



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF WANGARATTA
PAROCHIAL DISTRICT OF WANGARATTA WEST & THE WARBYS

11.00am Ante Communion
The Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 5th 2024

GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

Greeting

Open our lips, O Lord,
and we shall declare your praise.

This is the day that the Lord has made,
we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

The Sentence

Jesus said, 'You did not choose me, but I chose you.
And I appointed you to go and bear fruit.'

John 15.16.

Opening Hymn: AHB 305/TiS 385. tune: Darwall

1. **Now is eternal life,
if risen with Christ we stand,
in him to life reborn,
held firm within his hand;
no more we fear death's ancient dread,
in Christ arisen from the dead.**
2. **For God, the living God,
stooped down to share our state;
by death destroying death
Christ opened wide life's gate.
He lives, who died, he reigns on high;
who lives in him shall never die.**
3. **Unfathomed love divine,
come reign within my heart;
from you no depth or height,
not life or death can part;
my life with you in God shall be,
now and through all eternity.**

Let us pray.

**Father of glory, holy and eternal,
look upon us now in power and mercy.
May your strength overcome our weakness,
your radiance transform our blindness,
and your Spirit draw us to that love
shown and offered to us by your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The Confession & Absolution

In baptism we died with Christ,
so that as Christ was raised from the dead,
we might walk in newness of life.
Let us receive new life in him
as we confess our sins in penitence and faith

cf Romans 6.4

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
in thought, and word, and deed,
and in what we have failed to do.
Have mercy on us,
forgive us all that is past,
and grant that we may serve you
and live a new life to your glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The minister stands and declares God's forgiveness

God desires that none should perish,
but that all should turn to Christ, and live.
In response to his call we acknowledge our sins.
God pardons those who humbly repent, and truly
believe the gospel.
Therefore we have peace with God,
through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

In this is love, not that we loved God,
but that he loved us and sent his Son
to be the perfect offering for our sins.

1 John 4.10

All stand. The minister says

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.
His steadfast love endures for ever!

Grace and peace be with you
and also with you.

All may exchange a Greeting of Peace.

The Hymn of Praise is said or sung.

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you,
we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

the Collect

Loving God,
your Son has chosen us
and called us to be his friends:
give us grace to keep his commandments,
to love one another,
and to bear fruit which will abide;
through him who is the true vine,
the source of all our life,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles [10. 44-48]

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, 'Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

Hear the word of the Lord,
thanks be to God.

Psalm 98. AHB 196/TiS 56. Tune St Fulbert or St Magnus

- 1. O sing a new song to the Lord
for marvels he has done;
his right hand and his holy arm
the victory have won.**
- 2. His justice and his righteousness —
the Lord has made them known,
his constant love for Israel
all ends of the earth have seen.**
- 3. Let all the earth now to the Lord
send forth a joyful noise;
lift up your voice aloud to him,
sing praises and rejoice.**
- 4. With harp, with harp and voice of psalms
unto Jehovah sing;
let trumpets and the echoing horn
acclaim the Lord our King!**
- 5. Let seas with all their creatures roar,
the world and dwellers there,
and let the rivers clap their hands,
the hills their joy declare**
- 6. before the Lord: because he comes,
to judge the earth comes he;
he'll judge the world with righteousness,
his folk with equity.**

Scottish Psalter 1650 alt.
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A reading from the First Letter of John [5.1–12]

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth. There are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree. If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Hear the word of the Lord,
thanks be to God.

Gradual Hymn: TiS 390

**Refrain: *Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,
alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name.***

1. **Jesus is Lord of all the earth;
he is the king of creation. *Refrain***
2. **Spread the good news o'er all the earth:
Jesus has died and has risen. *Refrain***
3. **We have been crucified with Christ;
now we shall live for ever. *Refrain***
4. **God has proclaimed his gracious gift:
new life for all! *Alleluia! Refrain***
5. **Come, let us praise the living God,
joyfully sing to our Saviour. *Refrain***

Donald E. Fishel 1950-

The Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to John [15. 9-17]

Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus said to his disciples:

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

For the Gospel of the Lord,
praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us reaffirm our faith.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father;
from there he will come to judge
the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

A time for reflection

Offertory Hymn: AHB 401/TiS 641. tune, Suantrai.

