



SAINT JAMES'
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Fremont, California

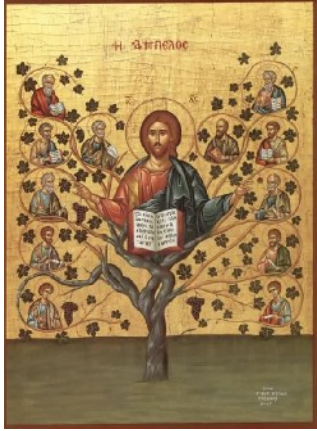
SERMON

10. May, 2009. Easter 5

Title: Vine and Branches, Working Together

Text: John 15:1-8

J.J.



"I am the vine, you are the branches"
Orthodox Icon

If I didn't know any better, I would conclude that today's Gospel comes right out of the Napa Valley, Sonoma or Livermore, what with all the vines and vinegrowers, branches and pruning, and bearing much fruit. But does not! Rather, it comes from another wine-producing area—The Holy Land—2000 years ago—and from the mouth of Jesus. Back then, and today, the Holy Land is an important wine growing area (but let me be quick to add, their wines don't even come close to Napa, Sonoma or Livermore) . . . And so, it's understandable that Jesus would use vineyard and wine-making images, known to everyone, then and now, as a way to describe our relationship to God and to one another: "I am the Vine and you are the branches."

And it's particularly important for us to hear these words, as we take time this morning to dialogue with one another about the results of the questionnaire that we did a couple Sunday's back regarding our worship services. Like a good winery, it's important for us to know how we can work together (or worship together)—**Vine and branches, Working Together**—in order to produce

"vintage" worship services here at St. James' . . . to develop the kind of worship experience that is going to meet our needs and our tastes. The decision about our worship services is not going to be made by Kathy and/or me . . . nor is it going to be the decision of the Lead Team or the Vestry without your input. Indeed not! For we, here at St. James', we are all part of those branches, those stems, out of the "True Vine," Jesus Christ, and so, working together, we will make that decision. Now, a brief summary of the data:

- 100 questionnaires were received (that represents about 65-70% of our ASA)—not bad!
- 78 of you indicated that you attend Sunday services either "Most times" or "Weekly"—also, not shabby!
- 30 of you regularly attend the 8am; 40 the 9am; and 46 the 11am (some of you attend more than one).

The top five things you like about the worship service you usually attend, are:

- The times of services (25%)
- The people/friends/homely feeling/feeling welcomes (17%) AND Music, hymn singing at 11am (17%)
- The Liturgy [and Rite 2 was specifically mentioned] (15%) [Rite 1 gets mentioned later in the survey]
- The Choir and organ music (12%)
- Contemporary Music (10%) AND Sermons preached on the readings (10%) AND worshipping in the Little Church (10%).

The top five things that are missing from the worship service you usually attend:

- Music/Singing at 8am (16 out of 30, or 53% of those regularly attending 8am) **KNOCK ME OVER**
- Footprints at 9am (9 out of 40, or 22.5%) (9% of the entire congregation)
- The songs and Music (guitars) we use to sing at 9am (8 out of 40, 20%) (8% of the entire congregation)
- Seeing members/friends who attend other services (7%)
- Once a month Folk Mass (Cursio) (6%)

It was in this section that Rite 1 was mentioned: 3 out of 30, or 10% miss it (3% of the entire congregation).

The most meaningful worship experiences you have had at St. James'

- Easter Vigil/Easter Services (12%)
- My confirmation; confirmation of our son (4%) AND the sermons (4%)
- The Passover Seder (3%) AND Christmas Services (3%)

If we were to go to two services during the summer (and, some of you voted more than once on this)

- 32 of you indicated you would attend the 8am service
- 60 of you indicated you would attend the proposed 10:30am service
- 13 of you indicated you would like to explore a 6pm service
- 7 of you indicated that we should “keep it as is” or “the proposed times do not work for us.”
- Finally, 46 of you indicated that you would be interested in attending, from time to time, a 9:15-10:15 faith formation class on Sundays; 33 of you said “probably not,” and 22 of you asked: “what does that mean...faith formation?” (OUR MISTAKE). If you add together the “Yes” and the “??” you have 68% indicating interest.

