

Dear friends

I hope you are all well, and in a position to enjoy a Bank Holiday weekend.

Our services today, for the Fifth Sunday of Easter, are at Merevale at 11am and Baxterley at 4.30pm. I look forward to seeing some of you at one of those services, and for those who will not be in church we have a video act of worship again, this time filmed in Kingsbury Church.

<https://youtu.be/dfgFlise4so>



## Worship for the Fifth Sunday of Easter

A service for the Fifth Sunday of Easter, filmed in the Church of St Peter and St Paul, Kingsbury. The reflection is on the words of Jesus "I am the vine", i...  
[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/dfgFlise4so)

I am also attaching the text of my sermon on John 15.1-8.

With my prayers and best wishes

John

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## Reflection for Fifth Sunday of Easter (2 May 2021)

### Acts 8.26-end John 15.1-8

The bells of All Saints' Church in the Devon fishing village of Brixham ring out every day with the tune of a hymn; and it is the same tune every time, 'Abide with me', written in 1847 by the then vicar of that church, Henry Francis Lyte. It is said that the words of the hymn came to him in just half an hour, as he sat and watched the sun setting over the bay. I must confess (and no disrespect to those for whom the hymn means a great deal) 'Abide with me' has never been one of my favourites. It's not only that it can sometimes come over as just a bit too gloomy – I am actually quite fond of miserable music – nor is it simply that I'm not keen on the rather negative attitude towards change in some verses of the hymn, which treat God and by extension the church as the last bastion of changelessness against the inevitable change and decay everywhere else.

No. My real problem with Henry Francis Lyte's most famous work is with the prayer at its very heart. "Lord, abide with me". What's wrong with that, you might think? Surely we want the Lord to abide with us, especially at times of darkness and dismay? Well, yes; but if we know anything about God, it is that he will, anyway. The Lord's faithfulness to us, his promise to abide with us, through thick and thin, is not in doubt. The repeated plea in the hymn 'Abide with me' starts to smack of desperation and insecurity, rather than the assurance of faith.

To put it bluntly, 'Abide with me' gets it the wrong way round. The Lord will abide with us, no matter what. The question is, will we abide with him? The beautiful word 'abide' recurs several times in today's Gospel reading from St John's Gospel, and the emphasis is always that way round. "Abide in me as I abide in you", Jesus says. "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." It is sometimes translated, "Remain in me", but I think "abide" is a much richer, stronger word, even if it is one that we don't often use outside of Reverend Lyte's famous hymn. It is closely linked to the word "abode"; it speaks of dwelling, of making a home. Jesus abides with us and in us, and in our world; it is the truth of the incarnation, as expressed in the prologue to John's Gospel: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory".

There is a mutual indwelling; Jesus abides in us, and we are called to abide in him. This is where the image of the vine is so strong. "I am the vine; you are the branches", says Jesus, but the two are so interconnected that in some ways we can scarcely distinguish between vine and branches. Jesus, as vine, represents the stock that is in the ground, from which the rest of the plant can draw its nutrients and nourishment.

Last Sunday, our focus was on the words of Jesus, "I am the good shepherd"; and the words "I am the vine" are similar in the way that they both draw on ancient scriptural images for the people of God. In the Old Testament, Israel is depicted as the sheep of God's pasture, but also as the vineyard, that God has planted and tended. At times, the prophets draw on that image to deliver a message of judgement. If the vineyard does not produce its expected crop of sweet and luscious grapes, then what else is the owner to do but to rip it up and start again? In the New Testament, St Paul adapts the image in a different and more hopeful way, and speaks of how Gentile believers have been grafted on to the stem, as new branches on an ancient stock, and have become part of the vine, alongside those who have always belonged.

Whether new branches or old, we all belong to the vine for as long as we abide in the Lord. All that we are, all that we do, all that we may achieve, is dependent on that connection. We have no need to pray to Jesus, "Abide with me". He will. He has promised and does not break his promises. Pray rather that we may always abide in him and bear the fruit that comes from being a part of God's true vine.

## Keep Singing from Sarah

Dear all,

Hope you are all well and have had a good week.

Please find some links below for music to accompany 2nd May 2021 - 5th Sunday of Easter.

9 - Alleluia, alleluia! hearts to heaven - [LUX EOI-ALLELUYA! ALLELUYA! - YouTube](#)

332 - I, the Lord of sea and sky - [I, The Lord Of Sea And Sky - YouTube](#)

408 - Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour - [Lord, Enthroned in Heavenly Splendour - Peterborough Cathedral - YouTube](#)

428 - Love divine, all loves excelling - [Stainer: Love Divine, All Loves Excelling - YouTube](#)

and some more...

The Call (Come, my Way) Vaughan Williams - [Vaughan Williams: The Call \(from Five Mystical Songs\) - YouTube](#)

I am the bread Hoare - [I Am the Bread of Life - Toolan | Notre Dame Folk Choir - YouTube](#)

Light of the lonely pilgrim's heart - [KCC - Light of the Lonely Pilgrim's Heart \(2021\) - YouTube](#)

Vinea mea electa Poulenc - [4 Motets pour un temps de pénitence, FP 97: II. Vinea mea electa \(Tendrement et... - YouTube](#)

Come and find rest in Christ - [Come and Find Rest in Christ - YouTube](#)

In the Lord I'll be ever thankful - [In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful \(El Senyor\) - YouTube](#)

We hope you are all enjoying the bank holiday weekend. We are looking forward to the break and have fingers crossed for good weather so that we can do some work in the garden, we have plans to build a new fence! The girls are busy once again with after school clubs and Emily is excited to start ball crew training for the Nottingham Open tennis in the coming week.

We have navigated another online parents evening for Phoebe and are super proud of how she has settled into secondary school in such a difficult year.

We hope you are all doing ok and maybe even feeling a little optimistic as things slowly continue to open up for us here. Please could I ask you to spare a thought for my colleagues and friends at work this week as many of them have family, parents and friends in India for whom things are not so good at the moment.

We are looking forward to seeing many of you soon and sending love to those who we may not see yet.

Stay safe and well

Love from Sarah, Tom, Emily and Phoebe xxxx