

Sunday 17 May 2026 Cooma Anglican HC 3

Hymn: TIS 462 - Hallelujah! sing to Jesus

Now we come, our heavenly Father, one in glad community,
needing still your guiding mercies: stronger faith, more fervent plea:
all your blessing, now confessing
we would praise you trustingly.

Through the years your spirit guided those who blazed the path we tread,
in the glow of faith they laboured by the bread of life were fed;
while their yearning, hearts were learning
more of Christ, their living head.

Proudly high they held his gospel, far surpassing human creeds,
striving for his church united in the things for which he pleads;
torn no longer, but made stronger,
one church meeting all our needs.

Like we, then, their torch with gladness pledging all to this high aim
your lost world reclaimed from darkness, yielded to your sovereign claim;
visions firing, hearts inspiring,
march we onward in your name.

Sentence of Scripture

Jesus said "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

The Great Commandments

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 'This is the great and first commandment.

And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: we pray you, leave us not comfortless, but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to the same place where our Saviour Christ has gone before, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Ezekiel 17: 22-24 (NIV)

22 “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain. 23 On the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it; it will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches. 24 All the trees of the forest will know that I the LORD bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish.

“I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.”

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Psalm 80 (NIV)

¹ Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth

² **before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your might; come and save us.**

³ Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

⁴ **How long, LORD God Almighty, will your anger smolder against the prayers of your people?**

⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have made them drink tears by the bowlful.

⁶ **You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors, and our enemies mock us.**

⁷ Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

⁸ **You transplanted a vine from Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it.**

⁹ You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land.

¹⁰ **The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches.**

¹¹ Its branches reached as far as the Sea, its shoots as far as the River.

¹² **Why have you broken down its walls so that all who pass by pick its grapes?**

¹³ Boars from the forest ravage it, and insects from the fields feed on it.

¹⁴ **Return to us, God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see! Watch over this vine,**

¹⁵ the root your right hand has planted, the son you have raised up for yourself.

¹⁶ **Your vine is cut down, it is burned with fire; at your rebuke your people perish.**

¹⁷ Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself.

¹⁸ **Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name.**

¹⁹ **Restore us, LORD God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.**

Philippians 2:1-8 (NIV)

¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same

love, being one in spirit and of one mind.³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

John 15:1-25 (NIV)

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

¹ “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹ “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.

¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

¹⁸ “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.¹⁹ If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.²⁰ Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.²¹ They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they

have no excuse for their sin. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

This is the gospel of the Lord. **Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

Sermon - The Vine and the Branches

The Nicene' Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of one being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Prayers of the People

Let us pray for the world and the church

Response: Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

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 for ever. Amen.

Scripture Sentence

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. 1 Corinthians 11:26-28

The Confession

Knowing the goodness of God and our failure to respond with love and obedience, let us confess our sins, saying together:

Heavenly Father, you have loved us with an everlasting love, but we have broken your holy laws and have left undone what we ought to have done.

We are sorry for our sins and turn away from them.

For the sake of your Son who died for us, forgive us, cleanse us and change us.

By your Holy Spirit, enable us to live for you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God is slow to anger and full of compassion, forgiving all who humbly repent and trust in his Son as Saviour and Lord. God therefore forgives you in Christ Jesus, in whom there is no condemnation. **Amen**

Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn - TIS 526 - Lord Jesus Christ

Lord Jesus Christ, You have come to us

You are one with us, Mary's Son.

Cleansing our souls from all their sin.

Pouring Your love and goodness in.

Jesus our love for you we sing, Living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, Now and every day

Teach us how to pray, Son of God.

You have commanded us to do

This in remembrance Lord of you

Into our lives your power breaks through, Living Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, You have come to us

Born as one with us, Mary's Son.

Led out to die on Calvary,

Risen from death to set us free,

Living Lord Jesus help us see You are Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, I would come to you

Live my life for you, Son of God.

All your commands I know are true,

Your many gifts will make me new,

Into my life your power breaks through, Living Lord.

Thanksgiving for Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom. **Blessed be God for ever.**

The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you **And also with you**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, making us in your own image. We praise you for your son, our saviour Jesus Christ, who by his death on the cross and rising to new life offered the one true sacrifice for sin and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.

Therefore, we lift our voices to praise you, saying,

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

And now, gracious God, we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine, and pray that we who receive them in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit according to our Saviour's word, in remembrance of his suffering and death, may share his body and his blood. On the night before he died, Jesus took bread, and when he had given you thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying 'Take and eat. This is my body which is given for you.

We who are many are one body in Christ, **for we all share in the one bread.**

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying 'Drink from this all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' We eat this bread and drink this cup **to proclaim the death of the Lord.** We do this until he returns. **Come, Lord Jesus!**

Father, as we recall his saving death and glorious resurrection, may we who share these gifts be renewed by the Holy Spirit, and united in the body of your Son. Bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom, there to feast at your table and join in your eternal praise.

