

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

VINE

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

The vine (John 15:1-8)

The Sundays of Easter invite us to encounter and to engage with the risen Christ, and to open our eyes to who Jesus is. John's Gospel offers a series of helpful clues in the 'I am' sayings of Jesus. Today's Gospel reading opens with Jesus claiming, 'I am the true vine'. In the Old Testament the people of Israel are described as God's vine. God planted the vine and expects fruit from the vine. John's Gospel develops the image of Jesus as the true vine nurturing the branches. Those who are part of that true vine bear much fruit. Those who are not part of that true vine cannot bear fruit. The vine symbolises the source of life in Christ.

Our image to stimulate reflection on this 'I am' saying of Jesus is *vine*.

Core extract from the Gospel (John 15.1-4; for reflection throughout the week)

Jesus said, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower.
He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit.
Every branch that bears fruit
he prunes to make it bear more fruit.
You have already been cleansed
by the word that I have spoken to you.
Abide 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.'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Risen Lord,
you are the true vine
and we are your branches.
Prune us and cleanse us,
feed us and nurture us
that we may bear fruit in you;
now and always.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

John 15.1-8

Jesus the True Vine

‘I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide 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. 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. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (John 15: 1-8)

Begin exploring John's presentation of Jesus as the true vine by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What is the relationship between the true vine and the vine-grower?
- What does this passage say about Jesus' relationship with his disciples?
- What does this passage teach about pruning?
- What is meant by disciples bearing much fruit?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Compare John's teaching about the true vine with the parables concerning the vineyard in the synoptic Gospels.

- Mark 12: 1-9
- Matthew 20: 1-16

Explore images of the vineyard in the Old Testament.

- Psalm 80: 8-15
- Isaiah 5: 1-7
- Ezekiel 28: 25-26
- Amos 9: 14-15

Exploring online

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (YEAR B) Sunday 28 April 2024

Widen your exploration of John's presentation of Jesus as the true vine by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choice.

- Commentaries on the good vine
- Images of vineyards
- I am the true vine poems. What do you see in Malcolm Guite's 'I am the vine; a sonnet'?

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on John's presentation of Jesus as the true vine is the *vine*. Draw on your experience of vines in real life or on television. For example:

- Have you ever visited a vineyard?
- Have you experience of tending vines?
- What experience have you had of looking after other fruiting trees or plants?

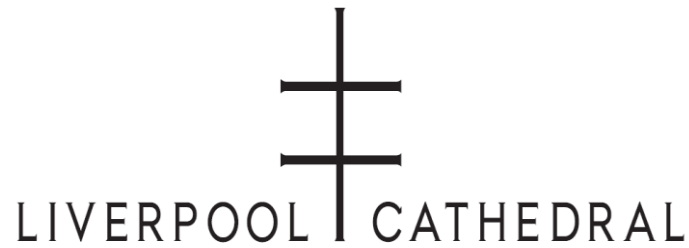
What have you learned about tending vines?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by John's presentation of Jesus as the true vine or by the image of vine.

- Create a poster of images of Jesus as the true vine.
- Create a collage of vineyards and vines, linked to the eucharist.
- Make a guide to growing vines.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Jesus as the true vine or on the image of vine.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (YEAR B) Sunday 28 April 2024



EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL AT HOME

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

Our invitation then is for you to share your reflections, prayers and photos of your creative work with the Cathedral by emailing them to smc.lesliefrancis@gmail.com.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales and the St Christopher's College Trust.



The scripture quotations contained in these materials are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Anglicised Edition, copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and is used with permission. All rights reserved.

Copyright © Leslie J. Francis, 2024
Canon Theologian Liverpool Cathedral
with sponsorship and support from
St Christopher's College Trust
St Mary's Centre, Wales