

## The Ninth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B August 2, 2012

Following on from last week, the Lectionary continues to call us to faith. This week the challenge is to recognise that faith in God's grace and abundance must lead us to action – to generosity and sharing of what we have received, be it gifts or resources. Essentially we cannot claim to be people of faith unless we live what we believe and proclaim in ways that touch the lives of others with grace and goodness.

May we grow a little more like our generous, compassionate God as we worship this week.

### INTRODUCTIONS

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

#### **2 Samuel 11 : 26-12:13a**

Last Sunday we read of David's sin of adultery and murder. Now we hear the rebuke of the prophet Nathan. It introduces us to the family troubles which persisted through the rest of David's life.

#### *or* **Exodus 16 : 2-4, 9-15**

In their desert pilgrimage, the people of Israel missed what comforts there had been in Egypt. Yet they were miraculously fed. Today's gospel will remind us that it was read from heaven which the Lord gave them.

#### **Psalms 51: 1-13**

David's repentance psalm in which he acknowledges his guilt over his affair with Bathsheba and pleads with God to forgive and restore him.

#### *or* **Psalms 78: 23-29**

A song remembering how God gave manna to the people in the wilderness and sent birds to provide meat for them to eat.

#### **Ephesians 4 : 1-16**

This letter is all about the nature of the church as Christ's body. This section calls us to our essential unity, despite our different gifts and personalities. We are to grow into a mature faith, bound together by truth and love.

#### **John 6 : 24-35**

Jesus made a small amount of bread enough for several thousand people - and they want more of the same. He teaches them the deeper meaning of the sign of the bread he gives: that he is himself the satisfaction of all our deepest needs.

### TEXT OF READINGS

[http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB\\_RCL/Pentecost/BProp13\\_RCL.html](http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Pentecost/BProp13_RCL.html)

### COLLECTS OF THE DAY

#### **Collect One**

Grant to us, Lord, we beseech thee,  
the spirit to think and do always  
such things as be rightful;  
that we, who cannot do any thing  
that is good without thee,  
may by thee be enabled to live according to thy will;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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### Collect Two

Almighty God,  
who sent your Holy Spirit  
to be the life and light of your Church:  
Open our hearts to the riches of his grace,  
that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit  
in love and joy and peace;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Jesus comes to his believing ones in mystery and wonder. A young boy's small offering of food becomes a plentiful feast in the hands of the Saviour. His presence in a storm at sea brings peace. Recalling Christ's gifts of plenty and peace, we gladly pray, "Abide with us, dear Saviour," and offer this response, "Nor let your mercies cease."

That a generous church in every place may quicken thanksgiving. Abide with us, dear Saviour. **Nor let your mercies cease.**

That those beleaguered by chronic depression, unwanted fears, and continuing inner distresses of any kind, may be relieved. Abide with us, dear Saviour. C: Nor let your mercies cease.

That where uncertainty and doubt in the church have masked vision and eroded faith, courage and confidence may be restored. Abide with us, dear Saviour. **Nor let your mercies cease..**

That the world's goods may be shared justly that those of plentiful means may be moved to relieve the desperate want of the poor. Abide with us, dear Saviour. **Nor let your mercies cease.**

That political terrorism and other acts of violence for national achievement may fail and be supplanted by negotiated and peaceful settlements. Abide with us, dear Saviour. **Nor let your mercies cease.**

Forgive our selfishness, O God, when we have withheld even a little so that others in our world know starvation, loss of hope and life. Abide with us, dear Saviour. **Nor let your mercies cease.**

Provider God, we entrust to you what you have entrusted to us, our lives and our possessions. **Amen.**

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

*Presider or deacon*

Gathered as the body of Christ, rich in the gifts of God, let us offer prayers for all who hunger and thirst.

*Deacon or other leader*

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For *N* our bishop and *N* our presbyter, for this holy gathering, and for all who share the bread of life.

**Lord, have mercy.**

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

**Lord, have mercy.**

For farmers and a good harvest, for travellers and those on vacation, and for safety from violent storms.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For all those in danger and need: the sick and the suffering, prisoners, captives, and their families, the hungry, homeless, and oppressed.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the dying and the dead.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For ourselves, our families and companions, and all those 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*

God and Father of all, hear our prayers for all in need and fill your hungry people with bread from heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **POST COMMUNION**

Holy Father,  
who gathered us here around the table of your Son  
to share this meal with the whole household of God:  
In that new world where you reveal the fulness of your peace,  
gather people of every race and language  
to share in the eternal banquet  
of 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,

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dancing worship,  
mourning children,  
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.  
*Intercessions may be included...*  
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.  
*Intercessions may be included...*  
Hear our prayers  
that we may love you with our whole being  
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours. 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.  
*Intercessions may be included...*  
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,  
[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)

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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  
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbours,  
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.  
*Intercessions may be included...*  
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.  
*Intercessions may be included...*  
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.

