

## MINISTRY OF THE WORD : PENTECOST 11, SUNDAY 8 AUGUST 2021

### WELCOME

The gift of lockdown can be 'slow worship'; you are invited to ponder and pray the readings, prayers and sermon offered for this Sunday. As we slow and focus on the Word, we will notice images and thoughts coming to us – don't shut them out, invite the Holy Spirit into your being to bring to you the message Christ is bringing to you. We thank Rev'd Sandra for the sermon; again, take the bread offered for spiritual sustenance in the focus on the words of Jesus Christ.

And keep hopeful – not only for short-term change to restrictions and returning to some semblance of 'life as we know it', but also hopeful for the enduring power of the love of God to penetrate this world and be the difference.

With blessings for this day and the week ahead; Rev'd Jan

### COLLECT PRAYER OF THE DAY

Grant, O Lord,  
that we may see in you the fulfilment of all our need,  
and may turn from every false satisfaction  
to feed on the true and living bread  
that you have given us in Jesus Christ;  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

### READINGS

**READING: 2 Samuel 18: 5-9, 14, 31-33**

<sup>5</sup> The king gave orders to Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom.' And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders concerning Absalom. <sup>6</sup> So the army went out into the field against Israel; and the battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim. <sup>7</sup> The men of Israel were defeated there by the servants of David, and the slaughter there was great on that day, twenty thousand men. <sup>8</sup> The battle spread over the face of all the country; and the forest claimed more victims that day than the sword. <sup>9</sup> Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. His head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on. <sup>14</sup> Joab said, 'I will not waste time like this with you.' He took three spears in his hand, and thrust them into the heart of Absalom, while he was still alive in the oak. <sup>31</sup> Then the Cushite came; and the Cushite said, 'Good tidings for my lord the king! For the Lord has vindicated you this day, delivering you from the power of all who rose up

against you.’<sup>32</sup> The king said to the Cushite, ‘Is it well with the young man Absalom?’ The Cushite answered, ‘May the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up to do you harm, be like that young man.’<sup>33</sup> The king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, he said, ‘O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would that I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!’

Hear the word of the Lord,  
**Thanks be to God**

### Psalm 130

- <sup>1</sup> Out of the depths have I called to you, O Lord:  
    Lord, hear my voice;
- <sup>2</sup> O let your ears consider well:  
    the voice of my supplication.
- <sup>3</sup> If you, Lord, should note what we do wrong:  
    who then, O Lord, could stand?
- <sup>4</sup> But there is forgiveness with you:  
    so that you shall be feared.
- <sup>5</sup> I wait for the Lord, my soul waits for him:  
    and in his word is my hope.
- <sup>6</sup> My soul looks for the Lord:  
    more than watchmen for the morning,  
    more, I say, than watchmen for the morning.
- <sup>7</sup> O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy:  
    and with him is ample redemption.
- <sup>8</sup> He will redeem Israel:  
    from the multitude of their sins.

### READING: Ephesians 4: 25—5: 2

<sup>25</sup> So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. <sup>26</sup> Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and do not make room for the devil. <sup>28</sup> Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. <sup>29</sup> Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, <sup>32</sup> and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. **5** <sup>1</sup> Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, <sup>2</sup> and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

For the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

**THE GOSPEL : John 6: 35, 41-51**

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John, Chapter 6 beginning at the thirty-fifth verse. **Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ**

<sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. <sup>41</sup> Then the Jews began to complain about him because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' <sup>42</sup> They were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven"?' <sup>43</sup> Jesus answered them, 'Do not complain among yourselves. <sup>44</sup> No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day. <sup>45</sup> It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught by God." Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. <sup>46</sup> Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father. <sup>47</sup> Very truly, I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life. <sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. <sup>50</sup> This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

This is the Gospel of The Lord:

**Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ**

**SERMON JOHN 6.35, 41-51**

**Rev'd Sandra Kjellgren**

+ In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

As the Gospel opens today, the scene before us is that it is the day after the feeding of the 5,000 by Jesus when he blessed and multiplied 5 small loaves of barley bread and fed all of the people near Bethsaida.

And when the next day comes, it dawns on the crowd who are still in the region of Bethsaida - that only one boat had been on the shore the night before. Jesus hadn't left with his disciples in the boat. But once the crowds discover that neither Jesus - nor any of his disciples are still there, they got into some other boats and travelled across the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum in order to look for Jesus.

Only problem is, that the Gospel tells us that when they find Jesus in Capernaum, he effectively tells them that they had come after him- because of the miraculous feeding that occurred the day before - and not because they had come to appreciate God's generosity.

Jesus tells them that at Bethsaida he had given them all a free meal - but now he wants them to understand – what he is offering them is eternal life. Jesus said "I am the bread of

life and whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

The crowd and Jesus had been debating the meaning of the miraculous feeding and then, suddenly, it is no longer a matter of whether he is ‘the prophet like Moses’ who led the people through the deserts and prayed to God for food in the wilderness.

Because Jesus is claiming that he is actually ‘the bread come down from heaven’ which takes the debate to a much higher level. Jesus is now saying he is more than all of the prophets who have come before him.

According to the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses told the Israelites that God had fed them manna in the wilderness so they could understand that ‘one does not live by bread alone - but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord’. (Deut.8.3). And over the years, the Jewish people used the symbols of manna and of bread as images for the word of God, for the Law and for divine Wisdom.

In Proverbs Chapter 9 Wisdom invites people to “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.’ (Prov. 9.5) and in the Book of Ecclesiasticus [The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach] written around 190 years before Christ, we read that Wisdom feeds those who fear the Lord and hold to the Law ‘with the bread of understanding’; and that those who eat of Wisdom ‘will hunger no more’. However it is also said in Ecclesiasticus “that those who drink of Wisdom ‘*will thirst for more.*’ (Ecclesiasticus 15.3, 24.21).

