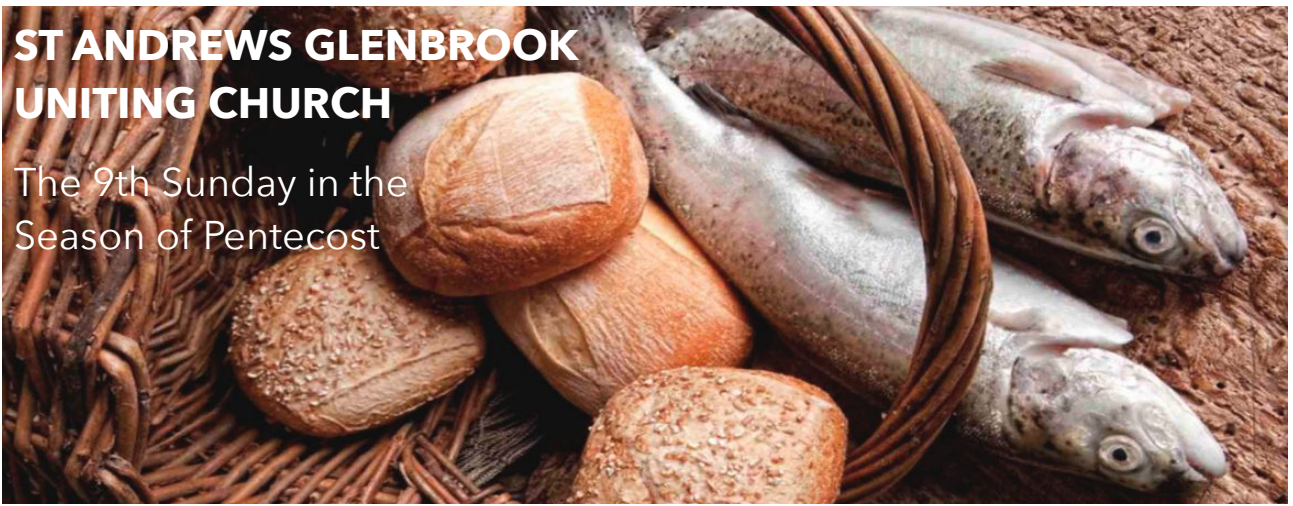


# ST ANDREWS GLENBROOK UNITING CHURCH

The 9th Sunday in the  
Season of Pentecost



## CENTERING WORDS

In our darkest hours, God's light continues to shine.  
In our weariest moments, God's strength is enough.  
In our times of greatest isolation,  
God's presence is always near.

## DIY OPENING ACTIVITY

*Write down as many names of the people in our St Andrews congregation as you can remember - if you can't remember a name, you can write something that describes them like: 'That woman with the young child who sits at the back'*

## OPENING WORDS

Remembering when we could gather as a congregation...

I can still see in my mind's eye the faces of people sitting in their 'usual' seats.

*Neil back left, Mark front right,, Joan front left, Therese back right, Sasha and Millie middle right sitting next Papa (Dad) their Grandma Carolyn...*

*Small children and parents creating a protective circle at the back of the church.*

*My Andrew and my boys always close by.*

Can you see them?

How many names or faces from the St Andrews Glenbrook congregation can you remember?

Or maybe you can't name them... maybe you're new, maybe you watch a worship through a computer screen full of unfamiliar faces and hope of community, but you have not experienced what it feels like to be all together in one place...

Maybe your face and your name is yet to be known or remembered.

As we worship in our homes today,

let us pause to remember with thanksgiving or with anticipation,  
the gift of one another, the gift of community.

*(pause for silent reflection)*

Remember when Jesus drew huge crowds...

We worship today, knowing that Jesus draws us still into solidarity.

Remember how Christ fed the hungry...

We worship now seeking for food for our souls and for all who are hungry,  
weary or waiting to feel invited to the table.

SONG: 'Invitation' by Shawn Whelan

God has laid a feasting table, all her guests are gathered 'round, from the  
highways and the byways. All the lost have now been found.

*When we hear the invitation  
will we lay our burdens down? (repeat)*

At this table all are welcome, No-one need be left behind.  
God is greater than our difference. Christ can see where we are blind.

*When we hear the invitation  
Will we love all humankind? (repeat)*

God is crying out for justice. Christ is weeping in the street.  
When will be the time for laughter? When will all have food to eat?

