



**Midweek Service of Word and Prayer
Grace Lutheran Church
Lincoln, Nebraska**

Opening Dialog

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. **Alleluia!**

We are enlightened by the brightness of his rising. **Alleluia!**

Death's darkness has no power over us. **Alleluia!**

Introduction to Sunday

This Sunday's image of how the risen Christ shares his life with us is the image of the vine. Christ the vine and we the branches are alive in each other, in the mystery of mutual abiding described in the gospel and the first letter of John. Baptism makes us a part of Christ's living and life-giving self and makes us alive with Christ's life. As the vine brings food to the branches, Christ feeds us at his table. We are sent out to bear fruit for the life of the world. So, what fruit will you bear this week for the life of the world around you?

Prayer of the Day

O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. Nourish our life in his resurrection, that we may bear the fruit of love and know the fullness of your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Readings

Acts 8:26

²⁶An 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.)

Why a wilderness road? What does this teach us about our faith? What is your wilderness road?

1 John 4

⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

God is known through love. What does this say about how we express what we believe in the world today?

John 15

⁴Abide 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.

How do you abide in Christ? Is faith what you know or who you know? Maybe both?

Reflection

Connected for Life

A parent stands at the bus stop on the first day of school with a kindergarten student. Another parent lingers in the doorway of a first-year dorm after unloading the final box from the car. These parents are entering new times they will not be present to help their children make some important life choices, and words of advice slip from their lips—eat your sandwich before your dessert, share with others, don't drink and drive, remember who you are. After years of preparation, their children step toward greater independence.

Jesus lingers with the disciples before his death and prepares them for the time when he will no longer be present day to day to help them make their way in the world. Words slip from his mouth: "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). These are difficult words as the disciples try to make sense of Jesus' impending death and the promise of his continued presence.

"Apart from me you can do nothing" may also be a difficult word for a self-reliant, individualistic culture such as our own, focused on personal achievement and success. God is the vine grower, Jesus the vine, and we the branches, who, separated from the life-giving vine, can do nothing.

Yet, these are gracious, gospel words from Jesus. He's been preparing his disciples for years to take this step. These are words that point not toward individualistic, self-reliant independence but toward dependence on the one whose life defies death and whose perfect love casts out all fear. Connected to the vine, these branches are given a death-defying life free from fear. These are gracious, gospel words from Jesus that point to a community nourished by this life-giving vine and bearing fruit for the sake of the world.

Lord's Prayer (together)

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.

Apostle's Creed (together)

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 again; he ascended to the living, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and 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.

Responsive Prayer

Show us your mercy, O God,

and grant us your salvation.

Give us the joy of your saving help again,

and sustain us with your bountiful Spirit.

Give peace in all the world;

for only in you can we live in safety.

Keep the nations under your care,

and guide us in the way of justice and truth.

Let your way be known upon earth;

your saving health among all nations.

Let not the needy be forgotten,

nor the hope of the poor be taken away.

Create in us a clean heart, O God,

and sustain us with your Holy Spirit.

Lord, hear my prayer,

and let my cry come before you.

Closing Prayer

O God, in you we live and move and have our being. Guide and govern us every day by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but remember that always we are walking in your promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Blessing

Almighty God (+) bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.