Copies of the results are available in the back of the Church. It will also include all of the results in the posting of this “sermon” on our web page.

Now, what to do? DISCUSSION

- There is no clear mandate (and frankly we didn’t expect one, otherwise it would have happened).
- Almost half of you clearly indicate that you would like more time for faith formation (Scripture Study) on Sunday mornings (had we been more clear in our question, that could have been as high as 68%). And I want to share with you, that is the reason Kathy and I want to explore with you going to two services! We don’t have adequate time for the study of Scripture and our Anglican/Episcopal roots.
- So . . . what do you think.

SHOW OF HANDS.

- Who is in favor of going to an 8am and 10:30am and 6pm Sunday worship schedule service, with a 9:15-10:15am Faith Formation (Scripture Study/Episcopal tradition/BCP) class, on a trial basis, during the summer months?
- Who wants to keep Sunday mornings just the way they are? And that’s OK too.
- And, who is still undecided?

Did you hear the closing words of today’s Gospel: ““I am the Vine and you are the branches” . . . “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” Indeed! Or [*holding up a wine glass*] . . . perhaps I should say: “Cheers! Here’s to your health” . . . or, better yet: “The Gifts of God for the people of God. Be what you see; Receive who you are.” Amen.

S.D.G.

The Rev. Dr. David E. Abernethy-Deppe
Castro Valley, California

RESULTS OF THE “QUESTIONNAIRE RE: WORSHIP SERVICES”

Total: 100 Returns

I attend Sunday Services	Occasionally	IIII
	Half the time	IIII
	Most times	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII III
	Weekly	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII
I attend the	8 am	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII
	9 am	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII
	11 am	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII I
	Varies	I
Two things I like about the worship service I usually attend:		
*	The people/friends/homely feeling/community/feel welcomed	IIII IIII IIII II
*	I feel comfortable inviting others to come	I
*	3 Scripture Readings and the Psalm readings	IIII
*	Time of services	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII
*	8 am is a good start for the rest of the day	I
*	8 am service is short	I
*	The quietness of the 8 am service	I
*	No singing at 8 am	II
*	Worshiping in the “Little Church”	IIII IIII
*	Kneeling to pray, 8 am	II
*	Contemporary Music (I miss drums, horns, keyboard) at 9 am	IIII IIII
*	Experimental Worship forms/format not too formal or dry	IIII
*	Like 9 am Service/Music/Liturgy/Meditation/Casual Service	IIII
*	Contemporary wording of liturgy	I
*	The Service is on the screen	IIII II
*	Taize Songs	III
*	Enjoy both 9 am & 11 am services equally	III
*	Music, hymn singing at 11 am	IIII IIII IIII II
*	Choir/Choir/organ Music	IIII IIII II
*	Communion/need communion at every service	IIII
*	Familiarity of Service/it’s now very Episcopalian	III
*	I like that the 11 am is <u>not</u> done with the visual screen	I
*	Closeness to God/Spiritual environment	II
*	Liturgy/Tradition/Rite 2	IIII IIII IIII
*	Sermons, Preaching according to Readings	IIII IIII
*	Minimal chanting	I
*	Time to celebrate people’s birthdays/anniversaries	I
*	The passing of the peace	I
One thing I miss in the worship service I usually attend:		
*	Rite I	IIII
*	Children’s Choir	I
*	Seeing other Members of the Church/my 8 am friends	IIII II
*	Don’t see those who go to 11 am	I
*	Coffee Hour with clergy/visiting with clergy	II
*	Music/Singing at 8 am	IIII IIII IIII I
*	Footprints/the Music Group	IIII IIII
*	The Songs & Music (guitars) we use to sing at 9 am	IIII III

