

PENTECOST 10  
1/8/21  
CAVES BEACH

### CALL TO WORSHIP

As we sit within this community of faith, so we are fed.

Praise and prayer feed our minds and spirits.

We are wonderfully fed.

The teachings of Jesus bring us to the faithful way.

We are graciously fed.

The cross of Jesus calls us to the selfless, practical way.

We are gloriously fed.

The rising of Jesus from death fills us with a timeless,  
unbounded hope.

Opening Prayer God: fed by praise worship trust: in God  
God, you give us food and drink for each new day.

You are worthy of our praise!

God, you give us friends for the testing paths of life.

You are worthy of our worship!

God, you give us the saints as models of Christian life.

You are worthy of our trust!

God, you give us Jesus Christ to strengthen us when we take on the powers  
and oppressors.

You are worthy of our love!

Great Eternal Giver, we praise you! Amen.

HYMN 209 And can it be

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQeIGbKqiw8>

### PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

Generous God, who offers an unexpected feast in surprising ways,  
We welcome your care and love!

In wonder and hope, we worship you,  
for you continually surprise us.

At the very times when we tire in our faith  
and hunger for new answers,

You raise before us a spiritual feast,  
where every 'course' that comes before us each day,  
conjoins with the next delight of unfolding of wisdom.

Our soul fills with wonder and our heart with love.

You clear our thinking and direct our doing  
so that we can live with a fullness of life.

You offer so much more than we ask for  
and so much more than we can know.

Praise indeed to you, Our God of Abundant Love.

Prepare us, O Listening One, as we share honestly with you.

This last week has been full and flown past.

From busyness to boredom, we are unsettled.

In success and delight, we celebrate.  
So much comes before us, in both small and significant ways.  
Our thoughts pile high and cover our worries.  
We meet abundant problems, and miss the simple solutions.  
We focus on what is not, rather than what is.

In this space, let us lay our worries before our Listening God.  
Silent prayer

We are so sorry that we miss your abundant care,  
your wisdom that is present in our days,  
your guidance through unexpected people,  
your answers that echo in your natural world surrounding us.

#### WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God hears and watches and knows each of us,  
and in abundant love, sees so much more than we can see,  
offers so much more than we ask for  
and heals our woundedness with a depth and breadth beyond our imagining.  
Jesus says,  
"Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid"

#### READINGS

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

26 When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. 27 When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.

But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, 12 and the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him, 'There were two men in a certain city, one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had very many flocks and herds; 3 but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meagre fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. 4 Now there came a traveller to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him.' 5 Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, 'As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; 6 he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.'

7 Nathan said to David, 'You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; 8 I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. 9 Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, for you have despised me, and have

taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. 11 Thus says the Lord: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbour, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. 12 For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.'

13 David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' Nathan said to David, 'Now the Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die.'

\* John 6:1-21

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. 2 A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. 3 Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. 5 When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. 7 Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 9 "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" 10 Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. 11 Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12 When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." 13 So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. 14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

15 When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

16 When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. 20 But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." 21 Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.

HYMN 231 At the name of Jesus

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_7w-tDjlpqk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7w-tDjlpqk)

## SERMON

For most of this year we are concentrating on Mark's Gospel, however for the next few weeks we will be switching over to the sixth chapter of John's Gospel. Because of the play we had last week I am going back one week to give us a little taste of the story about the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus walking on water.

One part of this passage from John seems almost to disappear from our sermons as there is so much meat in the more popular ideas of feeding the multitude and the miraculous walking on water.

In between these two pericopes comes this short statement in verse 15:

"When Jesus realised that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself."

Or to put it more colloquially:

'When Jesus realised that they were going to try and force Him to become king, He took off for the hills.'

When we look at the way we talk about Jesus we very often talk in terms of Him being a King. There is even a Sunday in the Lectionary at the end of the year called Christ the King. However this is not a title or role that Jesus seems very comfortable with. So what is going on with this passage?

Well, let's start by going back to the passage from Samuel. This is the story of King David and his unacceptable relationship with Bathsheba. The machinations around this passage ends up with her husband being left at the mercy of opposition forces in the heat of battle to be killed so that the path was left clear for David to marry her.

The Israelites of Jesus' time constantly dreamed of an upcoming leader who could potentially be a new King David. David had heralded in a golden age that all the Jews longed to see again. They wanted someone to become the all-conquering ruler who saved them from foreign domination.

Also, this story seems to bring out some of the difficulties of having a king. I doubt that Jesus would have in any way condoned David's actions yet they were acceptable to the people surrounding David until the prophet Nathan called him to account.