1. **'This is my will, my one command,
that love should dwell among you all.
This is my will, that you should love
as I have shown-that I love you.**
2. **No greater love can be than this:
to choose to die to save one's friends.
You are my friends if you obey
what I command that you should do.**
3. **I call you now no longer slaves;
no slave knows all his master does.
I call you friends, for all I hear
my Father say you hear from me.**
4. **You chose not me, but I chose you,
that you should go and bear much fruit.
I chose you out that you in me
should bear much fruit that will abide.**
5. **All that you ask my Father dear
for my name's sake you shall receive.
This is my will, my one command,
that love should dwell in each, in all.'**

James Quinn 1919-

Words from Praise for all Seasons (1994) by permission Cassell plc, London

Offertory Prayer

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.
Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.
Accept and use our offerings for your glory
and for the service of your kingdom.

Blessed be God for ever.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us pray for the world and for the Church.

Risen Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

As our Saviour Christ has taught us we are confident to pray:

**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.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Notices may be given at this point

Concluding Hymn: AHB 567/TiS 631 [tune: Abbot's Leigh]

- 1. Father, Lord of all creation,
ground of being, life and love;
height and depth beyond description
only life in you can prove:
you are mortal life's dependence:
thought, speech, sight are ours by grace;
yours is every hour's existence,
sovereign Lord of time and space.**
- 2. Jesus Christ, the Man for Others,
we, your people, make our prayer:
let us love as sisters, brothers,
all whose burdens we can share.
Where your name binds us together
you, Lord Christ, will surely be;
where no selfishness can sever
there your love we all may see.**
- 3. Holy Spirit, rushing, burning,
wind and flame of Pentecost,
fill our hearts afresh with yearning
to regain what we have lost.
May your love unite our action,
nevermore to speak alone:
God, in us abolish faction,
and through us your love make known.**

David Stewart Cross 1928–89

Let us pray

Lord Jesus Christ,

**send us out with confidence in your word
to tell the world of your saving acts,
and bring glory to your name. Amen.**

May the Lord bless you and keep you;

May the Lord make his face to shine upon you,
and be gracious to you.

May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

In the name of Christ. Amen.

Alleluia! Alleluia!

The Sixth Sunday of Easter
Acts 10:44–48; 1 John 5:1–6; John 15:9–17

The desire for certainty goes very deep, and all of today's readings look at that longing with sympathy, though the answers they give are as challenging as they are reassuring.

In the Gospel, Jesus is at last giving his disciples 'commandments'. If the disciples have been listening to Jesus throughout the weeks and months before this, they must have some inkling already about how Jesus interprets God's commandments to his people. Underlying the great commandments given by God to Moses is the imperative that his people should show by their lives what their God is like. This commandment Jesus has fulfilled utterly. Through all his life he has kept the commandment to love God, be loved by God and to show God's love, and that is the commandment that he now passes on to his disciples.

If the commandments given to Moses have proved difficult to interpret and fulfil, then Jesus's retelling of them has proved even harder. How do we know if we have fulfilled this great command to love one another? The example that Jesus gives, of his own willingness to die for his friends, is not a comforting one. Is that, then, to be the measure of love? Well, the Gospel suggests, it may need to be sometimes. But the verses that directly follow the giving of this commandment suggest that there are other interim measures too. One is the insistent changing of roles that is so characteristic of Jesus's teaching. 'I have called you friends', he says, 'because I have made known to you everything that I heard from my Father.' The sharing that characterizes Father and Son is extended to us. We are not simply issued with instructions that we must follow without needing to understand them. Instead we are invited to God's table, to eat and discuss and share in his great plan for the world. So one mark of our 'love' for one another and God will presumably be our willingness to extend this invitation to others. 'Come and join us at God's table, come and help us to work out with God what to do next.' If God makes friends, not servants, so should Christians.

The second measure of our success at 'loving' that these verses suggest is 'bearing fruit'. Bringing others to share in the life and love of God will make us more loving. Anyone who has had any experience in Christian

evangelism, whether in word or deed or both, would I think agree with that. It is deeply challenging and enlarging to see the word of God at work in the lives of others, and to see that before you and your feeble attempt at love got anywhere near the situation, God's love was already at work.