* Once a month Folk mass (Cursio)	IIII I
* Singing and clapping/some of the informality in music	III
* Organ/choir at 9 am	III
* Better Hymns at 9 am	I
* More Contemporary Music at 9 am and 11 am	III
* More contemporary wording of the service	I
* The Bread at 9 am Service	I
* Kyrie Eleison	I
* Sanctus (with English/Spanish texts)	I
* Songs from African Hymnal (LEVAS)	I
* Alternate Contemporary and Traditional	I
* Getting Out On Time	I
* Words on Screen at 11 am	II
* Congregational participation	I
* Invitation or welcome of newcomers	I
* A cross on the altar	I
* Midnight Mass at Christmas	I
* Caroling at Christmas	I
* The people who aren't here/Larger attendance	III
* I miss going to church when I can not make it	I

One of the most meaningful worship experiences I've had, was:

* Enjoy the Sermons	IIII
* Sermons that are to the point 10-12 minutes long	I
* Worship/Sermons that apply to real life	II
* Services always meaningful	II
* First time we came to St. James' we were so welcomed	I
* Seeing the priest use full vestments at Holy Communion	I
* Using the New Zealand Prayer Book	I
* Advent Candle Lighting	I
* Christmas	IIII
* When the Alleluia was put away	I
* Stations of cross each week during Lent	I
* Palm Sunday	I
* Passover Seder	III
* 7 pm Good Friday Service (moving/sacred)	II
* Holy Week, 2009	I
* Easter Vigil	IIII I
* Easter Vigil Campfire 2008	I
* Easter Services, 2009/Best Easter ever	IIII I
* Easter balloons (now a no-no) Easter Egg hunt	II
* Baptism/ When I was baptized	II
* Children's Baptisms	I
* Confirmation/ my confirmation/youngest son's confirmation	IIII
* Marriage/Wedding Mass	II
* The evening funeral service	I
* A funeral service I attended	I
* Laying of the memorial stone for my mother	I
* Watching our children/grandchildren grow up in Church	I
* People sharing how they became members of St. James'	I
* In front of my ironing board	I
* Installed as Chaplain	I

* Silent Prayer	1
* Worshipping with people of different cultural backgrounds	1
* Crusillo	1
* Taize service at Mercy Center (Prayers of the cross)	1
* Congregation support for families in need, grief, joy	1

If the worship times were 8:00 am and 10:30 am and a family service at 6:00 pm, which one would you attend, most likely?

8:00 am	
10:30 am	
6:00 pm	
Keep as is	
9:30 am	1
??	
The times Do Not Work	

I would attend the Faith Formation offering (9:15-10:15 am) on a Sunday morning:

Yes	1
No	
No Answer or ??	

Other Comments

- * Would rather have only 2 services
- * Would like some covering of inside windows of Main Church
- * This was my first time at St. James'
- * Keep services to 50-60 minutes
- * I have been struggling with the Transition Process
- * Since we are coming into summer and will be gone Fri-Sun, the 6 pm Service is great
- * David's Doubting Thomas Sermon
- * Weekly services with Kathy & David
- * David & Kathy have brought to us so much love, if they leave us it will be terrible
- * I don't like modern 9 am service
- * Returning to St. James' after husband's death and feeling warmth and love
- * Worshipped at St. Peter's, Sitka, Alaska, and received a follow up note afterward. That was important
- * Thank you for this journey of spiritual learning
- * I don't think a service change should happen without a bigger discussion than a simple survey
- * If we go to 8 and 10:30; hope music styles would alternate traditional with contemporary
- * The (proposed) times do not work for our family (10:30 runs into naps and lunch; 6 pm bedtime for our children).
- * Please alternate Rite I at 8 am service once in awhile.
- * To now see priests use full vestments at Holy Communion
- * Not sure what "Faith Formation" is.
- * Would like to have some covering on side windows to be more enclosed in while in worship.
- * We like the current schedule. One of our strengths is the choice we offer. If we start limiting services we limit choice and we offer less-at time we should offer even more to a needy world.
- * If services are kept to 50-60 minutes, one priest can do all 3 (services)-it's been done before-a lot!
- * My first here at St. James'...the pace, format & enthusiasm brought me back and have kept me here.
- * (I like the) worship that relates to real life; showing how it applies to us.
- * The 7 pm Good Friday Service felt very moving and sacred, and I was moved in a way that I haven't experienced in a long time.
- * I find some of the traditional music and most of the contemporary music very moving; I also find the outpouring of love and support.
- * I like the biblical and philosophical sermons where I can continue to learn