

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B August 9, 2015

The call to action continues with this week's readings from the Revised Common Lectionary. Although the readings seem to be quite disparate in their themes, the single thread that runs through them all is the call to live with grace, integrity and compassion for both friend and enemy. It's the small, daily acts of love and forgiveness, of honesty and compassion that make a significant difference in the world, and it is these acts that we are invited to make the habits of our lives.

May the grace, honesty and compassion of Jesus be seen in us a little more because we have worshipped this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

2 Samuel 18 : 5-9, 15, 31-33

King David's reign became less effective, and Absalom, his eldest son, led a rebellion against his father. The culmination was a battle between forces loyal to David and the rebel army, and to David's great sorrow his favourite son was killed.

or **1 Kings 19 : 4-8**

Elijah had to flee for his life when King Ahab and his wife Jezebel tried to crush all worship of the Lord. In the desert, he found food and water miraculously supplied - 'bread from heaven', in the phrase today's Gospel uses.

Psalm 130

A Psalm of faith and trust in God who forgives sins and whose promises bring hope and redemption to God's people.

or **Psalm 34:1-8**

A Psalm of thanksgiving and praise in which the psalmist encourages others to join him in praising God for God's redemption and salvation, and in which worshippers are encouraged to "taste and see" that God is good.

Ephesians 4 : 2-5:2

Life in the church will not always be smooth and joyful. But Christians should be marked as gentle people, loving and forgiving, just as Jesus himself was.

John 6:35, 41-51

After the feeding of the five thousand, John records Jesus speaking at length about the mysterious real and true bread he proclaimed himself to be. The listening people found all this hard to understand.

TEXT OF READINGS

http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Pentecost/BProp14_RCL.html

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Let thy merciful ears, O Lord,
be open to the prayers of thy humble servants;
and that they may obtain their petitions,
make them to ask such things as shall please thee;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Collect Two

Let your merciful ears, O Lord,
be open to the prayers of your humble servants;
and that they may obtain their petitions,
make them to ask such things as shall please you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Jesus, we are often like the crowd that sought you after the meal in which you gave thanks. We fail to cherish the mystery of the Eucharist and pursue what fails to bring life. We pray, "Bread of life," and respond, "Nourish us always."

For partner churches *Insert Anglican prayer and Diocesan rotas etc* - , we pray. Bread of life. **Nourish us always.**

For those in the front line of the Church of Ireland's missionary endeavour abroad, and for those who have taken retirement, we pray. Bread of life. **Nourish us always.**

For those of our faith community who live with the threat and discouragement of wasting diseases, we pray. Bread of life. **Nourish us always.**

For the schools attended by the children and young people of our parish and Church we pray. Bread of life. **Nourish us always.**

For the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, that their enrolments for ministry may meet the need of the Church at home and abroad and a spirit of fellowship in Christ may be present among faculty, staff and students, we pray. Bread of life. **Nourish us always.**

For the Sunday school that must recruit new teachers, prepare lessons, continue meaningful training and teaching, we pray. Bread of life. **Nourish us always.**

Lord of the church, forgive us, when we are satisfied too soon with our Christian understanding. Bread of life. **Nourish us always.**

Our strengths, our weaknesses, our ambiguities and our certainties we entrust to you, O Christ. **Amen**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

For all the hungry and thirsty of the world, let us pray to the Lord whose angel gave bread to Elijah.

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For this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

Lord, have mercy.

For all nations and their leaders, and for mercy, justice, and peace in the world.

Lord, have mercy.

For all who grow and harvest food, for travellers and those on vacation, and for safety from violent storms.

Lord, have mercy.

For the sick and the dying, the poor and the oppressed, prisoners and their families, and victims of violence and abuse.

Lord, have mercy.

For those who rest in Christ and for all the dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For our city and every community, and for our families, companions, and all we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with ----- and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

Father in heaven, giver of the bread of life, hear the prayers we offer this day for all those in danger and need and bring your beloved children to your eternal banquet; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION

O God,
as we are strengthened by these holy mysteries,
so may our lives be a continual offering,
holy and acceptable in your sight;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

O God,
sustain us in the complexity of our humanity
as you sustained David--
playing the harp of youth,
throwing stones at giant problems,
loving our friends beyond wisdom,
dancing worship,
mourning children,

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breaking our hearts in psalms, and
longing for warmth in our old bones. Amen.

Friends in Christ,
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers
as dear to us as our own needs.
Loving our neighbours as ourselves,
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions
on behalf of the church and the world.
Hear our prayers, God of power,
and through the ministry of your Son
free us from the grip of the tomb,
that we may desire you as the fullness of life
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,
and guided them in the way of your love,
so listen now to those who call upon you.
Move us to praise your gracious will,
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens
and healed our spirits.
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,
those seeking healing,
those in need within the church and the world.
Hear our prayers
that we may love you with our whole being
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbors. Amen.

