**Saginaw First Free Methodist Church**

**FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**May 2, 2021**



*“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.”*

*(John 15:5)*

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**FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**May 2, 2021**

**Prelude**

**\*\*Greeting/Announcements**

**\*Call to Worship** (*spoken responsively*)

L: God is the True Vine

**P: And we are the branches**

L: We remain in God

**P: Connected to bear fruit**

L: Everyone who loves is born of God

**P: This love casts out our fear**

L: The Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world

**P: All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord**

**\*Opening Hymn:** “Near to the Heart of God” #621 (vv.1-3)

**There is a place of quiet rest**

**Near to the heart of God**

**A place where sin cannot molest**

**Near to the heart of God**

**O Jesus, blest Redeemer**

**Sent from the heart of God**

**Hold us, who wait before thee**

**Near to the heart of God**

**There is a place of comfort sweet**

**Near to the heart of God**

**A place where we our Savior meet**

**Near to the heart of God**

**O Jesus, blest Redeemer**

**Sent from the heart of God**

**Hold us, who wait before thee**

**Near to the heart of God**

**There is a place of full release**

**Nearer to the heart of God**

**A place where all is joy and peace**

**Nearer to the heart of God**

**O Jesus blest Redeemer**

**Sent from the heart of God**

**Hold us, who wait before Thee**

**Nearer to the heart of God**

**\*Invocation and Lord’s Prayer**

L: Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. May we abide in his risen life, as we pray the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples…

**P: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come; your will be done in 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 Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

**\*Gloria Patri**

**Glory be to the Father​**

**And to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.**

**As it was in the beginning​**

**Is now and ever shall be**

**World without end**

**Amen. Amen**

**First Scripture Lesson:** Acts 8:26-40

Then 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.) 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 and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.

Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.”

So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.

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. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.”

The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?”

Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 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?”

He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. 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. 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.

**Prayer of Confession**

L: Abiding with the true vine means being connected to the core teachings. As we seek to love others, as God loved us, may we cast out all fear. Let us confess…

**P:** **I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; Who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried, and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one holy universal and apostolic church; I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

**Affirmation of Faith:** From Psalm 22

**P: From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD. May your hearts live forever! All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.**

**Communion**

**MINISTER: THE INVITATION**

You who truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who live in love and peace with

your neighbors and who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments

of God and walking in His holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this holy

sacrament to your comfort; and humbly kneeling, make your honest confession

to Almighty God.

**IN UNISON: THE GENERAL CONFESSION**

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all

people, we confess that we have sinned, and we are deeply grieved as we

remember the wickedness of our past lives. We have sinned against You, Your

holiness and Your love, and we deserve only Your indignation and anger.

We sincerely repent, and we are genuinely sorry for all wrongdoing and every

failure to do the things we should. Our hearts are grieved, and we acknowledge

that we are hopeless without Your grace.

Have mercy upon us.

Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father, for the sake of your son, our Savior, Jesus

Christ, who died for us.

Forgive us.

Cleanse us.

Give us strength to serve and please You in newness of life and to honor and praise

Your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**MINISTER: THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

O Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who with great mercy has promised

forgiveness to all who turn to You with hearty repentance and true faith, have

mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from our sins, make us strong and faithful in

all goodness and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**CONGREGATION: THE COLLECT**Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom

no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of the

Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You and worthily magnify Your holy name,

through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**MINISTER: THE SANCTUS**

It is always right and proper, and our moral duty, that we should at all times and

in all places give thanks to You, O Lord, holy Father, Almighty and Everlasting God.

Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the inhabitants of heaven, we

honor and adore Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying,

**CONGREGATION: THE SANCTUS (CONTINUED)**

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts!

Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.

Glory be to Thee, O Lord, most high. Amen

**MINISTER: THE PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNION**

We do not come to this Your table, O merciful Lord, with self-confidence and

pride, trusting in our own righteousness, but we trust in Your great and many

mercies. We are not worthy to gather the crumbs from under Your table. But You,

O Lord, are unchanging in Your mercy and Your nature is love; grant us, therefore,

God of mercy, God of grace, so to eat at this Your table that we may receive in

spirit and in truth the body of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, and the merits of His

shed blood, so that we may live and grow in His likeness and, being washed and

cleansed through His most precious blood, we may evermore live in Him and He

in us. Amen.