In the world today Kings and Queens seem to have a very different position in society. None of them wield effective political power and their position is now largely seen as ceremonial, like the British Royal family. While popular they have no impact of the government of the country. They are really just celebrities.

Little is said of the Queen in the UK signing legislation into effect and being consulted regularly by their Prime Ministers. We seem to be bombarded with copious coverage of the royal weddings, births and so on. The popularity of the British Royal family has waxed and waned for years now as they get some things right in the eyes of the media and the public while failing to meet some standard at other times.

It must be a bit like living in a fishbowl for the Royal family. While they seem to have some privileges they equally have every action viewed with intense scrutiny and readily attract many differing opinions about just

about everything they do from their critics.

During the time of King David there were no such restrictions on a monarch. It seems that most people saw no problem with him taking a neighbour's wife as yet another conquest for his libido and harem. When Bathsheba became pregnant David openly tried to cover his tracks by manipulation and eventually organised her husband's terrible death.

While Nathan calls this horrible crime out in the religious world there seems to have been no general condemnation by the people. No one would dare to question his actions. There was no legal consequence for his misbehaviour. He was quite literally above the law. He could live out his desires without any impact from the law. It was only Nathan came forward that David was confronted by his actions.

It is not like the people of that time had not been warned about this. In 1 Samuel 8:4-20 the people were warned about the problems. They were told that a king would tax them heavily, draw their young men into the army and the young women would become his personal maids. However the people still called for a monarch and they were not dissuaded. It was like they were saying: "Give us royalty, give us celebrity, give us scandal, fascinate us. We're up for it! We crave it!"

So David can take Bathsheba and he can murder her husband, and the people will continue to laud him as their greatest ever king. And as we know David and his family paid a terrible price for generations for this toxic licence to indulge without limit.

Bizarrely, a monarch can be a kind of scapegoat, whose life we consume for our own ends, and every now and again we literally hound one of them to death as we did a few years back with Diana. That's part of the bargain too. Our royals and our celebrities live above the law to a point and seemingly above the normal moral constraints, but they never know at what moment their licence might suddenly be withdrawn, and the adoring public turn into a bloodthirsty mob who will eat them alive.

So when Jesus became aware that the people were going to come and force Him into becoming their king he literally headed for the hills. In this respect I note the phrase 'take Him by force.' While kings might be given the ability to take whatever and whoever they desire they equally can be forced to become whatever the people want them to be.

Jesus was determined not to become the result of what some community demanded of Him. There was no way that he would want to emulate the actions of King David, the warrior king. King David did destroy Israel's enemies and at the same time he played to the fantasies of the population with his scandalous lifestyle.

This attempt to avoid becoming the scapegoat does not stop Jesus being hung on a cross by a fickle mob. However Jesus is the one who shows us the real

face of God and the true integrity of God's intentions.

We might like to visualise God as being the warrior and a celebrity. We might even think that some sermons we hear put Jesus above the law and moral guidelines that the rest of us have to follow.

But:

- \* How often have we heard of people trying to use a god to justify genocide?
- \* How often have we heard of calls on a god to extract an endless blood sacrifice until some wrong has been avenged?
- \* Have you heard of a god being called on to sacrifice some innocent person to avenge a group's perceived injury?
- \* Is this god able to strut around and demand his people's obedience to the most unjust laws and rules, regardless of his own behaviour?
- \* Does this god stroke their ego seeking endless praise and worship while we are being humiliated and shamed for any trivial offence?

Jesus unmasks the absurdity of such a ruler. Jesus shows us that our God is a very different manifestation. Our God is not a rampaging warrior and most definitely not some self-indulgent celebrity. We have a God who will never seek to sacrifice others nor will God use people for self-gratification of some personal desire. Jesus gave His life for us to have eternal life.

Jesus is struggling to help His followers see Him as more than just a source of unlimited bread and circus tricks. In the verses we will be reading in the coming weeks Jesus will be struggling to stop people trying to overcome Him by force and forcing Him into following their short-sighted worldly demands.

The people seemed to be seeking a celebratory king who had little understanding for the real needs of His followers. What we sometimes still cannot comprehend today is that we have a God who does not use the loaves and fish for His own needs first. Rather he multiplies them so that we can all be fed the spiritual food that we need. We have a God who gives us scandalous abundance of the spiritual food that sustains us through the whole of our life.

Jesus is not after a besotted fan club but instead seeks humble and gracious partners in order to transform the world into a place of paradise where there is generous love and gracious hospitality with a borderless welcome to all believers.

