

Welcome to “Virtual Grace”  
from Grace Episcopal Church  
Honesdale, Pennsylvania

The Fifth Sunday of Easter  
2 May 2021

PRELUDE                      *“We know that Christ is raised”*                      Hymnal #296

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hello and blessings from Grace Episcopal Church in Honesdale, PA  
as we continue our Easter celebrations on this fifth Sunday in Easter.  
I’m Fr. Ed Erb, rector of our parish.

While we are not able to have gatherings in doors,  
for the summer months  
we will hold services on Saturday at 5:00  
and Sunday at 10:00 outside in the courtyard.  
And through May, we will continue offering these “Virtual Grace” broadcasts.

If you are in any pastoral need,  
or know anyone who would benefit from a visit, even with a mask,  
please e-mail me or call my cell-phone.

We give prayers of thanksgiving for our newly Confirmed youth,  
as Bishop Nichols visited the parish on Saturday:  
Harry DeVrieze  
Elise and Ewan Marsh  
Ethan Corso  
and Lucas Stephens

Let us now praise our God and Savior as we proclaim:  
**Alleluia! Christ is risen!**

A SONG of PRAISE “*Glory to God in the highest*”

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.  
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.  
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.  
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

**The COLLECT of the DAY**

Let us pray.       *silence is kept.*

Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

**The LESSON**

Acts 8: 26-40

An angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get ready and go south to the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This road is not used nowadays.) So Philip got ready and went. Now an Ethiopian eunuch, who was an important official in charge of the treasury of the queen of Ethiopia, was on his way home. He had been to Jerusalem to worship God and was going back home in his carriage. As he rode along, he was reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah. The Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to that carriage and stay close to it." Philip ran over and heard him reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah. He asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

The official replied, "How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?" And he invited Philip to climb up and sit in the carriage with him. The passage of scripture which he was reading was this: "He was like a sheep that is taken to be slaughtered, like a lamb that makes no sound when its wool is cut off. He did not say a word. He was humiliated, and justice was denied him. No one will be able to tell about his descendants, because his life on earth has come to an end."

The official asked Philip, "Tell me, of whom is the prophet saying this? Of himself or of someone else?" Then Philip began to speak; starting from this passage of scripture, he told him the Good News about Jesus. As they traveled down the road, they came to a place where there was some water, and the official said, "Here is some water. What is to keep me from being baptized?"

The official ordered the carriage to stop, and both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away. The official did not see him again, but continued on his way, full of joy. Philip found himself in Azotus; he went on to Caesarea, and on the way he preached the Good News in every town.

The Word of God.

*People:* **Thanks be to God.**

GRADUAL

**Psalm 22: 25-31**

My praise is of him in the great assembly; \*

I will perform my vows in the presence of those who worship him.

The poor shall eat and be satisfied,

and those who seek the Lord shall praise him: \*

"May your heart live for ever!"

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, \*

and all the families of the nations shall bow before him.

For kingship belongs to the Lord; \*

he rules over the nations.

To him alone all who sleep in the earth bow down in worship; \*

all who go down to the dust fall before him.

My soul shall live for him; my descendants shall serve him; \*  
they shall be known as the Lord's for ever.  
They shall come and make known to a people yet unborn \*  
the saving deeds that he has done.

The HOLY GOSPEL of our Savior Jesus Christ  
**Glory to you, O Christ.**

John 15: 1-8

Jesus said, "I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener. He breaks off every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it will be clean and bear more fruit. You have been made clean already by the teaching I have given you. Remain united to me, and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me. Those who do not remain in me are thrown out like a branch and dry up; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, where they are burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, then you will ask for anything you wish, and you shall have it. My Father's glory is shown by your bearing much fruit; and in this way you become my disciples.

The Gospel of Christ.

## MEDITATION

Last week, the Confirmands and I read through this little pamphlet called,  
*Sharing your Faith.*

As they concluded preparations for Confirming their own faith,

I insisted that isn't like 'graduating,' it's more a Commencement -  
the beginning of the journey of the rest of their life.

Thinking that Bishop Nichols was to come *next* week,

I was going to use *Sharing your Faith* at a final class this week,  
when we have the perfect example of St. Philip.

Nonetheless, it was probably God's Serendipity  
that they were confirmed (today) yesterday  
on the feast of Ss. Philip and James.

I love it when God laughs!

This is one of the strangest, and yet most wonderful, story in Luke's telling.  
Long before Paul's Conversion and fight to spread the Gospel to outsiders,  
Philip set the example of inclusion of those  
who we faithful considered unfit for joining with us in God's kingdom.

