

PENTECOST 11
8/8/21
CAVES BEACH

NOTICES:

- * We hope to be able to gather together again next week. If not we will have something different to offer in You Tube.
- * Please take the extra time that you have this week to ring someone who you haven't spoken to in recent times.
- * Be kind to one another.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Bless God at all times!

We will bless and thank God at this morning service of worship.

Bless God at all times!

We will bless God when we celebrate birthdays and anniversaries, the markers of our human life.

Bless God at all times!

We will bless God when God holds us fast in the storms of life.

Bless God at all times!

We will bless God when we have been blessed with joy within our family or friendship circle.

Bless God at all times!

We will bless God when evil is confronted and the discouraged are given hope. We will bless God at all times!

Opening Prayer God: presence of God difficult times: presence of God in
In the warmth of a pleasant evening beside the lake or in the backyard,
we seek God's renewing presence.
In the smile of a young mother,
we seek God's parental presence.
In the agony of despair, the shock of an unexpected diagnosis,
we seek God's empathetic presence.
In the struggles and fractures of life with family and friends,
we seek God's reconciling presence. In all of life's
experiences - joyful, frustrating, painful, exhilarating - and in this
service of worship, Loving God, we seek your presence. Amen.

HYMN 390 Jesus is Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U1MuOCHon4>

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

God of forgiveness, each day your love greets us.

You help us shake of the dark ways that turn us from your light.

You assist us to quell our anger and distress,

for the warmth of your shining presence brings new ways of being.

In you, we find the strength to go forward and overcome our human weaknesses.

With you, we are never alone or far from your wisdom, if we take the time to listen

God of love, we thank you for all these healing gifts
that make each moment a blessed gift of life beyond measure.

In our world, there are so many things on which we rely, Constant One.
We rely too often on timetables, planning and managing our days
with tasks and duties, with competitive actions.
We are sorry we miss the sacredness of moments with you.

Irritations, disruptions and differences of opinions,
become an unhealthy focus of conversation and thoughts.
We are sorry that we do not listen fully to points of view,
or dismiss alternate ways with such vigour and annoyance.

Words of blame and disparagement, of anger and harm to another
flow from our mouths too readily.
We do not respect each other or offer space for explanation;
rather, our words and actions bring hurt, shame and insult.
Shake off our anger and hate, our negativity and bitterness,
for we know these are not part of a faith filled life with you.
We have strayed from your path, Jesus, and are controlled by selfishness.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Friends, our God offers us strength to overcome these negative ways.
Call on the Spirit and allow this gentle and honouring love
guide you, strengthen you and grow in you.
Wisdom, tender-hearted love and forgiveness
reflect the Way of Jesus, to which we are all called.
Let us welcome being controlled by God's love.

READINGS

* Ephesians 4:25-5:2

25 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our
neighbours, for we are members of one another. 26 Be angry but do not sin;
do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not make room for the
devil. 28 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. 29 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. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you
were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. 31 Put away from you all
bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all
malice, 32 and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one
another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. 5 1 Therefore be imitators of
God, as beloved children, 2 and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave
himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

* John 6:51-58

51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this
bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the
world is my flesh."

52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" 53 So Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; 55 for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. 56 Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. 57 Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever."

HYMN 442 All praise to our redeeming Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2Qhk8zl7Jo>

SERMON

As I mentioned last week we are working our way through the 6th chapter of John's Gospel. John is very different in his approach to Mark's Gospel. Mark is short and direct whereas John has layer upon layer of meaning for us to chew on before we can start to digest it. To simply take John at face value would very quickly give us indigestion.

Also Mark's Gospel is so short that parts of John's Gospel are introduced during this year so that over the course of the three year lectionary cycle a large part of all four Gospels are evenly covered.

One of the interesting things in John's Gospel that there is no actual account of Jesus sharing the bread and then the wine at the last supper. In the passage today we have an emphasis on the body and blood of Christ.

This passage is very important as it gives us a whole new depth of meaning for the sacrament of communion. The imagery used here could almost be seen as cannibalistic. The passage ends with Jesus saying: "Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."

The rawness of the language and the imagery it evokes keeps being developed in passages that we will look at in the weeks ahead. Today I am simply going to explore the meaning of the passage which says: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." The passage from Ephesians helps to flesh this concept out for us.

When we look at advertising we often see the idea put forward that something is missing in your life unless you have bought the product being promoted. It is one of the most basic and obvious approaches to marketing. In any good marketing program people have to be convinced that the product is essential for a happy life. They need to know that it will finally fill that hole in their life and will bring lasting satisfaction. Just watch any commercial on TV and you will see what I mean.

So, when Jesus says: "Eat this bread and you'll never be hungry again," we can see the ground being prepared for the sales pitch to follow. However, if this was what we expected then we will be disappointed as Jesus turns things on their head now. In fact by the time that he finished speaking people around Jesus are complaining that His message was unacceptable and they had started to abandon His band of followers. In fact even the disciples were having second thoughts.

Jesus is simply putting the hard word on those present to make a clear decision. "Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. I am the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die." As God had said to the people following Moses, centuries before, "I put before you life and death; therefore choose life." Here is Jesus talking about the bread of life and the bread of death. We need to choose the bread of life.

What really disturbs the crowd is the fact that here is the son of a carpenter sprouting that 'He is the bread of life!' They knew His father and mother. What gives Him the right to say that He came down from heaven?

