



Sunday
19th May, 2024

Feast of
Pentecost

Truth and Love, Can we handle it?

Breaking Open the Word

PENTECOST
SUNDAY
2024
Liturgical Year B



Prepared by
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St Peter's by the Lake

Paynesville, Victoria Australia
Anglican Diocese of Gippsland



READINGS

EZEKIEL 37.1-14
PSALM 104.26-36, 37B
ACTS 2.1-21
John 15.26-27; 16.4b-15



Foreward	4
Abstract	5
Sermon	9
Icebreaker	8
Discussion Questions	9
Prayer Points for Small Groups	15

Abstract



“

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13.13 NRSV-A

”

The sermon reflects on Pentecost’s message of unity and love, using a story based on Archbishop Young’s to show its impact.

It emphasises spreading love amid division and calls for reconciliation through God’s transformative love.

Love transcends barriers, and as group leaders, you are urged to be agents of love and healing, embracing forgiveness and unity in a broken world.

Your role is crucial in fostering this unity and love within our community.

ABSTRACT

The sermon titled “Truth and Love, Can We Handle It?” explores the profound message of unity, diversity, and universal love conveyed through the Pentecost experience. Referencing a poignant story about Archbishop Sir Guilford Young and Pope John XXIII, the sermon draws attention to the critical role of language and communication in expressing divine love. Pentecost, where disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in various languages, is a potent symbol of this universal divine love that transcends all boundaries and barriers.

The sermon emphasises the relevance of Pentecost in our contemporary world, mired in division and conflict. It encourages us to receive and spread love, serving as ambassadors of reconciliation in the troubled lives of those around us. Drawing from the metaphor of God breathing life into dry bones, the sermon underlines the importance of love in healing and restoring brokenness. The sermon skillfully contrasts legalistic language concerning sin and righteousness in a passage from John’s Gospel with Jesus’s teachings of love and truth.

Moreover, the sermon addresses the danger of contorting truth in the guise of reconciling differences through a reference to the play and movie “A Few Good Men.” In essence, the sermon encapsulates the

fundamental truth of Pentecost — the transformative power of love unifies us as one community in Christ, no matter our distinctions. We are urged to channel this divine love and serve as agents of forgiveness and recovery in a world starved of these virtues.

The sermon conveys the profound significance of Pentecost and concludes with a prayer for the spirit of Pentecost to renew individuals today. It calls on listeners to bear testimony to God’s unconditional love through their actions, love fearlessly, forgive generously, and reconcile graciously. Individuals should empower themselves through God’s love and confront the world’s brokenness, ultimately healing it through divine love.



Keywords

Unity	Love
Diversity	Reconciliation
Acceptance	Community



Contemplation

universal	reconciling self
healing	loving the unloveable
truthfulness	



Integration

diversity	freedom
understanding	thought, word and deed
opportunity	



May the words of my lips,
and the meditation of all our hearts
be acceptable to you,
O Lord, our strength and Redeemer. Amen.



Today, as we celebrate Pentecost, we are reminded of its profound significance in the Christian calendar. Pentecost marks the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, empowering them to proclaim the Gospel in languages understood by people from every nation under heaven. It is a day of unity, diversity, and, above all, love.

On Tuesday, at our weekly Eucharist and discussion, I related a story about the late Sir Guilford Young, Archbishop of Hobart in the Catholic Church, visiting Pope John XXIII in 1958. At that stage, Guilly was the youngest Archbishop in the Catholic world, having been consecrated at the age of 33.

Asked by Pope John where Hobart was, Guilly got down on his knees in front of the giant globe in the office and, climbing under it, pointed to where it was on the map. The Pope decided that given his generous frame, he would not get down to look but accept that it was near the bottom of the world, well and truly, down under! On rising, Guilly was asked what he felt was needed in the life of the Church. His thesis for his Doctorate of Divinity on the power and use of the word “love” as found in the epistles of Paul and its application to the priesthood. Guilly’s response resonated with the pontiff, leading to a most significant “Pentecostal” change at the second Vatican Council.

Guilly’s response was to resonate with the pontiff, and led to a most significant “Pentecostal” change at the second Vatican Council.

“Nothing is more dear to any man (sic) than his mother’s tongue. It is a mother who first teaches the child about love. The Mother Church should share the language of love like a mother would do with her child.”