*When we hear the invitation  
Will we make God's will complete?(repeat)*

#### PRAYER OF YEARNING

Come to us, Holy One, even in our times of resistance.  
Work within and through us,  
even when we wrestle with doubt and despair.  
Enlighten and guide us, even in our darkest hours.  
Bless us and call us by name,  
even when we reject your presence.  
Hold us and love us, even when we try to run away.  
When we feel beaten down by the world,  
and are weary with fatigue and sorrow,  
nourish us with your mercy and your grace.  
Fill us with your love, that we may go forth with confidence and faith.  
In your mighty name, we pray. Amen.

#### WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God's strength is enough.  
Christ's forgiveness is sure.  
Through God's strength and Christ's grace,  
we are blessed, loved, and made whole.

#### BIBLE READING: Psalm 17

<sup>1</sup>Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to my cry; give ear to my prayer from lips free of  
deceit. <sup>2</sup>From you let my vindication come; let your eyes see the right.

<sup>3</sup>If you try my heart, if you visit me by night, if you test me, you will find no wickedness in me; my mouth does not transgress.<sup>4</sup>As for what others do, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent.<sup>5</sup>My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped. <sup>6</sup>I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me, hear my words. <sup>7</sup>Wondrously show your steadfast love, O savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.

<sup>8</sup>Guard me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings, <sup>9</sup>from the wicked who despoil me, my deadly enemies who surround me. <sup>10</sup>They close their hearts to pity; with their mouths they speak arrogantly. <sup>11</sup>They track me down; now they surround me; they set their eyes to cast me to the ground. <sup>12</sup>They are like a lion eager to tear, like a young lion lurking in ambush.

<sup>13</sup>Rise up, O Lord, confront them, overthrow them! By your sword deliver my life from the wicked,<sup>14</sup>from mortals—by your hand, O Lord— from mortals whose portion in life is in this world. May their bellies be filled with what you have stored up for them; may their children have more than enough; may they leave something over to their little ones.

<sup>15</sup>As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness.

GOSPLE READING:        Matthew 14:13-21

<sup>13</sup>Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. <sup>14</sup>When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. <sup>15</sup>When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." <sup>16</sup>Jesus said to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." <sup>17</sup>They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." <sup>18</sup>And he said, "Bring them here to me." <sup>19</sup>Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. <sup>20</sup>And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. <sup>21</sup>And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

SERMON:    A Season of Loaves and Fishes by Rev Ellie Elia.

This is not  
the age of information.

This is *not*  
the age of information.

Forget the news,  
and the radio,  
and the blurred screen.

This is the time of loaves

and fishes.

People are hungry,

and one good word is bread  
for a thousand.

*(From The House of Belonging: poems by David Whyte)*

*So writes the poet David Whyte*

*People are hungry....*

*Yet we are fed a daily dose of despair  
we over feed on fear and anxiety  
we binge on a steady showing of brutality and self righteousness  
as we watch the world unravels before our eyes,  
as we sense our humanity dying*

*People are hungry....*

*We crave up to-date information  
we speculate and reason,  
we criticise 'those' people,  
we keep our eyes on hotspots,  
like watching a waiter weaving through a crowd carrying the very last hot  
sausage roll.  
And still we are - unsatisfied*

People are hungry  
and one good word is bread.

Let me be brutally honest.

A wise woman recently reminded me  
that my calling as your minister is to hold out Hope before the people.  
To which I said - through teary eyes  
"But I can't see hope right now"  
And she responded: "Me too"

And in that moment something broke open in me.  
Some hidden seed of hope germinated in the beautiful darkness of my soul  
because in that moment I knew I was not alone.

Me too.

Small words that tell of brokenness and healing  
Powerful words the speak truth to power  
Ordinary words that bring us into the good companies of God  
and one another.

And one good word is bread

for a thousand.

You see, every part of me wants to serve you up a lavish feast of love and comfort,  
I want to believe that my words can be enough to nourish and sustain you  
during these uncertain days.

Yet how do we know what words to speak in a global pandemic?

Is this the time for words of hope?

Is this the time to speak words of lament ?

or is it time to wake up

To wake up to the real spiritual hunger of the church who have forgotten how to  
fast.

The three spiritual disciplines that Christianity, Judaism and Islam share in common,  
is Prayer, Giving, and Fasting.

Apart from sometimes giving up something for Lent,  
many of us Christians have lost any sense of valuing the presence of hunger in our  
lives.

Fast days are for weight loss, not drawing closer to God.