That is certainly the experience of Peter and his hearers as they watch Cornelius and his household respond to the love of God. They hear these strangers praising God long before they have gone through all the proper forms, and they realize that their own love for the Gentiles has been much smaller than God's. If they were looking for certainty about the next step in relation to the Gentiles, then they are given it abundantly. They see the Holy Spirit poured out with unmistakable power—and notice that that power is proved not just by the use of tongues, but by the praise of God. Of course, the certainty experienced by these witnesses is not easily transmitted to those who weren't present, as you will discover if you read the next chapter of Acts or Paul's letter to the Galatians.

1 John combines both love and the Holy Spirit in its explanation of Christian certainty. Like the Gospel, 1 John suggests that the commandment we are given—the thing we have to do to know that we are in the right—is to love God and love each other. Like Acts, it suggests that it is the Holy Spirit rather than our own innate discernment that leads us to spot the love of God at work. 1 John also reintroduces the sombre note of suffering sounded by the Gospel. The cross of Christ is not a past thing that has been superseded by the praise, joy and certainty of the Spirit. The Spirit witnesses constantly to the truth of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus which, in its totality, is the way of God's victory in the world.

Today's readings imply that certainty comes through sharing our faith, praising God and loving one another. Each one of those activities makes the others more and more possible and natural, and brings us closer and closer to the life of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jane Williams, (2005). *Lectionary Reflections: Year B* (pp. 66–67). SPCK.

On back page: Wright, N. T. (2002). *Twelve Months of Sundays: Reflections on Bible Readings, Year B* (pp. 64–66). Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

The Sixth Sunday of Easter, N.T. Wright.

'His commandments are not burdensome.' Hard to take, that, in a world where *all* commandments are burdensome, where anybody telling anyone else what to do—even God telling his creatures what to do—is felt as an imposition, a belittling or patronizing attempt to keep people down.

But John, let alone Jesus, won't let us get away with that. Loving God means keeping his commandments; and the greatest commandment is love. Circular? Maybe, but not viciously so. The upward widening spiral of Christian commitment uproots us from the swampy ground of the romantic movement, where everything that is not generated by our own 'feelings' is somehow 'inauthentic', and replants us in the firm soil of God's conquest of 'the world'. This is where the vine can grow best, and where its branches can bear fruit that will last. This is where prayer to the Father in the name of the Son will surely be answered.

But what does it mean to pray in the name of the Son? Jesus Christ came 'not with water only, but with water and blood'. He was not, that is, simply a human being who had become 'divine' at his baptism, but was the full Son of God, supremely in his death. Even so, those who believe this complete gospel are to be marked not by a super-spirituality which will take them out of the real world, but by a Jesus-spirituality in which moral effort and world-conquest go hand in hand. 'His yoke is easy and his burden light'; yes, but that doesn't mean that yokes and burdens are themselves a bad thing. In that context (read on a little in John 15 and you'll see how relevant it is) specific prayer is neither selfish nor whimsical, but rather the expression of the life of God already flowing through the branches of the vine.

What matters, then, is the Spirit. Not a general religious feeling, or a sense of 'the spiritual' as opposed to 'the material', but the Spirit of Jesus, known by bearing witness to Jesus, recognized, as was the risen Jesus himself, through the marks of world-conquering suffering. The Spirit brings people into a partnership with Jesus, a friendship where commandments are neither arbitrarily imposed nor obeyed without comprehension, but are part of a shared strategy to which all are gladly signed up.

Conquest of the world is not a negative thing, like the Vietnam soldiers who claimed they had 'to destroy the village in order to save it'. It is a conquest of the present structures and power-systems of the world, through which humans are enslaved. In the early Church the most obvious of these was the sky-high wall that separated Jews from Gentiles. But when Peter preached at Cornelius's house, the Gentiles heard the gospel message, and found that, believing it, new languages of praise came naturally. The wall came tumbling down. Water and Spirit testified that the commandment of love was not burdensome.