

Order of Worship for 5-5-2024 (Confirmation 8:30)

P: Alleluia! Jesus Christ is risen!

C: He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Opening Hymn: *“With High Delight Let Us Unite”* – Hymn #483

Confession and Forgiveness: page 151

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm:

P: A little while, and you will see Me no longer;

C: and again a little while, and you will see Me.

P: I will extol you, my God and King,

C: and bless Your name forever and ever.

P: Every day I will bless You

C: and praise Your name forever and ever.

P: The LORD is gracious and merciful,

C: slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

P: All Your works shall give thanks to You, O LORD,

C: and all Your saints shall bless You!

P: My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,

C: and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.

**ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: A little while, and you will see Me no longer;

C: and again a little while, and you will see Me.

Kyrie (Lord, Have Mercy): page 152

Hymn of Praise: *“This Is the Feast”* - page 155

Salutation: page 156

Prayer of the Day

P: O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

First Reading: Acts 8:26–40 (Lego scenes by Confirmands – 8:30 only read by pastor)

P: Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Rise and go toward the south to the road that

goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is a desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over and join this chariot.” So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” And he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to come up and sit with 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 before its shearer is silent so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.”

And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle: 1 John 5:1–8

R: Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia and Verse: p. 156

Holy Gospel: John 15:9–17

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 15th chapter

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] “As the Father has loved me, so have I 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. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon Hymn: “*Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me*” – **Hymn #722**

Sermon: “*Abiding in Love*” - **John 15:9–17**

Last week was the NFL draft. The Chicago Bears got Caleb Williams with their number 1 pick; the latest in a long line of quarterbacks that Bears fans have hoped would lead them to a Super Bowl. 39 quarterbacks have started a game for the Bears in the last 34 years. The last one, Justin Fields, went to the Pittsburgh Steelers in an offseason trade. He never lived up to the hype he came onto the team with, and had to deal with the constant changes in head coaches and offensive coordinators, leaving him constantly having to learn new systems.

The Steelers, on the other hand, have been a model of consistency. They’ve only had three head coaches in the past 55 years. They haven’t had a losing season in the last 20 years, though they’ve remained right around .500 recently. Why? Because instead of the constant change, they allow time for coaches to develop players, to build the team they want to play the system they want.

That ability for consistency is part of what it means as we hear Jesus talking with his disciples about remaining and abiding. Jesus has been teaching them for the last three years, and now is preparing them for his departure. These verses are part of the words of Jesus on Maundy Thursday, on the night when he would be betrayed. They also come in a time of uncertainty and change. In the midst of that uncertainty, of not knowing what would happen next, Jesus tells them to remain in his love. How can they abide or remain in his love when everything was going to change?

The answer to the question of their uncertainty, and our uncertainty, is found in that word, remain. Remaining is not something that is temporary. It is because of God’s abiding, remaining

love for us, shown in Christ's death on the cross, which allows us to follow his commands and remain in his love.

Connection is what we see in the Gospel lesson from John 15. The preceding verses are where Jesus describes himself as the Vine, and his followers as branches. It's a great picture of how we grow and bear fruit when we are connected to Christ. It's a great reminder of the importance of connection, how we need it.

When John describes Jesus' last supper, Jesus talks about himself like a vine, and his disciples, his followers, as branches. That tells us that in the midst of change, there's something firm that we can hold onto. Abiding, remaining in love is not something that is temporary. Like a vine that takes years to get established before it produces fruit, abiding takes time and patience. It is because of God's abiding, remaining love for us, shown in Christ's death on the cross, which we abide in his love. And it is through God's love for you that those being confirmed will remain faithful to the promises made today and we will all know that God will be with us wherever we go.

After sharing these words with his disciples, after sharing a last meal with them and washing their feet, Jesus took them to the garden, where he continued to pray for them, knowing what was to come. It was in the Garden of Gethsemane that Jesus was arrested, and separated from his disciples. It was there that the disciples scattered and separated from each other. But after his death and resurrection, Jesus brought them back together. Jesus reminded and showed his disciples that their connections to each other and to the Father would be restored and repaired.

It's good to remember that we have that connection, because we live in a world that threatens to pull everything apart. Increased polarization and isolation and disconnection. At times you've felt unmoored and ungrounded, unsure of what happens next.

Without God, none of the promises the confirmands are about to make could be kept. Without God, sin and stubbornness would threaten to separate everyone and end love. Without God, nothing would stay together.

Thankfully, God is here, too. It is God who holds all things together, who joins you together, and will keep you together. As you face the challenges of the future, God promises to be faithful to you. He died for you, after all. And He continually offers His forgiveness to those He loves. As He forgives you, you forgive those around you. God's work is to create and preserve and restore. God's work of forgiveness restores relationships. And so we rejoice today. And we rejoice that we are connected to each other, and to God.