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive praise and honour and glory and power forever and ever. Amen

The Holy Communion

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

After Communion

Gracious God, thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the body and blood of our saviour Jesus Christ. Thank you for assuring us of your goodness and love, and that we are living members of Christ's body.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

Notices

Hymn - TIS 133 - O worship the King

**O worship the King All glorious above!
Oh gratefully sing His power and His love!
Our shield and Defender, The Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendour, And girded with praise**

**O, tell of His might, Oh sing of His grace!
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;
His chariots of wrath form the deep thunderclouds
And dark is His path on the wings of the storm**

**The earth with its store of wonders untold
Almighty! Thy power hath founded of old:
Hath stablished it fast, by a changeless decree;
And round it hath cast like a mantle, the sea**

**Thy bountiful care What tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, It shines in the light;
It streams from the hills, It descends to the plain,
And sweetly distills in The dew and the rain**

**Frail children of dust and feeble as frail—
In Thee do we Trust, nor find Thee to fail:
Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end!
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer and Friend!**

**O measureless Might! Ineffable Love!
While angels delight to hymn Thee above,
The humbler creation, though feeble their lays,
With true adoration shall sing to Thy praise**

Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Sermon - John 14:1-25 - the Vine and the Branches

My family will tell you that I am not a great gardener. The rectory garden is testimony to this, and what is there is thanks to Wendy, our previous minister. It's not that I don't know the basics of botany - you plant seeds, water and occasionally fertilise them and they grow into plants, resembling the plants the seeds come from (hopefully also the picture on the seed packet). With enough water (and occasional fertiliser) you get fruit, veggies or flowers. Fortunately, my finances, and even my nutrition do not depend on whatever colour my thumbs are. This is unlike many first century farmers, and professional farmers today. Their knowledge goes far beyond mine, and they know that the idea of simply planting seeds is simplistic. Greg C could tell you that apple seeds in particular grow trees different from their parents, so to get the same type of apple you have to graft a cutting from the parent onto new root stock - or something like that. I understand you can also plant trees that are two or more different fruits grafted together. The significant thing for this reading is that different branches can be on the same tree.

The Vine, the Gardener and the Branches

I mention this because in our reading today, Jesus uses the vine to illustrate his disciples, his followers, you and me. He tells his disciples "I am the Vine, you are the branches." He is mainly referring to grape vines, which usually end up with a pretty solid central trunk from which individual branches grow, and those produce the bunches of grapes. The branches fully rely on the trunk and its connection with soil and moisture from its roots to stay alive, grow and produce fruit. Should a branch be separated from the trunk, either by accident, or deliberately by a farmer pruning the branch, then it withers and dies.

Jesus tells us that his father, God, is the gardener and he, Jesus, is the vine. His followers are the branches. The farmer prunes off entire branches when they don't produce fruit, and he prunes or trims fruiting branches to help them produce even more fruit.

Jesus describes the branches as being in the vine, as Christians are in him and he is in them. Last week we heard that Jesus said that after his ascension the Father will send the Holy Spirit who will be with and in us, and I think that this is the way that Jesus will be in us. The branch is in the vine either naturally or by being grafted in, and it draws its life, its moisture and nourishment from the vine. This is the way we are in Jesus - we draw our life - our spiritual life from being in Jesus, and he nourishes and teaches all who are in him.

The illustration also shows the role that God, the farmer, plays in growing his Church. There is a clear warning that branches can be cut off the vine if they don't produce fruit, and that those that do produce fruit will be trimmed so we produce more fruit. Being trimmed doesn't sound like much fun to me, and it isn't. God allows trials and other lessons to trim away whatever is holding us back from producing godly fruit. The sin in our lives: sometimes just distractions, sometimes our wants, our desires, and even our fears, hold us back from bearing fruit. These things are unhelpful, but having them removed from our lives can be painful, but God does it for his kingdom.

Fruit

It is worth thinking about what Jesus means by fruit in this illustration. The fruit could be more disciples for Jesus, so as we share the gospel, as we invite others to church and as we live winsome Christian lives, people put their faith in Jesus and are grafted into the vine. This may certainly be part of it, but fruit, grapes, are not vine branches, and are not grafted into the vine, so it is more.

Jesus gives a clue when he says: You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Part of being fruit must be that we live lives that are clean - that are acceptable to God because we hear and obey the word that Jesus has spoken to us. Living this way is certainly to the Father's glory as Jesus refers to in verse 8, and so is a strong hint that it is what Jesus means. Jesus also says that this cleanliness must come from hearing his word, and so cleanliness by the standards of the world, for the world's sake, does nothing for us being part of the vine. Only cleanliness for Jesus's word counts.