God of the lowly and the mighty,  
you know the ugliness of your people  
when we harm and destroy one another,  
yet you offer us  
forgiveness of our sins if we but turn to you.  
Expand our hearts to receive the mercy you give us,  
that, in turn, we may share your grace and mercy  
with others each moment of our lives. Amen.

God of hope,  
when your hungry people longed for the slave food of Egypt,  
you opened the doors of heaven and rained down manna.

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Feed us with the bread of life at your table,  
that we may taste the freedom of eternal life  
and lead lives worthy of our calling,  
through Christ our head. Amen.

Almighty God,  
your Son Jesus Christ  
fed the hungry  
with the bread of his life  
and the word of his kingdom.  
Renew your people with your heavenly grace,  
and in all our weakness  
sustain us by the true and living bread,  
Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who lives and reigns  
with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

### ***Prayer of Approach, confession and petition***

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.

Almighty God, Lord of Time and Space, we are thankful that You have cared for each one of us from the day we were born; and that You will go on caring for us for the rest of our days. Though we may run and hide from Your presence, though we are forgetful of our promises to You, though life sometimes makes us feel bitter and confused, You remain faithful and hold us in the palm of Your hand. In You, we can rest secure, safe in the knowledge that nothing can separate us from Your love, revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

Father God, You know us better than we know ourselves. You see us with all our imperfections. You understand our weaknesses and failings. In the peace of this moment, we confess our sins before You, trusting in Your grace and forgiveness. We confess to You now that we are unworthy of Your Goodness and Love. In our weakness, we have not lived as You would have us live. We have sinned in thought, word and deed. We fall easily into temptation and we find it hard to do the right thing. Yet You are patient with us and see in us the potential we have to be faithful followers of our Saviour Jesus. Father forgive us for all our sins - those known to others, and those known only by You. Place in us a new heart and a new spirit, and grant us the resolve to live as Christ would have us live, seeking one another's welfare, bearing one another's burdens and sharing one another's joys. This we ask in the Name and for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

### ***Prayer of Intercession***

Almighty God our heavenly Father, we offer our thanks and praise for all that You have done for us through Jesus Christ. We can only marvel that He came to earth to identify Himself with humanity and to live as one of us, yet without sin. We are grateful that He lived the perfect life, and died to set us free, before returning to Your right hand to plead our cause. As we travel through life, grant us the knowledge that we are never alone, never without a friend, for His presence is with us by the power of Your Holy Spirit.

We pray today for leaders in *Parliament and Assembly* and all who bear the burden of authority in the political world.

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For leaders across the world in every nation,  
And for those whose leadership is in education, law, social services and business.  
Grant them a vision which is clear and compassionate, to serve the needs of others.  
Father, we pray for your world; for governments, leaders, diplomats, and all seeking  
reconciliation and solution for conflicts. We remember the peoples and governments of...  
*[insert specific situations of current concern]*

Give strength to all who work to relieve the hungry and seek justice for the oppressed and  
heal the sick throughout your world.

Lord, we pray for those who, day by day, face hurt and pain and for those facing  
operations and long-term illness, and especially those whom we know are in special need;  
we name them in our hearts ...

Loving God, we pray for the welfare of our Church throughout the land, remembering its  
work in the cities and in the housing estates, in nursing homes and hospitals, in hospices  
and in prisons, in offices and on the factory floor.

Bless all who serve as ambassadors for Christ who are channels of hope and  
encouragement, wherever they may be. Bless those in congregations throughout the land,  
who are faithful witnesses to Jesus in their Sunday worship and in their daily life. And bless  
those in our own congregation, who persevere under trial and testing, especially those  
who carry the burden of responsibility, those who struggle with ill-health, those coping with  
bereavement, and those with problems known only by You.  
May each of us receive the measure of Your Grace, according to our need, through Jesus  
Christ our Lord, Amen.

### **Offertory Prayer**

Almighty God our heavenly Father, let our offering today day, be an outward sign and  
symbol of our commitment to Your Kingdom. As we have received the full measure of Your  
Grace which none can repay, help us to respond in gratitude by putting our whole lives at  
Your disposal, to the honour and glory of Your most Holy Name. This we ask through  
Christ our Lord – Amen

