

**PENTECOST 11**  
**4/8/24**  
**CAVES BEACH**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

God, who has given us the gift of thanksgiving,  
**calls us to worship.**

God, who has given us the gift of faithful understanding,  
**evokes joy in us as we worship.**

God, who has given us the gift of feeling for the world's pain,  
**inspires and motivates us as we worship.**

God, who has given us the gift of faith community,  
**gives us determination to share in the work as we worship.**

**Opening Prayer**

You join us for worship, O God.

**As we greet each other, we express your friendliness.**

You enter into our praise, O God.

**As we joyfully sing, we mirror your willingness to celebrate.**

Your Word has pride of place in our reflection, O God.

**We will take it to heart and work out its significance for our community.**

You assure us that you will never leave us, O God.

**We rejoice in your faithfulness in this and in every generation.**

**Amen.**

**HYMN 209** And can it

be <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dC8HSEKtuio>

**PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION**

We praise you, O God, for the meaning that you give to our lives in and through Jesus. He is the sign of your deep and everlasting love for the world and we rejoice in his promise to sustain us with his life. We praise you for filling our emptiness with his goodness. May our worship and praise express our thanks, O God, for your gift to us of the true bread from heaven - Jesus Christ, your Son, our living Lord.

**Have** mercy on us, God of steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy blot out all our wrongdoings.

Cleanse us thoroughly from all our sins..

We know all too well, when we do sin, that we do it against you, O God.

When we do evil in your sight, O God, you are justified in your judgment of our misdeeds.

You desire truth in all we think, and do and say; therefore etch your wisdom on the innermost places of our hearts.

Wash and scrub our sins away until we are free from imperfection.

*Silent confession*

Create in us clean hearts, O God, and put a new and right spirit within us.

Do not cast us from your presence and do not take your Holy Spirit from us.

Restore to us the joy of your salvation, and sustain in us a willing spirit so that we can respond joyfully to your intention for our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen..

*(a short time of silence to contemplate the above words)*

#### ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:

Through the grace of God, we know the joy of salvation in Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners. Rejoice, then, that those who believe in Jesus are not only forgiven, but are fed and sustained by him. Jesus, Bread of Life, living Lord, we thank you and we rejoice over your care and your love for us and for all people.

#### READINGS

- **Ephesians 4:1–16**

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: 4 there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

7 But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.

8 Therefore it is said,

“When he ascended on high, he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.”

9 (When it says, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) 11 He himself granted that some are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity,[e] to the measure of the full stature of Christ. 14 We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.

- **John 6:24–35**

24 So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

25 When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” 26 Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate your fill of the loaves. 27 Do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.” 28 Then they said to him, “What must we do to perform the works of God?” 29 Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” 30 So they said to him, “What sign are you going to give us, then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing? 31 Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ” 32 Then Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” 34 They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”

35 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.

**HYMN 609** May the mind of Christ my Saviour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gE5fOXSymBc>

## **SERMON**

John has a very different in his approach to what we have been seeing in Mark's Gospel. Mark is short and direct whereas John has layer upon layer of making us reflect carefully before we can start to fully understand a passage. To simply take John at face value would very quickly give us indigestion. It needs to be carefully examined and fully digested in order to get the full value from this Gospel.

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

One of the interesting things in John's Gospel is 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 can give 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 hear in the weeks ahead. Today I am initially going to delve into 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."

Later we will see that the passage from Ephesians helps to flesh out this concept.

When we look at advertising we often see the concept put forward that something is missing in your life unless you get 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 the product will finally fill that hole in their life and will bring lasting satisfaction. So, when

Jesus says: “Eat this bread and you’ll never be hungry again,” we can see the ground being prepared for a 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, some of the people around Jesus are complaining that His message was unacceptable and they started to abandon the group. 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 alternatives of the bread that gives life and the bread that only means death.

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 idea. 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, or does He? We can see those undercurrents here in John’s Gospel.

Jesus responds to those comments 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 anyone, 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 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 we can 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 a simple biological fact.

Jesus picks up on this as He calls us to feed on the ‘bread of life.’ 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 simple option is laid before you.

The 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. To feed on His ways means that we become fully connected to God. Paul asks the faithful to be imitators of God. This 'bread' for Paul gives kindness, love, compassion and forgiveness.