Whilst the change to the vernacular did occur, we, as Anglicans, also updated our language from post-Cramnerian or Shakespearean English to an average reading age of 12. Whilst we didn’t reasonably adopt Strine, the language remained formal but consistent

with the scriptures.

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee” became, “Truly, I tell you”, and thankfully not “Struth, mate!”

Sadly, Archbishop Young was to preside over many places where children were taken from their unwed mothers or even wed mothers who were deemed to be ‘unfit’ to raise the child. Some of them were from the First Nations. Others were raised in indifferent or even hostile situations where the love was not apparent. Due to natal depression, some would not have that love. This hurt must be realised by the community and more so by the Church. As we prayed earlier, for these things, and things omitted, we say “Sorry”. Help us, Lord, to begin again.

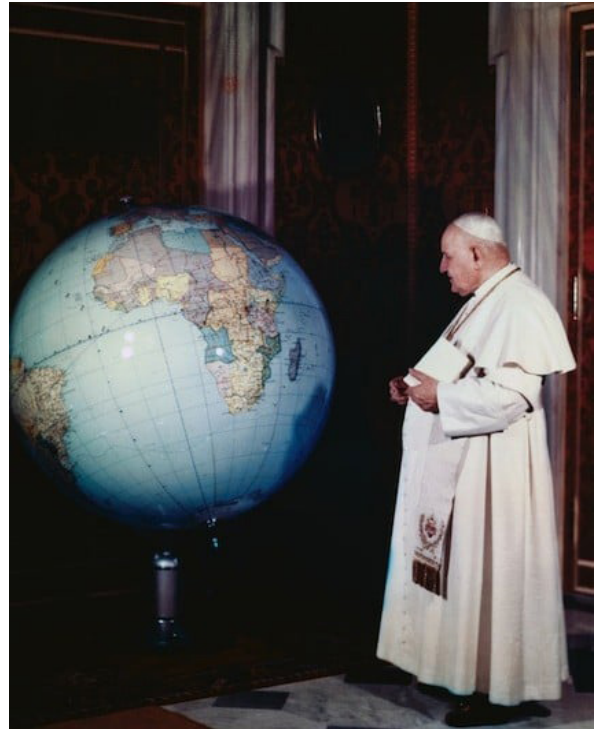
And that is where the magic of the Pentecost experience begins. It begins in the gathering in the community of those whom Jesus told to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Advocate, the Guide, who would be with them, in them, and through them able to speak the love that is to bring healing, wholeness, acceptance and courage. The unity of the Holy Spirit, another phrase we use regularly in our services, the gifting enabled them to continue the work of Jesus, which “was, and still is, a conflict with the world. The test of this work will not be religious experience, but (as we see so often in John’s Gospel) love.”¹

In Acts 2:1-4, we are transported to the scene where the disciples were gathered together in one place. Suddenly, a sound from heaven, like a rushing wind, filled the entire house, and tongues of fire appeared and rested on each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages, as the Spirit enabled them.

The miraculous event of Pentecost symbolises the universal nature of God’s love. The Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to communicate the message of God’s love in a way that transcended language barriers. This event reminds us that love knows no bounds or barriers and speaks to all hearts,



The Most Rev'd Dr Sir Guilford Clyde Young DD KBE
(1916 - 1988)
Archbishop of Hobart



Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli(1881-1963)
Patriarch of Venice (1953 -1958)
Bishop of Rome (1958 - 1963)

regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or language.

While Pentecost is a historical event, its relevance transcends time. It stands as a timeless testament to the power of love to bridge divides and reconcile fractured relationships. It's a call for us, in our modern world marked by division, strife, and conflict, to not just experience love in our own lives but also to be agents of love in the lives of others. Just as the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered to spread the message of love, we are also called to embody that love in our words and actions.

The need for love and reconciliation has never been greater in today's world, which is marked by division, strife, and conflict. We see the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision, representing our world's brokenness and despair. But just as God breathed life into those dry bones, so too can the power of love bring healing and restoration to our brokenness.

Parts of the Gospel passage we read today, especially in John 16 are unusually cast in legalistic language. This was inconsistent with the language of love expressed by Jesus elsewhere in the Gospel. We usually hear of great love, enfleshing love, a dwelling among us. But we hear in this passage, "Prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and

judgment." Sin is defined as being separate from God through disbelief; righteousness, or justification because the Word made Flesh is returning to the Father; and the judgment of condemnation of the 'ruler of the world' from which death and pain were the strength.