## LECTIONARY NOTES 1

### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

There are two ideas that collide in this week's Lectionary readings. Firstly we are called to  
meditate on and give thanks for God's generous grace that sustains and unites us. In the  
wilderness, the Israelites are fed meat and manna, which is remembered in the song of  
Psalm 78. In the Gospel, the people remember this miracle and ask Jesus what he will do  
to show them that they should believe in him. His response is to offer himself as the Bread  
of Life that brings true sustenance. In the epistle, this same sustaining grace welcomes us  
into the united community of God, and gives us each gifts that we are to use to build our  
community up. The second idea that the Lectionary offers us flows out of the semi-  
continuous Old Testament reading, and reveals what happens when we ignore God's  
generosity and grace, and start to live according to our worst, most selfish and lustful  
natures. David, to whom God had given the most abundant of blessings in every way,  
used his power to seduce a poor man's wife and then put the man to death. God does not  
stay silent in the face of this, but sends the prophet to challenge and confront David.  
Fortunately David is able to repent, as Psalm 51 reveals, but even this does not stop the  
consequences of his actions – the internal conflict within his family that ultimately  
destroyed the unity of God's people and split the kingdom in two.

The message is simple, but also very challenging. God's grace is sufficient, and God does seek to sustain and provide for us. But, we have a part to play. As we commit to the unity of the community of faith so we each contribute our share from the gracious gifts God has given us – be it time, talents or treasures. When we do this, we all enjoy abundance and unity and the tremendous life and nourishment that flows as a result. However, when we refuse to do this and make our own personal needs and desires paramount, our unity breaks down, and we all end up hurting and in need. This is not a magical, “reward and punishment” view of faith or of the world. It is the simple reality that the Bread of Life has given us enough for all in the world, as long as we share what we have. When we hoard and take more than we need, we create lack and hunger, and our relationships inevitably break down.

### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

#### **Global Application:**

The tremendous conflicts and struggles that we experience in our world can all be reduced to one basic reality. Some people have more than they need and hoard it, and others have too little and are willing to fight to get more. Whether it's issues of power, in which some are disempowered while others cling to control as corporate, political or organisational dictators; or issues of economics in which some fight daily just to survive while others spend small fortunes on their whims; or issues of disease in which some struggle to get the medical care and medicine that they need because of their station in life, while others use their knowledge and opportunities to get wealthy through medical patents and careful distribution of necessary drugs; every justice issue, every war and every violent protest arises because of the inequality, disunity and lack of generosity in our world. God has supplied the manna we need to feed, house and care for everyone in our world. The Bread of Life has shown us the way to life, by believing in his sacrificial, generous way of simplicity. Yet, like David, we continue to grab what we can, even when it hurts others, and we continue to place our own needs and desires over those of others. We continue to sacrifice the unity of our communities on the altar of our own lust and greed – and the world continues to suffer. If we are to make any difference to the harsh realities of our times, we must embrace the generous grace of God – not just for us, but as a force that flows through us to others. Only as we begin to value unity, simplicity and sharing our contributions with one another can we hope to find peace, freedom and an end to poverty, disease and war.

#### **Local Application:**

The unfortunate temptation of our time is the call to fill our lives with ever more “stuff.” We are constantly bombarded with images of things we don't have – be it sexual partners, food, objects, or lifestyles – and we are constantly encouraged to forget about others as we go after these “bright, shiny objects” of our desire. We are constantly being told that we will only find fulfilment when we own enough, eat enough, experience enough, or know enough. However, in the process, our relationships and communities die, and our hearts grow increasingly empty. We all discover that we resonate with David's song as we recognise that, when our lusts and greeds are allowed free reign, we bring disaster on ourselves and others. But, we also all know that there is another way – the way of the Bread of Life who gave himself to feed us, and who calls us to believe in him and his way. As we embrace the way of faith in God's Reign, we find the freedom that comes from simplicity, the unity that comes from collaboration, and the abundance that comes from simplicity and generosity. But, beneath it all lies the crucial question: do we believe in the way of the Kingdom enough, do we trust in Jesus as the Bread of Life enough, that we will

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risk living according to his way, and commit ourselves to seek the unity that can only come when we share whatever gifts we have with others.

### LECTIONARY NOTES 2

#### **2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a:**

- Today is [part two of the story](#) of David's act of adultery/deceit/murder/etc.
- I wonder how much room to disagree Bathsheba had in this whole affair. Could she refuse the king? Did she know of his plotting to kill her husband, or think it was a strange coincidence? Did she want to marry David? As usual, unfortunately in the scriptures, we hear less from the women than I at least would like.
- "You are the man!" Nathan helps David to see, by showing him the sin in another. We are so much better at seeing the sins of others, aren't we? But as Jesus would later teach, we first have to check for planks in our own eyes...
- :12 - David's 'private' sin is shown by God to be a public thing. Is individual sin only public for leaders, like David, or like Bill Clinton? Or is part of being in a community of faith realizing that all of our sin is in part a public act?