Creator God,
you call us to love and serve you
with body, mind, and spirit
through loving your creation
and our sisters and brothers.
Open our hearts in compassion
and receive these petitions
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.
Holy One,
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards
of the fragile bounty of this earth
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.
We offer these prayers of love

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on behalf of ourselves and our neighbors,
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.
Loving God,
open our ears to hear your word
and draw us closer to you,
that the whole world may be one with you
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,
you who hear the cries of those in need,
receive these petitions of your people
that all who are troubled
may know peace, comfort, and courage.
Life-giving God,
heal our lives,
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds
and offer you thanks from generation to generation
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,
hear our prayers
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings
with your unending compassion.
Redeeming Sustainer,
visit your people
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,
that we may hurry to make you welcome
not only in our concern for others,
but by serving them
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

Bread of heaven, you feed us in the depths
of grief, sin, and hostility.
Nourish us with your word
through the long hours of tears,
and in the dawning awareness
of our need for forgiveness,
so that we may be redeemed by your steadfast love. Amen.

Bread of life,
you taught us to put away bitterness and anger,
and with tenderhearted kindness
to share the fruit of our labor with the needy.
Strengthen us by your grace,
that in communion with you,
we may forgive one another
and live in love as Christ loved us. Amen.

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

This week in the Lectionary holds together a variety of disparate elements. In the ongoing saga of David's Reign we jump forward to the rebellion led by his son Absalom, and to Absalom's death. Once again, we find David grieving an enemy, although this time he grieves as a father as well. In the Gospel we find Jesus being challenged for saying that he is the bread of life, and claiming that he reveals God, that he offers eternal life to those who come to him, and that his followers will be raised by him at the last day. There is a tremendous strength in Jesus' response to his critics, even as he proclaims a deeply invitational message. In Paul's words to the Ephesian Church, some simple, practical guidelines are offered for living together as Christ followers. How we speak to one another and treat one another is significant, because it builds our life together, and reflects the life and grace of God. Both Psalms call on believers to praise God for God's faithfulness and salvation. In the light of this, it may seem impossible to find a common thread for this week's worship. However, what stands out is a call to Christlike behaviour that is lived in the daily routines of our lives. As we celebrate God's goodness, we are called to reflect and imitate that goodness in Christlike grace, compassion, gentleness and honesty. We are called to resist evil, but love those who oppose us, even to the point of grieving their demise. This is not just living "what comes naturally", but is a challenge to embrace forgiveness, love and honesty in a radical, counter-cultural way, and in so doing, allowing God's life to flow through us to touch and restore our neighbours, our communities and our world. The simple challenge of this week is to believe that choosing to live like Christ – the Bread of Life – each day can have positive consequences for our world. As someone once suggested, we need to think globally and act locally – even in considering our daily interactions and choices.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: It is distressing that political, scientific, religious and business discourse in our world has become so vitriolic and aggressive. The paradigm from which we operate as we face the major crisis of our time has become one of conflict, name-calling, shouting, shaming and dishonesty. Rather than seek to show the positive benefits of our ideas or our candidacy, we choose, instead, to show the negative elements in our opponents' offerings. Rather than seek to work together to find a shared wisdom, we shout down those with whom we disagree, and push through our own agendas as aggressively as we can. But, the result of all of this adversarial posturing is a growing disengagement in political, economic and religious processes, and a growing inability to address our problems through lack of cohesion, collaboration and prioritising of the greater good over special interests. All too often we find ourselves addressing symptoms, but failing to deal with causes effectively. Paul's instructions offer us a different way. Jesus' invitation to all reflects God's willingness to heal, nourish and sustain all people, and to bring all people together in God's Reign. David's grief over Absalom reflects the Godly ideal of love for enemies, even though David was unable to find ways to connect and collaborate with his own son. Finally, it is when we are willing to acknowledge that God's ways of grace, goodness and compassion are the keys to addressing our global struggles that we become able to reach out to ally and enemy alike and strive to find ways to work together for the benefit of our planet and all its peoples and creatures.

LOCAL APPLICATION: It doesn't take much thinking to recognise the benefits of living as Paul describes in our homes and communities. What we might not always realise, though, is that it is when we live like this that we make a positive impact on the world. As we follow the Bread of Life and live in ways that bring life to our families, friends, neighbours, strangers and even enemies, we become little "breads of life" to our world. As we live in ways that extend Christ's invitation to others, so they begin to find life and compassion,

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forgiveness and restoration through us. And it starts with the small things like being honest, speaking graciously and being quick to forgive. As these simple daily acts become the habits by which we live, we find ourselves growing to the point where love for our enemies, even to the extent of grief at their suffering, becomes a regular feature of our lives as well. This Christlikeness, lived out daily, then contributes to the compassion, integrity and healing of our small section of the world, and becomes like a pebble dropped in a pond, spreading ripples out into the world. It's rather like Gandhi suggested: we become the change we want to see. If we long for a world that begins to reveal God's Reign on earth "as it is in heaven" this is the first step to becoming co-workers with God to make that happen.