All of this hides the truth about God's power and love. Once we realise what truth is, something that John tells us again will set us free. Pontius Pilate responded to Jesus' truth with a question, "Truth? What is truth?" The very point that Jesus was making is encapsulated in that one question. Maybe Jesus would have been tempted to give the response in Aaron Sorkin's play, *A Few Good Men* (1989) and immortalised by Jack Nicholson's portrayal of Colonel Jessup responded to Tom Cruise's character prosecutor Lieutenant Kaffee, "I only want the truth."

Jessup exploded, "You can't handle the truth." What follows was a justification of doing 'what it takes to get it done' all for the honour of the Corp. Kaffee responds that honour is not a privilege or simply a badge on one's arm. It is about integrity.^{2,3}

Sadly, that play and subsequent film were based on an actual event in Guantanamo Bay. To this day,

2 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Few_Good_Men

3 <https://scrapsfromtheloft.com/movies/few-good-men-you-cant-handle-truth-transcript/>

the Pentagon has banned the screening or performance of the play on military bases run by the USA. It begs the question that maybe there exists a body that is determined to uphold its truth, no matter what it takes. In real life, the hazed and injured soldier recovered, unlike the story of the play where someone who speaks out with good conscience is punished to the point of death to keep the means secret. The ends never justify the means. Reconciling truth is not a justification for lying or hiding evil.

Reconciliation lies at the heart of God's plan for humanity. It is the reason why the Spirit was promised not only to the living but also to the dead. It reminds us that no one is beyond the reach of God's love and mercy. As followers of Christ, we are called to be instruments of reconciliation, reaching out to those who are estranged, offering forgiveness to those who have wronged us, and seeking healing for deep wounds.

Today, it is time to reflect on the profound truth of Pentecost: that the power of love transcends all barriers and unites us as one family in Christ. We can be inspired by the disciples' bold proclaimed message of God's love to the ends of the earth. In turn, we commit ourselves to being channels of that love in a world desperately needing healing and reconciliation. No matter what we face, even though illogical, love will always bear good fruit, a goodness that evil, whilst strong, can never overcome. We are called into a community of love that forgives, accepts, and helps to make all things new.

May the same Spirit that descended upon the disciples at Pentecost fill us afresh today, empowering us to love boldly, forgive freely, and reconcile graciously. And may our lives be a testament to the transforming power of God's love, spoken and heard in every tongue.

SMALL GROUP ICEBREAKER!

**“HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED
A MOMENT WHEN TELLING
THE WHOLE TRUTH COULD
LEAD TO HURT RATHER
THAN RECONCILIATION?”**



“

...the power of love
transcends all barriers and
unites us as one family in
Christ.



”

GROUP DISCUSSION

Question 1

How does the story of Pentecost demonstrate the importance of unity and diversity in the context of God's love?

Context

In the Pentecost story, the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to speak different languages and share God's love with people from every nation.

Application

How can we promote unity and embrace diversity within our community and relationships while expressing God's love?

Question 2

How can we become agents of reconciliation in a world marked by division and conflict?

Context

The sermon calls for us to spread love and be reconciliation instruments to heal our world's brokenness.

Application

Can you think of a specific situation or relationship where you can actively work towards reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing?

Context

The sermon encourages us to acknowledge the pain and despair in the world and use the power of love to bring healing and restoration.

Application

What practical ways can you contribute to the healing process in your community or amongst those around you?

Question 3

What does it mean to confront the world's brokenness and bring healing through God's love?

Question 4

What does it mean for the truth to set us free, as mentioned in John's Gospel, and how does it relate to the language of love?

Context

The sermon contrasts the legalistic language in the passage with the loving language used by Jesus elsewhere, emphasising the importance of understanding the truth.



Application

How can embracing the truth about ourselves and our relationships with others help us experience the freedom that comes with God's love and forgiveness?

Context

The sermon highlights the power of love to transcend barriers and unite us as one family in Christ.

Application

How can we demonstrate that love to others in our actions and words, regardless of their background or life situation?

Question 5

How can we apply the teachings of Pentecost and the concept of God's universal love in our daily lives?

