

Easter Season
Fifth of Easter, 2nd May 2021
Ceres, Kemback & Springfield Parish Church

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Call to Worship, 'One bread, One body'
John Michael Talbot

Welcome & Notices

Hymn All people that on earth do dwell
From the Albert Hall

Prayers of Approach & The Lord's Prayer

A Musical Reflection: 'God so loved the world', by John Rutter
Kate Doig & Sheena Sturrock

Scripture: **Acts 8 vv 26 - 40**
St John 15 vv 1 - 8

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Homily "We're all in this together"

Hymn Gather us in
Ferryhill Parish Church, Aberdeen

Prayers of Thanksgiving and for the World

Hymn The Church is wherever God's people are praising
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, Shaftesbury Ave, London

A Sending Out

'Gaelic Blessing', by John Rutter
Kate Doig & Sheena Sturrock

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I am the Vine and You are the Branches
'We're all in this together'

My dad used to make wine ... back in the 70's when wine making kits became the rage he set to in the garage ... up 'til then it had been ginger beer which is perhaps where my love of all things ginger comes from ... I'm sure some of you are more knowledgeable about wine making than I, but I did a bit of research to glean more ... If he is the true vine and we are the branches what can we hope to understand about our lives lived in his name?

Cana rest a little to the north of where Jesus' family came from in Nazareth ... it doesn't stretch our imaginations to be told that Jesus attended a wedding there with his mother and performed his first miracle, or sign ... and we shouldn't be surprised that John used the setting and scene of a wedding to develop themes of God's overflowing generosity ... Weddings are the result of a new relationship being sealed ... a new time in the lives of not just two people but two families or tribes ... love and faithfulness are the core values most people treasure when they organise a wedding and many weddings are conducted in the presence of tens if not hundreds of others - a public witness to a new time of life ... to the promise of a new, better way of living ... and done in the pursuit of loyalty and faithfulness ... to top this joyful time off, what better than to enjoy the fruit of the vine ... and John pushes this theme even further by telling us that the wine Jesus produces isn't just more of the same it's the equivalent of the very best *Dom Perignon* ... Jesus' coming, Jesus' kingdom is the very very best and when people take in its fulness, it's warming, it's satisfying, it's rich and it's effects linger even after taking a mouthful ... and we should remember that the wedding at Cana involves almost 600 litres of best quality wine ... it's not just the quality, John's telling us, it's the 'how much' too ... it's overflowing, it's generous beyond measure ... more than enough for everyone ... this is how we asked to be with our communities and in the world ...

I wonder, as we sit in one of our sanctuaries this morning with the sunlight pouring in and making everything look warm and golden and Easter bright ... I wonder what comes into your minds as you consider our church family here in Ceres, Kemback and Springfield ... in what way does taking part in the spiritual imbibing of the gospel enrich you and your life? As we consider what John says about Jesus' presence not just offering more wine but wine of such a quality that its compared to the best vintage - how does this generous providing enrich our parish? How are we bringing the presence of Christ into people's lives such that on tasting it people feel warmed, better, less alone? More hopeful perhaps ...?

Pre pandemic I know that there were many local community events and I've met people in the community who've been full of praise about the church being IN the community over recent years especially ... I know the *Gatherings* in Ceres have

enriched the local community and people came from further afield too - and not only church people ... how many people were enriched and encouraged by these Gatherings? And more recently, in pandemic times CKS has reached out and offered the generous wine of Christ by phone calls, by using the grape vine to ask after people, including our most vulnerable members as well as asking how can we offer the generous, warming, hopeful, delicious cup of friendship, welcome and fellowship whether they live in Crawley Court in Springfield in Dura Den in Kemback ... in Walton Park in Craigothie ... in Buchanan Gardens in Ceres and so on ... and what about those who feel disenchanting, disenfranchised even from church? How have we been, or how may we offer the generous cup of friendship and welcome once again?

And of course *making* good wine, *being the presence* of Christ as we're called to be takes time ... we know that to make good wine we need vines, a good harvest, crushing is involved and then fermenting ... pressing ... maturation ... blending and placing into vats or barrels preferably oak, I believe and finally bottling ... On doing some very brief research I believe that in order to produce the best Bordeaux wines the vintners need to blend Cabernet Sauvignon grapes with Merlot varieties, even adding small amounts of other local varieties ...

If this is true, then John's story about Jesus being the vine, and we the branches is really foundational and only the beginning of the process towards producing the very best wine ... there's a long way to go between growing the basic vine, seeing the bunches of grapes developing and from there uncorking the bottle and enjoying there's a process in wine making which requires great attention to detail called *blending* which means the introduction of a lot of other ingredients ... all of which I believe is a kind of indicator for how we, the presence of Christ in the parish are called to draw in many other people to blend, mix, to enrich to dilute sometimes and make good ... it seems that to make the very best wine ... to truly be the presence of Christ in the world the church family is just the beginning ... it's how we reach out and invite ... it's who we engage with ... it's how much time we take to blend/ engage with our communities and work with all sorts of personalities and skills, the hopeful ones and the ones be-set by loneliness ... the productive and sociable ones and the not so productive and even the prickly ones ... The church and the world are made up of all sorts of people and personalities ... it's a rich, rich blend ...

And it seems to me, having this week done a crash course in wine making .. it seems to me that another key part of the process is the environment we offer - not just to ourselves, the immediate church family but to our neighbours beyond the walls all this careful blending and creating won't produce the very best fruit and drink if we're careless and use the wrong sort of context the barrels have to be oak, or the

newly blended drink will go sour and off and be either thrown away or sold for the cheapest price - unless we ensure the barrels are oak ... unless we ensure our containers, our buildings are fit for purpose ...

I put it to you that being the presence of Christ in 2021 and going forward involves three types of barrel in which people of all kinds can be invited in to, to grow in love, kindness, compassion and spirituality ... first of all the barrel which is made of a loving, reaching out church family, so that our parishes know we offer safe, friendly, listening spaces informed by our love of Christ and belief in his promises ... second of all the barrel which is made of let's say *take up your bed and walk* ... being out there and going *to people* ... the days of expecting hordes to tip up at 11a.m. on a Sunday are no more ... and anyway the Gospel message time and time again is that the presence of Christ is a constantly moving, visiting, walking, talking, engaging, inviting one ... it's never a building ...

... but we do have those too, so let's make the best of them ... so our third type of barrel in which we invite people can be a church building and you have been busy already making Springfield Church as economical, comfortable and as welcoming to people in and beyond the church family as you can ... two families who did the Easter Day trail here spoke emotively and with deep appreciation of how they see this church wanting to *be with* the community here, offering a good safe comfortable space for all people to be, to share, to talk, to cry, to let children play and older folk talk over coffee ... Isn't this just possibly how John's story shows us how we can not only be the branches but how we can do the rest ...

Dear Friends may our presence in this part of God's world be such a rich, delicious, warming, promising, comforting place because of the risks we take and the relationships we make ... with Christ as our grounded vine and hope and with his easter risen presence walking ahead of us to Galilee and beyond ... we keep our eyes fixed on him and grow the Kingdom in his way, in his name, by his power ...

Amen ... and thanks be to God for the gift, the hope and the promise of the Gospel ...

Rev Jane Barron
2nd May, 2021