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

2 Samuel 18:5-9, 31-33

- Kings often had to deal with power struggles from their own children, especially when multiple sons were competing for power. Can you imagine the heartbreak of your own child out to get you?
- Even still, David's love for Absalom is evident throughout the text. He wants Absalom to be spared. Torn between what is best for his kingdom, and what is best for him and for his child. Conflict of interest, to say the least.
- "me instead of you" - that's deep love, when we would put ourselves in harm's way in place of someone else. An ongoing theme in our Christian story, no? In God's story with us?
- The way Absalom is killed is sad, horrible, and almost comic-book like, I hate to say. Seems like a cartoon death.

Psalm 130:

- This psalm was just in the lectionary [last month](#). Kind of soon for a repeat, no?
- A favourite Psalm. My favourite musical setting of this Psalm is the John Rutter *Requiem*, performed occasionally by my [childhood-church](#).
- Out of the depths - what are the depths from which you call to God? Do you remember to call to God from your lowest low?
- This psalm shows a great faith and hope in God's grace and forgiving mercy, unlike some psalms that are more bent on vengeance: "If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?" It is a nice change.
- wait, wait, wait the psalmist says. I've read statistics before about how many *years* of our life we spending waiting in line for things. How much of your life do you spend waiting on God? Are you more patient about waiting in line for concert tickets than you are about waiting for God?
- Relate this Psalm to the text from 2 Samuel. They are both laments. Do you lament to God?

Ephesians 4:25-5:2:

- "members of one another." I like this imagery. Not just members of the body of Christ, but members, then, of one another. That's deep connectedness, and we should treat it with care.

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- "do not let the sun go down on your anger" - an oft-quoted and little-heeded phrase.
- "tender-hearted" - that's a cleaned up way of saying "with healthy bowels," which is the literal translation of *eusplanchnos*, but it has the meaning of compassionate, so I guess tender-hearted sounds a little prettier!
- "be imitators of God, as beloved children" - Indeed, children are the best at imitating behavior, aren't they? We're called to do as good a job in imitating God.

John 6:35, 41-51:

- This text continues with week three of a month-long series of texts from John 6 that all talk about Jesus and bread and feeding and bread of life and living water, etc., etc. The imagery is rich and meaningful and can communicate a great deal. On the flip side, I remember preaching on these texts three years ago when I was just starting at my first appointment, and wondering if I would ever get to talk about something other than bread!
- never hunger, never thirst. For people who have actually experienced real hunger, these images must have been particularly powerful.
- "is this not Jesus?" The crowds question Jesus' authority and credibility, which is a good way to undermine someone who is saying what you don't want to hear. We do this today in politics, in the church, in our families - wherever someone is speaking truth we don't like!
- "unless drawn by the Father" - very process-theology language - being lured to God.

By Beth Quick

SERMON OUTLINE

John 6:35,41-45 I am the bread of life....

Jesus utters these memorable words shortly after the feeding of the 5000.. They had been fed physically but Jesus goes on to develop their thinking... He makes an amazing claim:- *I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.* On hearing this, the Jews criticise him & his message - & a fascinating debate ensues...

1. The Parentage of Jesus 41-42: They thought they knew all about him and his background:- *'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"?' With all their education they could not accept him & believe in him as the Messiah... So Jesus points them to the Scriptures*

2. The Prophecy of Isaiah 43-45: *they shall all be taught by God (54.13).* God draws people to faith – not something they do themselves - ⁴⁴*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.* That leaves the religious leaders in a predicament: *Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.* Where then did they stand? Where do we stand?

3. The Promise of God 46-51: *whoever believes has eternal life* – through faith in Christ - feeding on *the bread of life*

a) bread in the wilderness - ⁴⁹*Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, & they died* – manna provided by God..

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b) bread for the world – Jesus *the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; & the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.* 'May we truly feed on him & enjoy His blessing.

By Norman Porteous

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

["Out of the Depths,"](http://day1.org/1401-out_of_the_depths) the Rev. Benno Pattison, *Day 1*

http://day1.org/1401-out_of_the_depths

["Food for the Family Trip,"](http://day1.org/1003-food_for_the_family_trip) The Revs. Peter and Debra Samuelson, *Day 1*

http://day1.org/1003-food_for_the_family_trip

["I Doubt It!"](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=3094) Dianne Bergant, CSA, *America*

http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=3094

CHILDREN

["Sermon of the Week,"](http://www.sermons4kids.com/) / ["Mensajes para ninos,"](http://www.sermons4kids.com/) Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

["The Main Ingredient,"](http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/b-or19sn.php) Children's Time, in Sermons and Liturgies. Richard J. Fairchild. (Scroll down in liturgies to find Children's Time.)

<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/b-or19sn.php>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Abide With Me

Bread Of The World In Mercy Broken

There's A Wideness In God's Mercy

Bread Of Heaven On Thee We Feed

Come, Sinners, To The Gospel Feast

Never Let My Hunger Die

You Are

As We Gather

You Are A Refuge

May The Words Of My Mouth