In a fast that was not of our choosing,  
We are learning how to go without  
our 'usual' food:

the sounds of people singing

the breath of church praying

the touch of a peace that is shared

the taste of communion and belonging in our mouths

the faces of community revealing God

I don't know about you, but I get grumpy when we are hungry  
And training my brain to accept hunger,  
to welcome and trust the feeling of hunger in my life  
is a daily struggle

Yet I sense that this is the time God is calling us to wake up and pay attention.  
Pay attention to our discomfort, our hunger, and what it is we are craving.  
Pay attention to the crowd, who left the security and convenience of the city, to  
follow Jesus to a deserted place.

So I come to our text for today recognising my own persistent hunger.

Feeding stories in the bible have always been my favourites

For me the church is like a table,

where all are welcome

and are a fed

and the unexpected happens

And the kingdom is revealed in the ordinary beauty and brokenness of doing life  
together.

I feel at home when we the church can practice abundance and generosity.  
When we can trust and believe that there is indeed more than enough  
so we can risk giving away everything we have  
and all that we are.

Even speaking this hope  
against a backdrop of a global pandemic  
feels childish,  
but it's all that I have.  
...just a few loaves and fishes.

And of course our reading today, clearly indicates that there is a backdrop to this miraculous feeding story.

<sup>13</sup>Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself.

What did he hear?

He heard a terrifying story of another feast.  
A birthday party for Herod Antipus, son of the infamous King Herod.  
In this scene we hear how John the baptist, Jesus' cousin, had been arrested and imprisoned for criticising Herod Antipas for getting rid of his first wife and taking his half-brother's wife Herodias for his own.  
Herodias' daughter danced for Herod and his guest and pleased him.  
And then in a lavish show of power, he promises to give her anything her heart desires.  
Prompted by her mother, the child said " Give me the head of John the baptist on a platter" and he does.

After burying John's body, his disciples came to Jesus to tell him what had happen.

This is where our story begins.  
Jesus, hearing the devastation news, seeks the solitude of a boat on the water  
but the people followed him and a huge crowd awaited him on the shore.  
Seeing the crowd he had compassion for them and began to heal the sick.

It is this moment of compassion that feels miraculous to me today.

How does Jesus move from his own overwhelming grief and solitude  
to sharing in an overflowing of healing, blessings and abundance?  
We recognise our own humanity in the way he seeks time alone.  
But then the Kingdom of God breaks in and breaks open Christ's heart in the midst of devastation.  
Grief makes way for compassion  
And compassion brought real hope to those people in that moment on the shore.

In our isolation,  
 In our grief  
 In our loss  
 with hunger pains of our own lives grumping below the surface  
 Jesus calls us to practice compassion - now.

And then comes the moment of resistance.

*Send them away Jesus.  
 Tell them to take responsibility for themselves  
 Why should they be fed first?  
 There's not enough food for everyone anyway  
 We only have five loaves and two fish and this is barely enough for us.*

And Jesus answers

*Bring them to me  
 This is the time of loaves and fishes.  
 The people are hungry,  
 and one good word is bread  
 for a thousand.*

The English word 'companion', is derived from the Latin 'com' which means "with" and 'panis' which means "bread".

A companion, therefore, is someone with whom you share your bread.

In this feeding story,  
 Jesus show us that compassion make us companions of the hungry.  
 Compassion humbles us,  
 reminding us of all the things we have in common.  
 Compassion breaks us open  
 and blesses us.  
 Against a historical back drop, and present day reality of death and lost,  
 threats of violence,  
 systems of injustice  
 and overwhelming need,

Jesus calls us now to open-hearted living, to rebuild community,  
 by meeting the spiritual hunger in each other and in our world  
 with honesty, grace and compassion.  
 Jesus persists in hopeful living, that may seem hopeless now,  
 but will ultimately succeed.  
 To call out, even in our own lives, behaviours that seeks only to control, manipulate  
 and destroy.

Yes, this is a time of lament, solitude and isolation  
*and the people are hungry*

This is the time of waking up to our spiritual hunger  
and why we are the church  
*because one good word is bread*

And this is indeed the time of loaves and fishes,  
and of awe and wonder at what God is doing  
*because one good word is bread  
can feed a thousand.*

As the late Rachel Held Evans once said:  
"All who feast on the Bread of Life are family. All who dare to feed the hungry,  
fellowship with the suffering, and befriend sinners are companions of Christ.  
This, after all, is the Kingdom: a bunch of outcasts and oddballs gathered together,  
not because we are rich or worthy or good, but because we are hungry, because  
we long for more. And just as the fish and the loaves continued to multiply, so have  
the companions of Jesus. The family just keeps growing and growing."