Surely God would use a grander stage and more prestigious presenter than this simple carpenter to promote such a major change. After all there is no way that God would choose an ordinary human being to share the secrets of the profound gift of eternal life.

Jesus responds with a passage from scripture: "And they shall all be taught by God," and then he says that everyone who has heard and learned from the Father can receive this gift. What Jesus is explaining here is that God is capable of sharing through any human, not just Jesus. These gifts are freely available to anyone who can embrace the message and then lives out the message and continues to share it with those around them.

Now let's look at the passage from Paul's letter to the faithful in Ephesus. Here Paul says: "Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us."

Here we are being shown that there are two very different types of bread to live by. There is the bread of wrath, anger, bitterness and abuse on one side. On the other hand there is simply the bread of love, kindness, compassion and forgiveness. Paul asks us to choose life and be imitators of Christ by choosing the second type of bread to consume.

When we share communion every month we often hear the words from St Augustine: "Let us receive what we are; let us become what we receive." If we listen to the dieticians we are often told that we are what we eat. This is simply a biological fact.

Jesus picks up on this as He calls us to feed on the 'bread of life.' Become what you receive. Will you become people of bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander and malice, or people of kindness, compassion, forgiveness and love? It all depends what you feed on. The options are laid before you.

The simple difficulty that we have is that both types of bread can seem like they are the same. If we feed on images of an angry 'god' and we are full of hatred and lashing out in anger seeking to spread bitterness and hatred poorly dressed up in some spiritual language and trying to look like the real God then that is the bread we eat. This bread quickly leads down the path to the bread that does not satisfy nor give eternal life.

Jesus boldly tells us that He is the 'bread of life.' Paul expands this for us calling on Jesus' followers to imitate God. Paul knew very well how deceptive the path can be. The God we seek to imitate is one who is the complete opposite of anger and hatred.

Marketing 101 tells us that the easiest way to unite the people of the world is to help them feel good about themselves and unite against the hate and division. We need to address those who would corrupt the love of God. We need to feel unified and supported as we go forward with excitement and righteous as we move down the road to remove anger, and hatred and bitterness and death.

Jesus told His followers that their forefathers had lived off the mana from heaven while they were in the wilderness until they were led by God into the promised land. However they did not live up to God's directions when they then committed genocide, so they died. Those who lived by the sword also died by the sword.

Jesus calls on His followers to feed on Him, feed on His ways and become what you feed on. Paul asks the faithful to be imitators of God. This bread is kindness, love, compassion and forgiveness.

Coming back to what I said earlier today about the image of chewing on the depth of the John passage I want to again draw on that connection. Our basic practices covering how we express our feelings and emotions and how we look after others is a sign of how we are chewing on that 'bread.' We can be emotionally like a cow chewing its cud, and whatever you chew on the longest will shape you the most.

* When someone hurts you or offends you or makes you angry, what are you going to do with it?

* Well, what kind of person are you choosing to become?

You can feed on the bread of anger and hurt and the desire for vengeance and payback. You can chew on those things, over and over and over, and you will become what you chew on. What you feed on will consume you, and you will eventually be consumed by bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and

slander and malice. Or in other words, you will die.

Or you can feed on the bread of kindness, compassion, forgiveness and love. You can make a conscious choice to spit out the wad of bitterness and anger, and choose to forgive, choose to love, choose to relinquish the right to retaliate. Jesus gives no guarantee that this will work for you at all in terms of changing the other person's behaviour. They might take advantage of your graciousness and go right on hurting you.

They took Jesus and tortured him to death. So he's not promising that this approach will make people treat you better. But what he is promising is that what you feed on will consume you and become who you are. He is promising that it will change you.

On the communion table each month is the bread that we can choose to consume. Is it the bread of death, or life? The Bread of Life offers Himself to you and for you, in love, in compassion, in brokenness, laying down his life for you, that you might feed on Him and become a body of kindness, compassion, forgiveness and love. Therefore, choose life. The Bread of Life. And may what you feed on consume you.

HYMN 607 Make me a channel of your peace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EikRxx5-8NE>

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

Take our gifts today Loving God and use them to build a peace-filled world.
Take our days and use them to bring about just and hope-filled community.
Take our hearts and warm them with love for all people and your creation.
For these are the things that we cherish, and that we wish to honour with you.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

In this irritated and unsettled world, God of all,
We bring before you these concerns in prayers from our heart.

For the underfed and unsheltered, we pray for food and homes.
Call us to welcoming hospitality and generosity.
Show us where to bring change.

For the environment groaning under the pains of misuse and abuse.
Call us to be wise in our use of resources, renewables and recycling.
Show us where to encourage others in loving creation.

For those struggling in loneliness and isolation.
Call us to watch, listen clearly and act with generosity.
Show us where to encourage inclusion and acceptance.

For those who need advocacy and support that we can offer
Call to us to see the world as it is and where we can use the gifts, we have
to create a thriving society, controlled by your love.

We pray that we are instruments of your love and kindness,
that we live our lives bearing witness to your Way
and to the change that will bring about your realm, God of new beginnings.

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.

JAN'S REPORT

HYMN 609 May the mind of Christ my Saviour
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gE5fOXSymbC>

BENEDICTION

Let God create a clean heart in you.
Set aside what weighs you down,
Build up your inner strength and resources,
controlled by God's love.
Step forth with certainty that God is before you,
Jesus walks with you
and the Spirit surrounds you.
This is the moment to step into a new way of being,
so that you live life to the fullest with our loving God.
Go in peace, with justice and humility in your hearts.