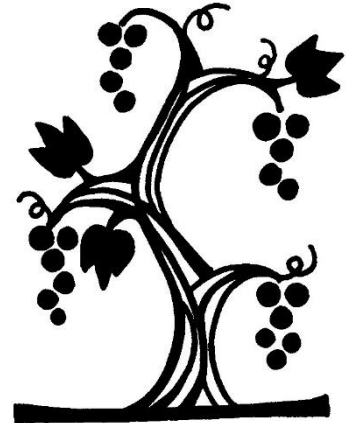


HAEBEA Home Worship: No.62 – 5th Sunday of Easter

2nd May 2021 – Mr John Ellis

Opening Prayer

True God, true vine,
strength of all our being,
giver of all good gifts,
healer of all that is broken:
we worship you;
we glorify you;
we rejoice in you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.



*I am the vine
you are the branches*

Reading: John 15.1-8

Reflection

Our reading today takes us to look at the vineyard. By saying He was the vine, Jesus was employing an image very familiar to His followers. He often used elements from nature to illustrate His teaching – water, seeds, soil, wheat, fig trees, flowers and birds. Grapes have always been central to Israel's agriculture and economy and were found everywhere. In fact, the grapevine was the emblem of Israel, much like the Bald Eagle is for the USA. Grapes appeared on coins during the period between Malachi and Matthew. At the time of Jesus, a golden vine hung over the entrance to the Temple.

In our culture, it would be as if Jesus were walking through a field of corn and drawing life lessons from them. But the image of the vine and its fruit has far deeper spiritual symbolism. The grapevine represented Israel's fruitfulness in doing God's work on earth. Psalm 80:8: "You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it."

God's desire has always been for His people to be fruitful. This goes all the way back to Genesis 1:28 when He said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth..." This call to be fruitful was repeated and reinforced after the flood in Genesis 9:1: "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth...'"

Since a disciple must exhibit fruit which comes from faithfully following Jesus, a Christ-follower who does not produce fruit is a contradiction in terms.

An unforgettable display of Christ's expectations for fruit-bearing followers is found in Matthew 21:19. One day Jesus went for a walk "and seeing a fig tree by the wayside, He went to it and found nothing on it but only leaves. And He said to it, 'May no fruit ever come from you again!' And the fig tree withered at once." It is unacceptable and unnatural for a follower of Christ to be unfruitful.

We need to ask Christ to take our lives and use them because apart from Christ the Vine we are nothing and can do nothing. If we faithfully follow Jesus, He will make us fruitful.

I close with John 15:8: “my Father’s glory is shown by bearing much fruit, and in this way you become my disciples.. When we faithfully follow Him, we will intentionally help others to do the same and that’s fruit that will last.

Intercession Prayer

Gracious God, we bring to you in prayer
those denied the opportunity to grow and to bear fruit;
those whose growth has been stunted by abuse and violence;
those whose fruit has been bruised by criticism and bullying;
those who have been uprooted by prejudice and oppression;
those whose branches of hope and dreams
have been callously cast aside;
those whose lives have not been pruned
by the wisdom and kindness of friends and teachers.
Bless and nurture them all.
In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hymn: I the Lord of sea and sky

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zr9SMm1gIn>

1 I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I, who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord.
Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord,
if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

2 I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people’s pain;
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my word to them.
Whom shall I send?

3 I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts are satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?

Daniel L. Schutte (b. 1947)

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Closing Prayer

As we leave this service,
may we abide with God,
grafted and rooted and pruned.
Lord, help us to stay connected to one another and to you,
bearing fruit wherever your love takes us. Amen.