

## ervice reflections for: 3/5/20 @ Newport Congregational Church

Explore the image of Jesus as the true vine and his followers as the branches.

See the Music Page for song suggestions for today.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we are like this dead branch. Sometimes we are unkind or unhelpful.

Forgive us, and help us stay joined to you.

Lord Jesus, sometimes the things we say are cruel or rude, like sour fruit.

Forgive us, and help us stay joined to you.

Lord, we are sorry for the times when we are selfish, thinking that our way is better than yours.

Forgive us, and help us stay joined to you.

Lord Jesus, every time we do wrong things, we fail to bring glory to God.

Forgive us, and help us stay joined to you.

Jesus said, 'If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you, then you will produce lots of fruit.'

Lord, thank you for forgiving us. Help us stay joined to you.

And Pray the Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven. Hallowed be your name;

Your kingdom come. Your will be done,

on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us,

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For the Kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and for ever

AMEN.

1 John 4:7-21 Explores the theme of love.

God's love and ours

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.

Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

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

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. This is love: not that we loved God,

but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

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

God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

This is how we know that we live in him and he in us:

he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify

that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.

If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them

and they in God. 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.

This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgement: in this world we are like Jesus. 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. We love because he first loved us.

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. And he has given us this command:

anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.

Second Bible reading John 15:1-8 The vine and the branches

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

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.

You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

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. 'I 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.

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish,

and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit,

showing yourselves to be my disciples.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, Israel was frequently likened to a vine that God had planted (see Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21).

This vine had, sadly, only produced bad grapes despite all that had been done for it.

So when Jesus describes himself as the true vine, (John 15:1), this is deeply significant.

Anyone who wishes to belong to God's people must 'remain in the vine' (v 4).

It is only through staying in relationship with him that we can 'bear fruit' as God intends we should (vs 2,4,8).

Whether we think of 'the fruit of the Spirit' (Galatians 5:22,23) or acts of mercy and justice, we are reminded that God has not put us on earth to twiddle our thumbs but to live out the life of Jesus in the nitty-gritty challenges that life and relationships bring.

Of course the model for living a life of love is God himself.

His love was shown once and for all in that he sent 'his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him' (1 John 4:9).

Imagine the cost to the Father of making the Son 'the atoning sacrifice for our sins' (v 10)!

This is costly, sacrificial love that takes the initiative and carries the blame and the shame so that others may be free of it.

We are called to be like this in our relationships with one another.

As it says in John 15, it is as we allow his words to remain in us (v 7), especially his command to love one another as he has loved us (v 12), that we will remain in the vine (v 4), experience wonderful answers to prayer (v 7), and bear much fruit to the Father's glory

(v 8).

Are we like plants?

We are created by God and we grow.

How are we not like plants?

We don't grow flowers.

Imagine if someone says that we don't grow (Spiritual) fruit!

What fruit do we grow?

What sort of fruit should we be producing?

There was a big clue in the Bible reading.

How should we display the fruit? Being helpful; loving people even when they are unkind to us; looking after lonely people.

What aids growth? What conditions are needed for real plants to grow? Light, water and soil.

What conditions do we need for the fruits of love, kindness, goodness to all grow in us?

We have to stay joined to Jesus.

Staying in the same area as Jesus won't help our fruit to grow.

Staying near to Jesus won't help either.

Jesus said we had to stay joined to him, because he is the true vine, who will give us all that we need to help us to grow.

He is the source of all the goodness, kindness and love.

It's not just a question of us not producing much fruit.

Without him we cannot produce any fruit.

Without him we cannot do anything.

If we decide to go our own way we become like useless branches with wilting fruit.

Wilting fruit is not very attractive, so don't be tempted to go your own way.

What happens to gone-off fruit and dead branches.

It's of no use, it's wasted, composted or burnt!

Jesus doesn't feed us by pouring water over us!

How does he feed us? Reading God's Word is key, prayer, Worship and spending time with other Christians all help.

Jesus said that if we stay joined to him, his words become part of us.

When all this happens, we grow fruit, we stay joined to Jesus, and his Word becomes a part of us.

Sing or listen to - In my life, Lord, be glorified  
before sharing in Communion in whatever way works for you.

Jonathan and I shall be sharing via the live stream  
and the Messenger chat after our online service.

What I miss most is being a Gather Church - where we can meet together