Coming back to what I said earlier today about the image of digesting 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 changed by that 'bread.'

We can be emotionally like a cow chewing its cud so that 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?

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 thoughts of bitterness and anger, and choose to forgive, choose to love, choose to ignore 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 even 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 change you and you grow closer to God. He is promising that it will transform 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 Christ to you and for you, in love, in compassion, in brokenness, laying down His life for you, so 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 390** Alleluia

### **PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING**

The gifts we bring are signs of God's goodness.  
The services that we offer are signs of our discipleship.  
All we are and all we have are what we would offer this day.  
Loving God,  
receive the gift we would offer this day –  
the gifts of our resources and the dedication of our lives.  
May they be used to your glory in service of your mission. Amen.

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

#### **Morisset Uniting Church**

Morisset Uniting Church, known as "Church in the Trees" seeks to be a place where people can draw near to nature and to God in an accepting community of Christ Jesus. We reach out to the wider community through our Op Shop, Over 55s Expo, hiring our facilities, the Open Kitchen meals, and involvement with other groups and charities. We are in the process of constructing a Bush Chapel along with other ideas for service and growth.

**Prayer:** We pray that the worship, witness and service of Morisset Uniting Church will bring many into the presence of God. We pray for each person to be aware of their blessedness as they interact with others, blessing each one with good news, in the name of Christ. Amen.

*Holy God,*  
we come with our prayers for others.  
We pray for those known to us in particular need this day.  
*(Silent prayer)*  
Loving God,  
in the midst of our world's anguish and pain,  
we look for the signs of your presence as we search for peace.  
We pray for all leaders in power.  
Guide them we pray.



Help them to know deep within that true leadership benefits all people. Wherever race, or religion, or gender or politics causes division, let there be mutual understanding and a willingness to seek common ground.

*(Silent prayer)*

Eternal God,

we pray for your people.

Shape us. Create in us a willing heart to serve you and others.

As the first disciples were commissioned to share the gospel, may we be willing to speak your words of truth and new life.

Build us up as your body of believers, so others can see the new life you offer through faith.

*(Silent prayer)*

In all things, may your will be done, and your reign come among us. In the name of Christ. Amen.

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.

**HYMN 526** Lord Jesus Christ

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKsbd5UqKkc>

## **COMMUNION**

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Hear the words of institution of this sacrament as recorded by the apostle Paul:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: "This is my body which is for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, for the remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

*1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

With this bread and this cup we do as our Saviour commands: we set them apart for the holy supper to which he calls us, and we come to God with our prayers of thanksgiving.

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is right that we should always offer thanks, O God, because you have created and sustained us and all things.

And so we praise you  
with the faithful of every time and place,  
joining with choirs of angels and the whole creation  
in the eternal hymn.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise you, O God,  
that in your mercy you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ,  
that whoever believes in him  
should not perish but have eternal life.

We give thanks for his humble birth,  
for his life of ministry and love,  
for his sufferings and death on the cross,  
for his glorious resurrection and ascension,  
and for the promise that he will come again.

O God, by your word and Spirit  
bless and sanctify this bread and this wine,  
that they may be for us  
the communion of the body and blood of Christ,  
and that he may ever live in us  
and we in him.

God, accept us,  
as we offer and present ourselves, our souls and our bodies,  
to be a holy and a living sacrifice;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit  
be all honour and glory, now and forever.  
AMEN

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.  
The cup we take is a sharing in the blood of Christ.  
The gifts of God for the people of God.

—  
Receive this holy sacrament  
of the body and blood of Christ,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

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## **DISTRIBUTION**

### **AFTER COMMUNION**

Let us pray:

We thank you, God our Father,  
that through word and sacrament  
you have given us your Son  
who is the true bread of heaven  
and food of eternal life.

So strengthen us in your service  
that our daily living may show our thanks;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

**HYMN 530** Now let us from this table rise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3c9nLdio7Q>

### **BENEDICTION**

We are called to be a sign and witness for Christ.  
As we go from here,  
may we seek to serve and to be living bread for others.  
May our lives reflect God's goodness and mercy.  
May all we say and do glorify Christ.  
May the love of God be always in our hearts.  
May the truth of Christ be upon our lips.  
May the power of the Holy Spirit keep us strong. **Amen.**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH\\_HdkWs74](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH_HdkWs74)