Further Reading

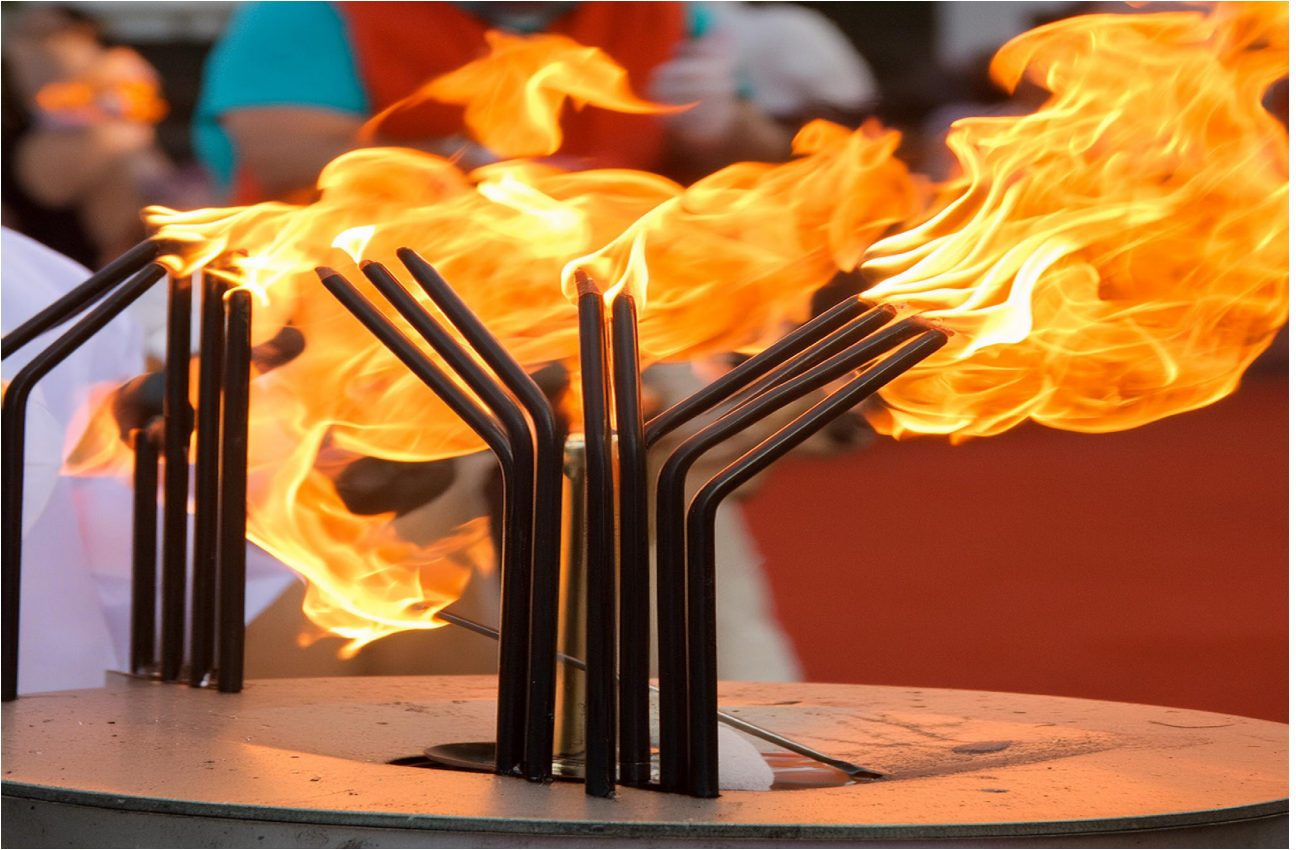
Andrew's Version

Substack Article: <https://abmcg.substack.com/p/pentecost-the-spirit-v-the-world>

The Worship Cloud: from Jane Williams, Lectionary Reflections - Year B

All of these readings suggest that the work of the Holy Spirit is to bear witness to the truth of Jesus Christ, and to enable our witness to that same truth. Sometimes that will be accompanied by gratifying gifts of power and sometimes it will involve a complete surrender of human power, to the point of death. But wherever the Holy Spirit witnesses, there is judgement. 'Do you choose for or against God?' the Holy Spirit asks, echoing the life and work of Jesus.





Prayer Points

Please pray for

Ask for prayer requests and listen to the group's needs and concerns.

- Pray for God's guidance and strength to apply the sermon's message of unity, diversity, and love throughout the week.
- Pray for opportunities to spread God's love and be agents of reconciliation in the lives of others.
- Pray for healing and restoration in brokenness and despair in our lives and the world around us.
- Pray for a deeper understanding of the truth that sets us free and the courage to embrace and live by that truth

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