Yet, this Jesus, the son of his Father who sent him (John 6.7-38), is more than that - for just as Jesus promised the Samaritan woman at the well, that those who drink his living water will never thirst again (Jn.4.14), now, as the ‘Bread of Life’, he is superior to the bread of the Law and of the Wisdom literature because he says ‘Whoever comes to me will never be hungry.’ and ‘whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’(6.35).

And I believe that we are invited to realise that Jesus is explaining to the people that their thirst - is really thirst for him - and their hunger is - the longing for him - that was seared into their hearts before they were born - which until now they have been unable to name.

It is a staggering claim - and it leads to ‘murmuring’ or ‘grumbling’ within the crowd. Because it is one thing to be miraculously fed by Jesus through his blessing and multiplying of 5 small loaves of barley and two dried fish to feed over 5,000 people, after which the people want to make him prophet and king – and it is quite another to accept his claim to be superior to all that you as faithful Jewish people may have ever believed.

And the complaints from ‘the Jews’ against Jesus centre around how Jesus can make such claims for himself in light of his origins which is where John gives us one of his typical contrasts between two levels. John contrasts the earthly and the heavenly understanding. Because some people in the crowd know Jesus from his earthly origins – they say he is the son of Joseph, the Carpenter of Nazareth, and they know not only his father but his mother also ‘So who does he think he is making claims about coming down from heaven’(6.42).

However, this is where Jesus goes straight to the heart of the matter - as he warns the people to not be grumbling and complaining - because if he has only an earthly origin - no one will pay him any attention – and Jesus goes on to explain that no one will come to him unless they are drawn by his Father – the one who sent him.

Of course, the prophets of Israel knew all about the attractive power of God’s love. Hosea says that God has ‘drawn’ us with cords of love (Hos.11.4) while the Greek version of Jeremiah Chapter 31 verse 3 says ‘I have drawn you with an everlasting love’ and uses the same word for ‘drawn’ as John uses here in his Gospel.

The prophets looked forward to a time when everyone would learn about God and God’s love and this, says Jesus, is what is happening right now (6.45). And I think it is helpful for us to bear in mind that Jesus’ claims are not blasphemy - or about any kind of self-seeking fame. Because Jesus explains that the initiative is always God the Father’s, whom no one has ever seen. Even Moses could not see God and live, he had to be hidden in a cleft of rock as God passed by. But if Jesus is the ‘bread come down from heaven’, then it is safe to assume that he has seen the Father (6.46).

My friends I believe that this is where Jesus invites all of us to understand that this no ordinary debate about different interpretations of the story of the Exodus. Because just as Jesus’ claim to be ‘the bread come down from heaven’ is staggering – so are the consequences of acceptance or rejection of him.

In the wilderness the Israelites grumbled and God fed them with Manna – but their grumbling also led to their death, as they wandered around and around for years, and only Joshua and Caleb got to go into the promised land.

However, my friends I believe that the primary message for us today from Jesus is that he presents us all with the reality that, all the comparing of Moses with Jesus – of manna in the wilderness and the feeding of the 5,000 with bread and fish; of earthly and heavenly origins; of complaining or believing – all come down to a simple choice and that is that it is a choice between life or death.

For just as Jesus offered the Samaritan woman ‘living water’, he is now offering the crowd ‘living bread’ and he gives them – and us - the assurance that ‘whoever eats this bread will live forever’. As ‘this bread’ is none other than his own flesh, his body, which is given in sacrifice for us. And because Jesus feeds us with ‘living bread’ - we need not die but share in eternal life with him(Jn 6.51).

Jesus says “I am life. I am your gift from heaven. I am your provision and your sustenance. I am nutrients and am necessary for life - in this world and for all eternity”.

Let us Pray:

Lord Jesus,

We thank you for being our Bread of Life. Nourish us today we pray, that we may receive your sustaining power to live in you and to share your love and life with others.

Draw us closer to you with the cords of your Father's love and give us of yourself as the living bread from heaven. Amen.

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE** prepared by Alan Dann

*As St Paul wrote; do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

God of compassion, we bring before you those suffering illness, anxiety and fear. We bring before you people throughout the world, especially remembering those in our local community.

Be present now to people who need Your loving, healing touch because of COVID-19. May they feel Your power of healing through the care of doctors and nurses.

Take away the fear, anxiety, and feelings of isolation from people receiving treatment or under quarantine. Give them a sense of purpose in pursuing health and protecting others from exposure to the disease. Protect their families and friends and bring peace to all who love them.

We ask for you to look lovingly on those who feel they are particularly vulnerable. Especially today we pray for those who have asked for our prayers, ..... and for these we now name, silently or aloud.....

Father hear our prayer  
**Through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Thank you Lord for those who minister in our parish, Kenmore Brookfield, for our Wardens and those volunteers who work quietly behind the scenes to ensure the smooth functioning of the parish.

Bless our families; give them the strength to cope with additional stress caused by disruption.

We pray for our community, for ourselves and each other, those with whom we live and work, for our neighbours and our friends.

Father hear our prayer  
**Through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Father, you are the source of all wisdom and understanding, we bring before you our places of learning, our schools colleges and universities particularly those currently locked down. May they continue to be lively places of sound learning and discovery in these stressful times. Bless those who learn and those who teach.

Father hear our prayer  
**Through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

We remember with thanks those who have died in the Faith especially those whose lives have touched our own. Almighty God you have promised to hear our prayers

**Grant that what we have asked in faith we may by your grace receive, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**BLESSING**

Live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us; let us give ourselves for each other's good;

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you and all those you love and care for, this day and always. **Amen.**