Our Bible Study group this Spring discovered that  
in the first year's after Christ's Resurrection  
Peter, Philip, Paul and Barnabas spread the Good News  
to God-fearers, Gentiles, Romans, those considered unworthy,  
just like our Ethiopian friend.

They spread the Good News of Christ's offer of Salvation.

Angela V. Askew, a retired priest and professor at NY Theological Seminary  
reflecting on today's story, writes:

Practicing evangelism is often no more and no less than learning  
how to encounter strangers with the openness and readiness of  
Jesus himself. And Philip shows us how there is a whole lot of love  
that needs to be expressed on the way to conversion and baptism.

Deacon Philip seized the opportunity to join the Ethiopian on the man's own terms, reading what he was reading, answering the man's questions, bringing the conversation around to Jesus. To proclaim our faith in the risen Jesus as a work of love among all our neighbors needs the gentle nudges as well as the motivating powers of the Holy Spirit. And we had best abide firmly and deeply rooted, planted in the ways of Jesus himself.

*from Sermons that Work*

Evangelism - that's the name of our game,

or rather our work as, how do we say it?

“as a people, forgiven, healed, renewed;

that we may proclaim your love to the world.”

The question is raised in *Sharing your Faith*” as to why this is important.

Now more than ever, people need the Gospel to help them deal with everyday concerns, such as:

Emptiness

Loneliness

*and* Fear

The Gospel can give meaning to lives that seem to be without purpose. [It] gives us strength to weather those dark moments when we feel so alone. [And as a] fountain of faith, the Gospel can help us face crises, doubts and anxieties with strength, calmness and conviction.

*Sharing, p. 5*

*Sharing* even gives the pay-back, so to speak:

Witnessing can add meaning to your own life as a Christian:

- + It enriches your faith and understanding of the Gospel, by encouraging Bible study and the exchange of ideas;
- + It deepens your commitment to God and church by directly involving you in God's work on earth; *and*
- + It's a source of joy and satisfaction, when you know you've helped others discover the love and goodness you find in Christ.

*Sharing, p. 14*

The hymn for this week commemorates Philip and James in this way:

We praise you, Lord, for Philip, blest guide to Greek and Jew,  
and for young James the faithful, who heard and followed you.  
O grant us grace to know you, the victor in the strife,  
that we with all your servants may wear the crown of life.

*Hymn #231/2*

Whose first line is, “By all your saints still striving.”

That would be us, you and me, still striving in the faith,

along with Elise and Ewan, Lucas and Ethan and Harry.

Which brings to mind another favorite hymn which ends,

“The peace of God - it is no peace - but strife closed in the sod.  
But let us pray for but one thing - the wondrous peace of God.”

*Hymn #661*

At the end we say, “Go forth in peace, to love and serve the Lord.

Alleluia, alleluia!”

## APOSTLES' CREED

Let us proclaim our faith, using the words of the Apostles' Creed.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven,

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again 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.

## CONFESSION of Sin

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbors.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.

For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive all our sins through  
the grace of Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the  
power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. *Amen.*

## PRAYERS, Form II, adapted BCP, p.385

I ask your prayers for God's people throughout the world; for Justin, the Archbishop of Canterbury; Michael, our Presiding Bishop; Kevin, our Bishop; and for all ministers and faithful. Pray for our parish family, and the Church throughout the world; for those growing in their faith, especially our Confirmation Class: Elise and Ewan, Lucas, Ethan and Harry.

I ask your prayers for peace; for Joe and Kamala, President and Vice President of our country; for Tom our Governor; Sarah, our mayor; for goodwill among nations; and for the well-being of all people. Pray for justice and peace in our country, in our homes and abroad.

I ask your prayers for the poor, the hungry, the oppressed, those in prison, those separated from loved ones, for the sick, the crippled, the disabled and those suffering from Covid-19 symptoms. Pray for those in any need or trouble, remembering Richelle, Fr. Graham and Addison.

I ask your prayers for the departed, those who have succumbed to the virus, and those killed by violent acts. Pray for those who have died.

I ask your thanksgiving for loved ones, and the creative ways they and we have found to share our love, especially in this Easter season of new life. Pray for our families wherever they may be.

To sum up all these petitions, let us pray the words which Christ has taught us:

Our Father...

#### SEASONAL BLESSING for EASTERTIDE

May Almighty God, who has redeemed us and made us his children through the resurrection of his Son our Lord, bestow upon you the riches of his blessing.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

Christ for the world we sing!

The world to Christ we bring with loving zeal:

the poor, and them that mourn, the faint and overborne,  
sin-sick and sorrow-worn, whom Christ will heal.

POSTLUDE

*“Christ for the world we sing!”*

Hymnal #537