Jesus also tells us we cannot bear fruit if we are not in the vine - that is, if Jesus is not in us, and we are not in him. We need Jesus to bear fruit for him. The lives we live cannot bear fruit for Jesus without him, and even if we try to go through all the motions of living good, upstanding lives, Jesus says that if he is not in us, leading and guiding us, then they are not the fruit he wants, are not his fruit. Good lives for our sakes and not Jesus's are not fruits for Jesus, and don't make us part of the vine.

Another element of fruit is love. In verse 10, Jesus says "If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love", just as he has kept his Father's commands and remains in his love." Then down in verse 12 he specifies which of his commands he is talking about. He says "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." If we are to stay in the vine and not be pruned, the fruit we are to produce is to love each other as Jesus has loved us. The principal example of love is Jesus laying down his life for us, and we are to lay down our lives for each other. This doesn't necessarily mean martyrdom, (physically dying

for our faith) although it did for many early Christians, for most of the apostles that Jesus was speaking to that day. It also continues to be the case for many Christians around the world today where sharing Jesus's words leads to persecution and even death. But we, in this country today, are called to lay down our lives for each other. This, as I mentioned earlier, means giving up the sin, the distractions, our wants, desires and fears that prevent us producing fruit for Jesus. It means, as Paul tells us in Philippians 2:2-4: "Doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." Paul says doing this is having the same mindset as Jesus, and this is being in the vine.

As we live clean lives before God and love each other, we must not let verse 16 confuse us as it has many people. Jesus says: "whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you." I don't know how many kids have assumed that all they need to do is pray for a bike and God will provide on the basis of this verse, or even adults have prayed for good things expecting that God must provide. However, we need to read this verse in its context: Jesus said: "I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit —fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other."

Jesus is talking about bearing the fruit that we have been talking about, emphasising "fruit that will last", and then reminds us of his command "Love each other." The "whatever we ask in Jesus's name" is not about bikes, or other things that do not last, but all about the fruit that we, grafted into the vine, will produce for God's glory, and specifically the love we will have for each other. If we ask God in Jesus' name for love for our neighbour, he will help us love that neighbour (even if we find we still do not particularly like that neighbour!) Such love is always in accordance with God's will and character, which is what asking the Father in the name of Jesus implies.

The final implication that Jesus talks about here of being part of the vine is that the world will hate us. While the branches of his vine are in this world, we do not belong to this world, because he has chosen us out of the world. He tells us: the world hated him first. If we belonged to the world, it would love us as its own. But since the world persecuted him, it will persecute us also.

There are two sides to this warning. One seems obvious to me - the world is diametrically opposed to Jesus and his teaching. If the world obeyed Jesus's teaching, they will obey ours as well. But it is obvious that the world does not obey Jesus's teaching, and so they won't love us, they will hate us. The world

hates us and both Jesus and his Father, to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

This reminds us that we are not to be like the world. We are not to hate as the world hates, but to love each other, and particularly to love those in the vine. In my experience, some Christians (people in this congregation excluded, at least most of the time) can be the hardest people to love. I guess that is because we expect the best from each other, and so any little sin or disappointment just drives us up the wall. In those instances, we just need to learn to be forgiving - to share our love with forgiveness, despite the inevitable sin that falls from being part of, but not belonging in, this world.

Another reason Christians can find it hard to love each other is that we are all supposed to be heading in the same direction, to the same ends. We are all supposed to be about glorifying God, and seeing God glorified in his people. The reality is of course that, as sinful human beings, we are not solely focused on worshipping God because our own egos get in the way. When someone else tries to do their bit for God's glory, it is all too easy to believe that they or their motives are wrong, or their ideas are not as good as our ideas, or somehow will take priority away from what you are doing for God's glory. This attitude is not loving our neighbor, and more like hating them as the world hates us.

I want us all to think about when this can happen in this church, when you might oppose ideas or people for wrong reasons. No ministry will be perfect or ideal for every situation, and with most situations, multiple plans can proceed without interfering, and multiple people can minister without detracting from each others' ministry. We have a big God, and a huge mission field where the grain is ready for harvest, and I just pray that workers just put up their hands for the work that needs to be done, irrespective of how God may be using others.

Conclusion

God the Father has called us all as branches in the vine that is Jesus his son. He has called us to live lives that are cleansed by Jesus's words, and particularly to obey his command to love one another as he loved us, laying down our lives for each other, and putting others' needs before our own. Let us learn to love one another in his strength, even while God trims us to make us more fruitful, and as the world around us hates us.

Now remain in Jesus's love, keeping Jesus's commands just as he has kept his Father's commands and remains in his love. Jesus has told you this so that his joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. Is your joy complete?

Amen