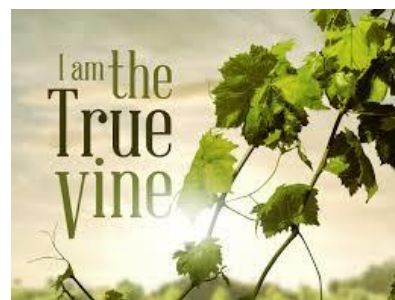


## Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2021 – Bulwell United Reformed Church

*Today's worship for the Fifth Sunday after Easter is focused on John 15: 1-8 - Jesus says that he is 'the true vine'. His Father is the vine-grower who removes fruitless branches and prunes those that are fruitful so that they might produce even more. The disciples are the branches; they are to remain part of the vine and expected to grow and bear good fruit.*

### **A gathering prayer**

We gather here, O Lord, for you, the vine, to nourish us.  
May we, the branches, draw our strength from you,  
and grow in harmony, unity and love.  
May we find nourishment through our rootedness  
in the life, teachings and love of Christ.  
Receive the fruits of our worship and be glorified.  
**Amen.**



### **A prayer of Confession and an Assurance of forgiveness**

Gracious God,  
we come to you aware of our failings and conscious that we have tried to live in our own strength.

**Forgive us and reconnect us to your vine.**

We have resisted the challenge of change and not trusted your truth.

**Forgive us and reconnect us to your vine.**

We have rooted ourselves in our wills and not in your word.

**Forgive us and reconnect us to your vine.**

We have looked for quick fixes and not kingdom-shaped growth.

**Forgive us and reconnect us to your vine.**

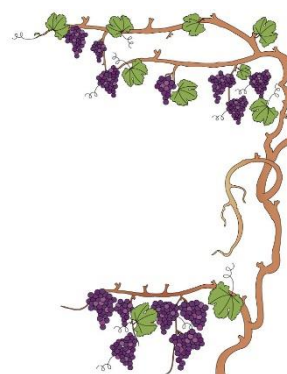
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour.

**Amen.**

***Our Father .....***

**Song You are the vine – Matt Bellingham**

[\(490\) You are the vine, we are the branches | Lyrics - YouTube](#)



### **John 15: 1-8 The vine and the branches**

**15** '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.

<sup>5</sup> '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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (NIVUK)

### **Abiding in Jesus and producing fruit - John 15: 1-8**

In another of the great 'I am' sayings, Jesus again transforms an image from the Old Testament. In the prophets, the vine represents Israel, usually in a context where the nation stands under judgement for her faithlessness. Now Jesus proclaims himself as the true Israel – the Vine. Those who remain in him, part of his community, will be protected from such faithlessness and its accompanying desolation. The word 'remain or abide' helpfully conveys a sense of both 'stay' and 'be with'.

What does Jesus mean by talking of our 'remaining or abiding' in each other? This will happen when we as believers receive and keep his words, which he in turn has received from the Father. But Jesus is talking of much more than mere obedience. The metaphor of the vine is marvellously reworked: God is no longer external, the one who plants something separate from him. Now, the branches are seen to draw their very life and fruitfulness from him.

The branches refer to us. Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. A branch cannot float around and exist by itself – it will have no effect and wither and die. In other words we need to abide in Jesus and not do our own thing and ask God to bless it.

The force of this passage is if you are going to follow Jesus, then follow Jesus! Don't be half-hearted about it. Remain in Jesus and produce fruit. We might need a bit of cleansing and we might need to work at it but we get there through worship, repentance (i.e. pruning or cleansing), receiving forgiveness, hearing the Word and applying it, and prayer. It's a process and we need to take these measures to keep ourselves abiding with Jesus. To hear the words of Jesus is to be filled with life, with the capacity to love, and with joy.

Remain as branches attached to this true vine, however, and 'ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you' (v.7). But what you wish cannot mean anything you desire, but only what is consistent with abiding in Jesus, the only source of a fruitful God-pleasing life.

### **Prayers of intercession**

Risen Lord Jesus,  
hear our prayers for all who mourn  
as they remember loved ones lost to this pandemic.  
Hear our prayers for livelihoods destroyed and hopes devastated.

Hear our prayers for all continuing to sustain and support us even as we begin to taste again so much we have had to wait for. Bless the nations with a renewing spirit of generosity, that vaccine and support might reach the poorest and most marginalised. We pray in your name.

Amen.

By the Revd Neil Thorogood, Minister of Thornbury URC and Trinity-Henleaze URC (Bristol)

*Please add your prayers for others you wish to pray for today . . .*

### **Song I, the Lord of sea and sky**

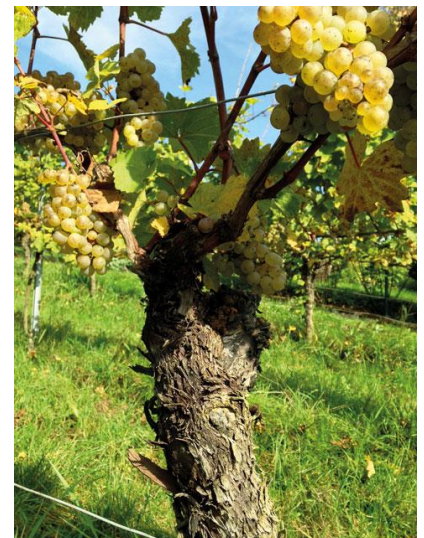
[\(490\) I, the Lord of Sea and Sky \(Here I Am, Lord\) \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

### **Communion – The Vine & Branches Thanksgiving**

We give you all thanks and praise, O God,  
for you have sent your Son as the Saviour of the world  
and your Spirit to graft us into the vine of life.

You created the universe and everything in it,  
and revealed your perfect love  
in your commitment to your people  
and your care for the poor and afflicted.

Through your prophets you promised a righteous servant  
who would suffer humiliation and injustice  
and, like a sheep to the slaughter, have his life taken away.  
In your Son, Jesus Christ,  
we have seen your promises fulfilled,  
and through his resurrection,  
he has broken the power of death to hold the righteous.  
In his perfect love, our fear is cast out,  
and now, like branches of a vine,  
we live in him and draw our life from him,  
that we might bear much fruit to your glory.



***Therefore, with our hearts lifted high,  
we offer you thanks and praise at all times  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.***

## **The Breaking of the Bread and Pouring of the Wine**

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast.  
I Corinthians 5:7

## **The Sharing of the Bread and the Wine**

*Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.  
Blessed are those who are called to the wedding feast of the Lamb. Alleluia.*

Take, eat; this is the body of Christ, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of him.

This cup is the new covenant in the blood of Christ, shed for you and for all, for the forgiveness of sin. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of him.

## **Commission & Benediction**

Go now, and love one another,  
because love is from God.  
Proclaim God's salvation to every generation.  
Remain in Jesus Christ,  
and like branches of a vine, draw your life from him.

And may God the vine grower tend you and make you fruitful;  
May Christ Jesus abide in you and give you life;  
And may the Holy Spirit cast out all fear and fill you with God's love.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,  
.....***In the name of Christ. Amen.***