This is, indeed, a radical change of culture that we are tasting here. The culture we live in is undoubtedly even more obsessed with spectacles and scandals and celebrity than that of David's day or Jesus's day, so perhaps such a radical change of culture is even more difficult for us to imagine and grasp.

But the emerging culture of God has drawn near to us, and if we will feed on

it and we can open ourselves so as to let it transform us instead of trying to transform it back into the stale and toxic bread by which we have been stupefied and exploited in the past. Starting here at this table, we may find ourselves with more blessings than we can ever consume and basketfuls more to take and share for the life of the world.

HYMN 256 From heaven you came

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrQiLEO4D5s>

#### PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

Take these simple offerings, Abundant One, as we offer them in humility. Take our week and let it be used in your work of love and care, sustaining society with hope and better ways of living and being, just as you, Jesus, fed a crowd of unknowns as if they were a united family. May we create a picnic of hope and welcoming love with all whom we meet this week.

#### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Too many are hungry, God of all, hungry for food and shelter.

We pray for our agencies and missions who offer physical support to those in need. Help us to be generous to them, so that they can offer the resources to satisfy the many needs that are around.

Too many are hungry, God of love, hungry to belong, to know genuine, unconditional love and friendship.

We pray for our local community in which we live. Let our church be a place of welcome and friendship. Grow in us our mission to open our doors and hearts to who is in need around us here.

Too many are hungry, God of hope, for a better way of living without violence, damaging addictions and self-wounding ways.

We pray for those who commit themselves to denigration and abuse, whose own woundedness, damages others in their path. May we be a church who is present in this space and can assist bringing your light into the darkness of this despair.

Loving God, show us how we can be your family of welcome, where we offer so much more to our local surrounding community. In the small ways we individually work and live, to the communal voice and action of this church, let us reflect to the world the blessing space of your abundant love that breaks into every part of life, so much more than we can ever find alone.

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 712 Create in me a clean heart

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

### COMMUNION

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
And also with you.

Christ our Lord invites to his table  
all who love him,  
who earnestly repent of their sin  
and seek to live in peace with one another.

Be present, risen Lord Jesus,  
as you were with your disciples,  
and make yourself known to us  
in the breaking of the bread;  
for you live and reign with the Father  
and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

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.

And so according to our Saviour's command,  
we set this bread and this cup 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.

Thanks and praise, glory and honour are rightly yours,  
our Lord and God,  
for you alone are worthy.  
In time beyond our dreaming  
you brought forth life out of darkness,  
and in the love of Christ your Son  
you set man and woman at the heart of your creation.

We give you thanks through your beloved child Jesus,  
whom you revealed to the whole world  
as Saviour and Redeemer,  
the light of all the nations.

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 thank you that you called a covenant people  
to be a light to the nations.  
Through Moses you taught us to love your law,  
and in the prophets you cried out for justice.

In the fullness of your mercy  
you became one with us in Jesus Christ,  
who gave himself up for us on the cross.  
You make us alive together with him,  
that we may rejoice in his presence  
and share his peace.

By water and the Spirit

you open the kingdom to all who believe,  
and welcome us to your table:  
for by grace we are saved, through faith.

With this bread and this cup  
we do as our Saviour commands:  
we celebrate the redemption he has won for us.

Christ has died.  
Christ is risen.  
Christ will come again.

Pour out the Holy Spirit on us  
and on these gifts of bread and wine,  
that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ.

Make us one with him,  
one with each other,  
and one in ministry in the world,  
until at last we feast with him in the kingdom.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ,  
in your holy Church,  
all honour and glory are yours, Father almighty,  
now and for ever.

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.

Jesus, Lamb of God,  
have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins,  
have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world,  
grant us peace.

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

## SHARING OF THE ELEMENTS

### PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Bountiful God,  
at this table you graciously feed us  
with the bread of life and cup of eternal salvation.  
May we who have reached out our hands  
to receive this sacrament  
be strengthened in your service;  
we who have sung your praises  
tell of your glory in our lives;  
we who have seen the greatness of your love  
see you face to face in your kingdom,  
and come to worship you with all your saints for ever.  
Amen.

HYMN 531 Sent forth by God's blessing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nt2aU6ItXt0&t=17s>

### BENEDICTION

Fill your heart with Christ's love.  
Let your soul sing with the Spirit of heaven and earth.  
God offers a feast to address the hunger of an empty life.  
So, join in this family of unexpected strangers and find belonging and purpose.  
Let God do so much more than we can ever ask for  
By believing, belonging and being God's family.  
Go in peace, restored by love and strengthened by faith.

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