the Lord;

all the families of nations shall  
bow <sup>l</sup> before God.

<sup>28</sup>**For dominion belongs <sup>l</sup> to the Lord,  
who rules o- <sup>l</sup> ver the nations.**

<sup>29</sup>Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall  
bow <sup>l</sup> down in worship;

all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel before the Lord.

<sup>30</sup>**Their descendants shall serve the Lord, whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.**

<sup>31</sup>They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying to them, "The Lord has acted!"

## **Second reading: 1 John 4: 7-21**

<sup>7</sup>Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup>God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

<sup>13</sup>By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup>And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup>God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. <sup>16</sup>So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. <sup>17</sup>Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. <sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears

has not reached perfection in love. <sup>19</sup>We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup>Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. <sup>21</sup>The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

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

[Jesus said:] <sup>1</sup>"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. <sup>2</sup>He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

## **Sermon**

### **Cleansed branches**

My father planted five grape vines at the house he built in Connecticut.

He ran them in a line to separate our front yard from the driveway turnaround. I remember hearing him tell my mother that in a few years they'd be able to pick the grapes.

The soil was a little iffy so one vine didn't last the first season. The other four struggled into the second season, but by the fourth year they were established and their branches had wrapped into the wire trellis ... the branches began to stretch out ... and the vines had grown to about six feet in height.

The leaves blocked the view into the front yard quite nicely.

The vines never flowered and never threw fruit during the years we lived in the house.

It wasn't until years later that I discovered that the vines needed to be pruned. The soil was treated with fertilizer, but the vines themselves were never tended to by my parents.

There were a lot of dead and unproductive branches hidden among the leaves each year.

It seems that regular care ... trimming ... pruning ... is needed in order for these vines to be productive and produce good fruit.

This morning, Jesus is in the middle of his farewell to the disciples.

They have had their meal together ... Jesus has already washed the disciples' feet ... he has predicted his betrayal and Peter's denial ... commanded that people love one another ... he promised that if they remain faithful, God will send an advocate to them.

Now, he tells the disciples a story about vines.

Jesus tells the disciples that the Father is the vinegrower ... that he is the vine ... and they are the branches ... sharing the good fruit with the world.

This is the final time Jesus makes an "I Am" statement in the gospel of John.

Jesus declares "I Am" seven times in John's gospel.

So far, John has shared Jesus' words:

"I am the bread of life."

"I am the light of the world."

"I am the door."

"I am the good shepherd."

"I am the resurrection and the life."

"I am the way and the truth and the life."

This morning we hear Jesus say, "I am the vine, you are the branches."

Until this point in John's gospel, Jesus' "I Am" statements have given the disciples glimpses into Jesus' nature ... of who Jesus is and what that holds for followers ... this is the first time that Jesus tells the disciples who they are and how that identity relates to the divine that is the vine and the vinegrower.

..."you are the branches."

..."YOU are the branches" ... these are words steeped in promise and possibility.

These are words about the promise and possibility held in a relationship with God.

This passage *is* about relationships ... the vinegrower to the vine ... the vine to the branches ... and the branches to the vinegrower.

It is about how branches are shaped by their connection to the vine ... following the call of the vinegrower ... the call to love unconditionally ... to serve others faithfully motivated by love ... knowing that each loving act ... each compassionate act ...

has the potential to carry outward and shape the community.

The branches cannot do anything without being connected to the vine.



Separated from the vine ... the branches wither and die. Life is only possible through the vine ... a productive life that bears fruit for others.

The vinegrower in John's gospel wants the branches to bear good fruit and share those things that come through the life-giving and life-affirming promise of grace.

It's easy to view words in this passage as a bit of a threat ... be a productive branch or you'll be pruned ... cut free of the vine ... separated from the other branches and left to rot away or burn in a fire.

But this doesn't sound like a vinegrower who continually comes to us ... calling us to live a life of love. This doesn't sound like grace, at all.

In the original Greek, John's gospel uses the same word for "prune" as it does for the word "cleanse."

Jesus makes it clear to the disciples ... and centuries later to us ... that we have been cleansed through baptism ... the things that cause branches to be unproductive are washed away through God's unrelenting love.

This ... then ... isn't a lesson about judgment. Jesus' statement is one of truth ... that there are good branches and bad branches.

Good branches share grace that come from the vine... they attach to the world through selfless love and compassion ... nurturing a hope-filled fruit.

Bad branches could be too self-involved ... feel too self-important ... too entitled ... too closed off ... that if they produce any fruit at all, it is small and bitter.

There is no grace in what the bad branches do or what they offer the world ... there is nothing that marks a life of grace ... the good fruit.

So, how can the branches be assured of producing such good fruit?

Jesus calls on the disciples to "abide" in him ... to be in a full and intimate relationship with him and ... through him ... with the vinegrower. This is a relationship marked by constant attentive love ... by the vinegrower ... by the vine ... and by the branches.

Abiding means that the branches are firmly attached to Jesus ... and the branches are the way Jesus ... the vine ... is connected to the world.

The interdependent relationship between vine and branch is present.

Through Jesus' words ... through living into our calls to love and to serve ... the unproductive material ... the dead stuff ... is continually sloughed off. Love cleanses us of the dead debris.

It falls away from us as we abide in Jesus and know the Jesus abides in us.

Through abiding ... through pruning and trimming ... the branches are shaped and ... ultimately ... the community is shaped into one that affirms ... that cares ... that selflessly loves.

This morning's story of the vinegrower ... the vine ... and the branches ... calls on disciples and their communities to consider if their focus is outward or inward ... and on what it means to grow with the vine.

It means carrying love outward into the community ... to those unfamiliar places ... to make active demonstrations of what love is ... to provide glimpses of God in the world ... and in those glimpses ... see hope in the eyes of others.

That is when the good fruit is enjoyed.

During the remainder of the Easter Season, we need to remember that the vinegrower's attention is unconditional ... and the act of pruning ... of cleansing ... is a redemptive one.

We are each redeemed through Jesus' act of love ... his suffering, death and resurrection. It is a loving act that cleansed the world.

And through this act ... we have been freed to love and to bear witness to the results of that love ... the fruits that this love ... God's love for each of us ... holds for the world.

We are the branch ... may we flourish ... may we nourish ... may our fruit be good.

**AMEN**

## 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever.

**AMEN**

## Blessing

The God of all,  
who raised + Jesus from the dead,  
bless you by the power of the Holy Spirit  
to live in the new creation.

**AMEN**