Three eighth graders will confirm their faith today. Confirmation can seem like a graduation. It's the end of having to come to Wednesday afternoon classes. It's the end of learning about the catechism as homework and classwork. But it's the beginning of making your faith your own. It's not the end of learning. It's a step on the journey. As they confess and confirm their faith, they will pledge to remain connected to Jesus, even in the face of death. That sounds hard, difficult, even impossible. But hope is found in how they answer; "I do with the help of God." The hope is found in realizing that they and we can't do that on our own. No, we can only do so with the help and grace of God.

It's also time for many students at Iowa State to be graduating, or at least heading off for the summer, to internships or back home. That can be a time of disconnection, too, having to plant roots in a new place, finding connection in a situation that is only temporary. But Jesus' command to abide and remain in His word and love applies even there.

How do we remain connected to Jesus? How do we grow in Christ? Through God's Word and through Holy Communion. By reading your Bible at home, hearing God's Word read and proclaimed in church, and participating in a Bible study with other Christians. The other way that you stay connected to Jesus is through Holy Communion. Holy Communion keeps us connected to Christ. Baptism and God's Word connect us to Jesus in the first place. God's Word and the Lord's Supper keep us connected and growing in Christ, looking outside of ourselves to God and those around us.

Consistency helps, just as putting in the work in the weight room helps improve your strength, putting in the miles running improves your speed and endurance, and putting in your time with the books improves your knowledge and study habits. Consistently doing those little things adds up over time. It applies in athletics. It applies in academics. It applies in your work. It applies in your faith life, too.

Spring is a time of new life. It's a time of change and departures, of endings and beginnings. Like the disciples, we're not alone. We know the Holy Spirit is at work in the world and in us. We are connected through Jesus with the Father, and we're connected through Jesus to each other. We are able to pray for one another, and comfort one another. But we know we're not alone, and we're loved by a God who will never let us go. That's a wonderful feeling.

Apostle's Creed: (11 AM)

Confirmation Hymn: "Thine Forever, God of Love" – Hymn #687 (8:30)

Rite of Confirmation (8:30)

Prayer on Love:

P: "If I speak in the tongues of men and angels, but have not love:

C: I am a noisy gong or a clanging symbol.

P: And if I have the prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge:

C: And if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

P: If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned:

C: But have not love, I gain nothing.

P: Love and patient and kind; it is not jealous or boastful.

C: It is not arrogant or rude

P: Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful.

C: It does not rejoice in the wrong, but rejoices in the right.

P: Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

C: Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will, pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

P: For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect.

C: But when the perfect comes, the imperfect will cease.

P: When I was a child, I spoke like a child. I thought like a child, I resounded like a child.

C: When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

P: For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

C: Now I know in part, then I shall understand fully even as I have been fully understood.

P: So faith, hope, love abide, these three.

C: But the greatest of these is love.

P: Lord Jesus, You've opened for us the gate of heaven given to all who believe in You the gift of eternal life.

C: We know that we are only beggars at the gate, but You have made us into the children of God.

P: We do not want to follow You any longer from a distance, Lord. We want to follow You on the way of love—up close and very, very personal!

C: So open our lives to Your Word that we maybe hearing disciples. Open our lives to Your heart that we may be caring disciples. Open our lives to Your voice that we may be witnessing disciples.

(other concerns)

P: And most of all, teach us to love, Lord, as You have first loved us, that we may rejoice not in the wrong, but the right.

C: Hear our prayer, O Lord, and make us Your disciples of love. Amen.

Share Our Ministry

Offering and Voluntary

Service of the Sacrament

Preface: p. 160

P: It is truly good, right, and proper that we should in all times and in all places give thanks to You, almighty God, heavenly Father, for You have loved us so much by sending Your Son, Christ Jesus, into this world to die on the cross which we deserved. In Him we have the power to love as He first loved us and to remain in that love as You move us to love each other. Therefore with angels and all the army of heaven we praise and make great Your holy name, evermore praising You and singing . . .

Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) p. 161

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

P: We give thanks to You, Lord God, for the gift of Christ Jesus who loved us so that we can love one another. Send Your Holy Spirit to that we remain in You by remaining in Christ Jesus. Bless us through the meal Jesus offers to us of His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Hear us as we pray the prayer He taught us . . .

Lord's Prayer and The Words of Our Lord: p. 162

Pax Domini (The Peace of the Lord) and Agnus Dei: p. 163

Distribution: “Father Welcomes” - Hymn #605

“Jesus Sinners Doth Receive” – Hymn #609

Song after Communion: “Thank the Lord” - page 164

Prayer after Communion

P: O God, the source of love, lead us by the inspiration of our Holy Spirit to think of those things which come from love and by Your goodness do them, through Your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing: (pastor)

C: Amen

Graduate Recognition

Affirmation of Vocation

Closing Hymn: “Abide, O Dearest Jesus” – Hymn #919