

Sermon for the 3rd S a Easter Jubilate: John 15:1-8

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 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. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 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. "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. 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. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (Joh 15:1-8 NIV)

Dear friends of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ: He is alive and well + Hallelujah + He is not dead, but the very source and centre of life. The grave could not hold him, but had to let him proceed victoriously on the 3rd day. He is enthroned at the right hand of God the heavenly Father - lives and reigns with all authority in heaven and on earth. Death, evil and all devils could not hold him down, but were conquered decisively and for good. That's not a theory, that's not just a quaint idea, but the most crucial and decisive reality there is. - thanks to the resurrection reality of our Lord and our God. This truly living Christ is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit too. Not three God's, but rather he is one holy God over all and everything and there is none other than him. The one, who died for us on the cross is the very same, who is now the almighty ruler and king of all. Praise and glory be to him always +

This one and only Lord likens himself to the true vine. The origin and source of life. He is the creator of heaven and earth and of all visible and invisible. And all and everything grows from, in and through him. His breath of life breaths in us, it is his vital power that makes our hearts pump and our organs function properly and thus it is he that is in us and makes us to be, what we are - living human beings, truly creatures of the one creator. It is only in the connection with him and through his living giving blood in our veins that we survive, yes, thrive and flourish according to his good will and mercy. Cut off from him, we fade and wither, decrease and die in no time at all. It is like any flower of the field that is blooming most lavishly, but when it is cut off, it dries out and withers like plain grass and nothing is left of its earlier beauty and magnificence. It's worthless, thrown aside and gone like hay, which has no other use than to be burnt or cast aside. That's true of every

branch of the vine too. Without the life-giving sap from the vine, the branches wither, shrivel up and disappear from one day to the next. No fruit, no purpose, no future. However remaining in the vine, the branch flourishes and thrives, it is green, firm, lovely and flowering bearing fruit in its season: plump, juicy and oh so fruity too. The most delicious fruit of the vine is a truly heavenly gift. Just as it is supposed to be.

Our Lord says that we are connected to him like living branches in him the true and good vine. This is not something we ought to strive for. This is not something we should accomplish today, tomorrow or in the coming weeks or at least before the end of our lives. No, this is not a goal set before us, but our point of departure. That is our firm foundation. That is the grounding of our life. That is why we are alive and well. Thanks be to him our most merciful and gracious creator. But there is even more. Therefore thanks also to his most holy Word and thanks to his most precious institution of holy and effective Baptism. See, his holy Word is creative and does, what it says. And he say's affirmatively and most comfortingly, he is the true vine and we are the branches. That holds true even if you don't see too much evidence of this in your life, because through his powerful word, he does create our living reality. It is like he says it is. His word is the truth. He is faithful. He surely does it. That is the blessed truth of our life and all reality. And to cement this even further in our poor hearts and faint beings, he reminds us regularly of our initial baptism, when we were joined inseparably with him and his divine corporate reality by his most gracious will, love and creative ingenuity. See, in holy Baptism he buried us into his own death. Through his effective operation in holy Baptism we are effectively buried into the death, grave and deepest cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus we and our sinful, faithless and rebellious nature and old human being are truly dead, buried and long-gone history by the efficacious judgement of God. Yet this is just one side of the coin or story. The other is the much better side, because it reveals that through this very same baptism into Christ we are graciously reborn, created anew by God's new act of creation, given a new existence by his mercy and made into living beings, which are joined and embodied into his resurrection and made one with the new glorious existence of the same risen Lord Jesus Christ. Now already his righteous personality and divine live pulses in our new being making us alive in Jesus Christ - and at the same time deadens us to sin, proclaiming us dead to death and judging us dead to the devil too. It's no longer us, but Christ in us. So - the old is past, the new has come. Thanks be to God, who has called us to this new and so precious existence through the most holy gospel of his dear son and our Lord and

saviour Jesus Christ. That is why the Lord calls his disciples "clean", "purified", "sanctified", made holy, divine, God's own and his race too. That is your privileged status - thanks to God's grace and mercy. Praise and glorify his name for this miracle and wonder every day of your life.

Just like any branch depends entirely on its base - like the wild olive tree, which is plugged and grafted into the old, domesticated and fruitful base of the true Israel and is carried, born and enlivened by it, so we also can't boast that we carry or bear the vine. We don't give anything to our precious Lord. Rather he carries us and all our sins, sorrows and burdens, bears with us most graciously and continues to invigorate us with love, faith and hope day in day out and all out of fatherly goodness, compassion and mercy. He carries us without tiring and grants us all and everything we need - and much more. We are sole receivers. He is the one and only giver and the most precious gift himself too. He the creator, we the creatures. He God, we his human beings. He the vine, we the branches. Without him, we can do nothing. Without him, we are less than nothing. Torn away from him, broken loose from his goodness, left to our own devices, independent and isolated, we wither, die and are no more.

Still the good news is that our good Lord from the very beginning never wanted to be separated from us. He always wanted to be near and with us all the days of our life. That's his innermost desire and goal. And that is why he has always strengthened the ties between us. He does so through his means of grace, through his personal input, seeking us, staying with us, nourishing us, nurturing us and letting us flourish and bear good fruit in season, which according to his grace and good will is not just a few weeks in the year, but all year round like in paradise of all and in his very wholesome presence, which we will behold finally when we come to where he has prepared our final destination and home and he will be all in all.

It is very important for us to know that the son Jesus Christ is not alone in this good work of our salvation. No, the heavenly Father is of the same mind and frame. He too does all that we remain in him and he in us and that nothing comes between us. He's the good gardener, who takes best care of his garden and creation. From the very beginning he wanted you to be part of it and him too. That was his idea in creating you from the start. He predestined you to be part of his godly being, a living member of his one holy Christian Church, in whom the divine blood pulsates - shed for the forgiveness of your sin and as the medium for eternal life and blessed salvation. That is why both the Father and the Son

send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to sanctify us through his most precious means of grace to maintain in us the true faith, which will believe that our living God saves, redeems and justifies us through the forgiveness of all our sins for Christ's sake. He quickens us through his gracious words of divine promise, granting us the surety, that in him, we are no longer lost or condemned, but alive, forgiven and sanctified to bear good and much fruit in due season and to his glory and praise.

And as if to underline and confirm this, he adds: *Ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you!* That is why we pray confidently and in good Spirit: "Grant dear God and Father that we will remain in you always. That we shall remain steadfast and faithful in your holy Word, which is the truth and has the power to save all, who believe it and that we will also live according to your most gracious and holy will, which seeks nothing else but the best for us and our neighbour in Jesus Christ our one Lord and God, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

We pray: *Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Easter mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Lord God almighty, every year you renew the face of the earth, and it is your will to renew the world fallen into sin and death. Grant that we may discern in your Son the dawning of the true life and in him share in this new creation; for he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Dr. K.P.P.W.Weber: Murrayfield 2015