This is the season of loaves and fishes,  
come and lay a table for the world.  
Bring all that you have - though it never feels enough,  
come just as you are with empty hands and open hearts.  
Come with all your hunger and your hoping  
into the company of God.  
For all is prepared,  
and there is more than enough  
Amen.

SONG: TIS 544 'God has a table'  
Since the world was young  
There's a song that's been sung  
Of a promise coming true  
Hungry folk will eat  
And long lost friends will meet  
And the Lord will make all things new

*God has a table  
Where He calls His friends  
To a feast that never ends  
God has a table  
And one day we'll meet Him there*

Jesus saw a crowd  
Who were hungry and vowed  
That they didn't have much food  
So He fed that bunch  
With a little boy's lunch  
As a sign that God is good



Jesus told a tale  
 Of how rich people fail  
 To accept God's summons to dine  
 Then before their eyes  
 Those without earthly ties  
 Share heaven's finest food and wine

Till we hear that word  
 From the mouth of the Lord  
 Saying join Me at My table  
 For the world we'll care  
 And its good things we will share  
 As long as we are able

#### OFFERING OUR GIFTS

Whatever our gifts—a loaf of bread, a tiny coin, a mighty blessing, or an amazing talent—each gift matters. Whatever our gifts, our gifts become miracles when we share them with God and with God's people.

#### PRAYER

Lord God,  
 wherever you went,  
 the crowds followed,  
 because they knew that you would feed them  
 in body, mind, and spirit.  
 May we gather friends too  
 because we are known to be kind and generous.

You found it difficult to have time on your own,  
 may we always have space  
 to recharge when we are tired.

Help us, Lord Jesus, just like you did,  
 to always see possibility and potential,  
 and to enhance the gifts of others,  
 sharing what we have  
 and being glad of all that others bring.  
 So may we love and serve you in all things.  
 Amen.

#### COMMUNION

#### THE INVITATION

As Jesus welcomed the thousands to share in a feast created from a few loaves and some fish, Christ welcomes us now to this abundant feast of holy communion, where we are fed with God's grace and love.

## THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

*[Take a moment to reflect on what you are thankful for today.  
Let this sense of gratitude inform your thoughts and actions this week]*

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.

You formed us in your image, breathing into us the breath of life.

You wrestled with our ancestors in the desert, came to us in night times of weariness, confusion and doubt, and guided us as a pillar of light and a blessing of love.

When our faith faltered and we rejected your guidance, you spoke to us of love and compassion, through the law and the prophets.

Always, your love remained steadfast.

Always, you deliver us from death and despair, and call us to return and follow you.

And so, with your people on earth, and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn, saying out loud:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest!

Holy are you, and blessed is your beloved child, Christ Jesus, who blessed and broke bread for thousands on a shore of Galilee.

He healed the sick and taught your love, as he walked upon this earth.

In Christ's great love, you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from the weary burden of sin, and freed us to receive your blessing and love, both now and into eternity.

On his last night, before meeting death, at a last supper, Jesus blessed and broke bread one last time, feeding his disciples with these words:

"Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you."

After supper, he took the cup, giving thanks yet again, and gave it to his disciples, saying,

"Drink from this, all of you; this is my life, which is poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. As often as you drink it, do so in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these, your miraculous acts in Christ Jesus, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving, as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

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

*[Lift up your hands to God]*

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us,  
 that we might know your blessing and receive your grace.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on these gifts of bread and wine.  
 May they nourish us as bread that never ends  
 and as living water that always satisfies.

By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to the world, until Christ comes again in final victory, and we feast at the heavenly banquet. Through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forevermore. Amen.

*[Break the bread]*

The bread of life, to feed your soul. The living water, to nourish your life.

*[Eat and drink]*

#### BLESSING & BENEDICTION

May we invite all people to God's table of abundance;

May we courageously speak the "truth in Christ";

May we go forth— to glorify the God of creation,

to adore the Christ in others,

and to be a surprising blessing of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

#### Resources:

- Bennett, Tanya Linn. The Abingdon Preaching Annual 2020 . Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.
- Scifres, Mary. The Abingdon Worship Annual 2020 . Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.
- Spill The Beans
- Together in Song
- <http://brunswick.unitingchurch.org.au/music-in-worship/>