#### **Psalm 51:1-12:**

- Ah, a favourite psalm. A confession. This psalm is one I'm mostly likely to use if I'm feeling the need to come before God in a confessional mode. Do you have a confessional prayer in church every week? We do not, and I think as Protestants, we sometimes get nervous about confession, even corporate. But even if we don't share sins with a priest, confession is a necessary part of our relationship - any healthy relationship, really.
- Where I disagree with the psalmist, (thought to be David writing after the sin with Bathsheba) is in his claim: "against you, you alone, have I sinned." Rarely do our sins only affect God - that's the worst about them - our sin hurts others. David's sin, for instance, resulted in a man's death, and a child's death, according to scriptures.
- This psalm usually shows up during the penitent Lenten season. Today it shows up in connection with the Old Testament lesson. How does reading this psalm in a different season change your understanding of it?

#### **Ephesians 4:1-16:**

- "live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" - Paul follows with a list of high standards for us to live by. When we respond to a call from God - to ministry, ordained or otherwise, to mission, to whatever, that call comes with responsibility too.
- one, one, one. Notice a theme? Repetition. Paul wants us to get the message. ONE. In a church that is so divided over ritual, liturgy, theology, social issues, politics, etc., how do we live as the ONE body of Christ?
- gifts - one of many great passages on the unique and varied nature of God's gifts to us. Great Sunday to talk about gifts, encourage use of gifts, or discovery of gifts.
- "no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine." We may feel like this is a concern today, but it is a concern as old as the church! We have such short attention spans, always following the next new fad, even in faith matters. Paul says that's simply immature.

**John 6:24-35:**

- This text continues with week two 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!
- "but because you ate your fill of the loaves" - you can take Jesus' statement two ways. 1e - the people are coming just because they got a free meal, and are hoping for more. Or, in eating the bread, the people realized Jesus could fill them in deeper ways too. Perhaps a bit of both, but probably more of the former. Jesus hopes to teach them of the latter.
- "This is the work of God, that you believe" The people were expecting something a bit more. They wanted signs. Jesus tells them essentially that they have all the signs they need - *they* are the signs this time. God in them is the sign.
- Jesus deflecting from his person to his source - Jesus always turns credit away from him or other individuals to what he names as his source: His father.
- "*I am*" - A theme in John, Jesus' "*I am*" statements. Here, Jesus is telling the people - I've already given you what you are asking for. Now, live like it!

By Beth Quick

**SERMON OUTLINE**

**Jn 6:24-35 looking for Jesus**

The discussion recorded here takes place on the day following the miracle of the loaves and fishes as the crowd *got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. (24)*

1. The Miracle 24-27 – performed by Jesus leads to Jesus questioning their motives in seeking him out – was it because of a) miraculous sign – feeding of 5000 with 5 loaves & 2 fish  
b) material satisfaction - *you are looking for me, (26) not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.* Jesus urges them to seek true & lasting spiritual satisfaction:- *27Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.* This raises the query- *What must we do to perform the works of God? - & the simple reply 'This is the work of God, (29) that you believe in him whom he has sent.'*
2. The Manna 30-33: supplied in the wilderness.. The Jews again question the credentials of Jesus: *'What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? 31Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat."* The food that God supplied via Moses was localised & perishable, but Jesus has something better to offer - *the true bread from heaven - 33For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.'*
3. The Messiah 34-35: Taking Jesus literally and thinking only of their stomachs, *34They said to him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.'* However Jesus directs their thoughts from the material to the spiritual and offers eternal satisfaction and spiritual salvation - *35 Jesus*

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*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 – too good an offer to refuse!*

*By Norman Porteous*

### **ONLINE SERMON SOURCES**

[Ministry Matters](#), See Sermon options

<http://www.ministrymatters.com/bin/2594/this-sunday-8512>

["The Thunk, the Gap, and the Six A's,"](#) the Rev. Mark Sargent, *Day 1*

<http://day1.org/1400-the-thunk-the-gap-and-the-six-as>

["Keeping the Children Fed and Happy,"](#) The Revs. Peter and Debra Samuelson, *Day 1*

<http://day1.org/1002-keeping-the-children-fed-and-happy>

["Bread from Heaven,"](#) Dianne Bergant, CSA, *America*

[http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article\\_id=3075](http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=3075)

### **CHILDREN**

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

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

[Ministry Matters](#), - worship for kids - scroll down

<http://www.ministrymatters.com/bin/2594/this-sunday-8512>

["Dinner on the Ground,"](#) Children's Sermon from Sermons4kids.com.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/dinner-on-the-ground.html>

["Who Is Number One?"](#) ["Seeing God's Helping Hand,"](#) 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-or18su.php>

### **HYMN SUGGESTIONS**

Trust And Obey

Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah

Break Thou The Bread Of Life

The Church's One Foundation

And Can It Be

Create In Me A Clean Heart

Search Me, O God

Search Me

How Long?

Your Grace Is Enough

We Will Run