**MINISTER: THE PRAYER OF CONSECRATION OF THE ELEMENTS**

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who gave in love Your only Son, Jesus Christ,

to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who by His sacrifice, offered

once for all, did provide a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world,

we come now to Your table in obedience to Your Son, Jesus Christ, who in His holy gospel

commanded us to continue a perpetual memory of His precious death until He comes

again. Hear us, O merciful Father, we humbly ask, and grant that we, receiving this bread and this cup,

as He commanded and in the memory of His passion and death, may partake of His most blessed body and blood.

In the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to

His disciples, saying, “Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

In like manner, after supper He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink of

this, all of you, for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of

sins; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” Amen.

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting

life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed upon Him in your heart, by faith with

thanksgiving.

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your soul and body unto everlasting life.

Drink this in remembrance that Christ’s blood was shed for you and be thankful.

**MINISTER: THE BENEDICTION**

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love

of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and

the Holy Spirit, be yours now and forever. Amen.

**Hymn of Affirmation:** “I Need Thee Every Hour” #600 (vv.1-2,4)

**I need thee every hour, most gracious Lord**

**No tender voice like thine, can peace afford**

**I need thee, O I need thee**

**Every hour I need thee!**

**O bless me now, my Savior**

**I come to thee**

**I need thee every hour, stay thou near by**

**Temptations lose their power, when thou art nigh**

**I Need thee, O I need thee**

**Every hour I need thee!**

**O bless me now, my Savior**

**I come to thee**

**I need thee every hour, most Holy One**

**O make me Thine indeed, Thou blessed Son**

**Need thee, O I need thee**

**Every hour I need thee!**

**O bless me now, my Savior**

**I come to thee**

**New Testament Scripture Lesson:** 1 John 4:7-21

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. 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.

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. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God.

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. 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.

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. We love because he first loved us. 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. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

**Passing of the Peace**

**Prayers of the People**

L: Lord in Your Mercy…

**P: Hear our prayer.**

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

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. 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.

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. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

**Sermon**

**Prayer of Response**

**Hymn of Response:** “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus” #209 (vv.1-4)

**Tell me the stories of Jesus**

**I love to hear**

**Things I would ask Him to tell me**

**If He were here**

**Scenes by the wayside**

**Tales of the sea**

**Stories of Jesus**

**Tell them to me**

**First let me hear how the children**

**Stood 'round His knee**

**And I shall fancy His blessing**

**Resting on me**

**Words full of kindness**

**Deeds full of grace**

**All in the love-light**

**Of Jesus' face**

**Into the city I'd follow**

**The children's band**

**Waving a branch of the palm tree**

**High in my hand**

**One of His heralds**

**Yes, I would sing**

**Loudest hosannas**

**Jesus is King**

**Tell me in accents of wonder**

**How rolled the sea**

**Tossing the boat in a tempest**

**On Galilee**

**And how the Master**

**Ready and kind**

**Chided the billows**

**And hushed the wind**

**Invitation of Offering**

L:God is our source of life, and we remain fruitful as we abide with God. God’s love is perfected in us when we love one another. Give out of perfect love, as we collect this morning’s tithes and offerings.

**\*Doxology**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow**

**Praise Him, all creatures here below**

**Praise Him above, ye heavenly host**

**Praise Father Son, and Holy Ghost.**

**Amen.**

**\*Prayer**

**\*Closing Hymn:** “Because He Lives” #256 (vv.1-3)

**God sent His son, they called Him Jesus**

**He came to love, heal and forgive**

**He lived and died to buy my pardon**

**An empty grave is there to prove my savior lives**

**Because He lives, I can face tomorrow**

**Because He lives, all fear is gone**

**Because I know He holds the future**

**And life is worth the living, just because He lives**

**How sweet to hold a new born baby**

**And feel the pride and the joy that he gives**

**But greater still that calm assurance**

**This child can face uncertain days because**

**He lives**

**Because He lives, I can face tomorrow**

**Because He lives, all fear is gone**

**Because I know He holds the future**

**And life is worth the living, just because He lives**

**And then one day, I'll cross the river**

**I'll fight life's final war with pain**

**And then, as death gives way to victory**

**I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He reigns**

**Because He lives, I can face tomorrow**

**Because He lives, all fear is gone**

**Because I know He holds the future**

**And life is worth the living, just because He lives**

**\*Benediction**

L: God’s word is in us, and the Holy Spirit moves through us. All things belong to God, maker of heaven and earth. Dedicate your gifts and yourself for the life of all people, as you go in peace to love and serve. Amen.