



Sunday
9th June, 2024

Pentecost 3B

Ears, Hands, Feet.

Breaking Open the Word

**Pentecost 3
Liturgical Year B**



Prepared by
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St Peter's by the Lake

Paynesville, Victoria Australia
Anglican Diocese of Gippsland



READINGS

1 Samuel 8.4–11 [12–15]
Psalm 138
2 Corinthians 4.13 – 5.1
Mark 3.20–35



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Summary



“

Take our hands and work through them;
take our lips and speak through them;
take our minds and think through them;
take our hearts
and set them on fire with love for you.

”

Dennis' sermon "Ears, Hands, and Feet" is a compelling reminder of the importance of community and faith in our lives, drawing inspiration from Paul's letters, the Gospel of Mark, and the writings of St. Teresa of Avila. It powerfully conveys the concept of believers as Christ's body on earth, using their hands, feet, and eyes to show compassion and love to others. The sermon is a call to action for our group leaders, urging them to live out their faith by sharing God's love in their everyday actions and embracing their role as part of Christ's family. The sermon concludes with a genuine call to prayer, asking God to work through our leaders and the congregation to spread love and compassion in the world, emphasising the urgency and importance of this mission.

INTRODUCTION

Dennis presented a heartfelt sermon titled “Ears, Hands and Feet” from the sermon series “Pilgrimage,” examining people’s recent physical and emotional trials. Drawing inspiration from Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, he reinforced the significant role of community and faith during testing times. The sermon commenced by recognising the impact of respiratory illnesses and the anxieties for loved ones in God’s care. However, Paul’s letter acts as a reality grounding and an assurance that, as believers, we are not alone in our battles.

In exploring Gospel of Mark narratives, Dennis unpacked a scenario where Jesus’s family worried due to public opinion of him. Despite seeming harsh initially, Jesus’s response stood as a reminder that those who listen and abide by God’s word are indeed his family. He called attention to the modern act of caregiving as a representation of God’s love, drawing on the commemoration of Les Mills’ life as an example of how community care mirrors being the eyes, ears, and feet of Jesus.

Dennis impressed upon his audience the value of a love-based community, likening it to a house built on a firm foundation. Citing St. Teresa of Avila,

he portrayed how Jesus’s teachings remain relevant today. A prayer from St. Teresa of Avila was shared to elaborate on this, emphasising believers’ critical role in demonstrating Jesus’s love and benevolence on earth.

A reference to Elizabeth Manneh’s blog “Busted Halo” further underlined the importance of conducting faith in our lives. The sermon’s conclusion echoed the notion that missions aren’t solely overseas—involve universal spreading of tasks but also i. With St. Paul’s letter, Dennis highlighted that even as our bodies age and health declines, we can find solace in an eternal home with God. The congregation was inspired to perceive themselves as part of Christ’s earthly family, acting with compassion and love. T

he sermon emphasised life’s trials, the power of the community, and believers’ role in manifesting Christ’s love in the world, drawing on biblical teachings, St. Teresa of Avila’s insights, and Elizabeth Manneh’s blog to encourage believers to live out their faith practically.



Keywords

eyes	compassion
hands	mission
feet	



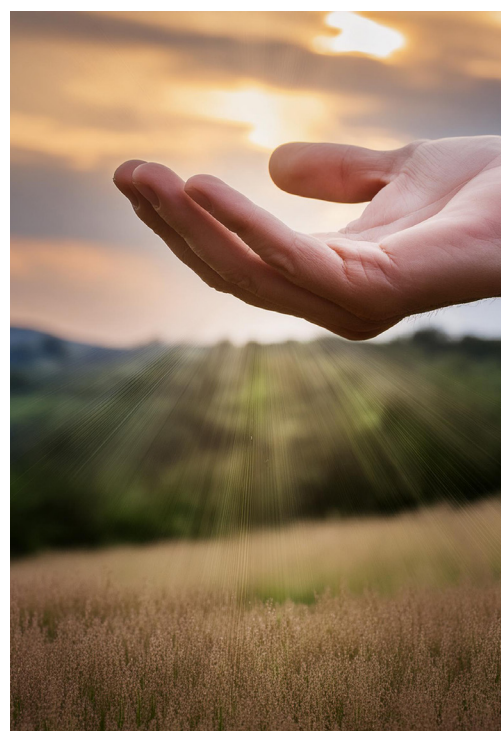
Contemplation

seeing through God’s eyes	through God’s hands
creating and caring	being in the right place when needed



Integration

looking	being there
listening	being here
reaching out	being me



God of Creation, breathe into us, made of clay,
your gift of life so that we, made in your image
may be your eyes, ears, hands and voice.



For many of us, this last couple of weeks has been emotionally and physically challenging. With Respiratory Infections, including COVID-19, continuing to cause havoc and people whom we love commended to arms of our creating and loving God, the challenges have been substantial.

Chapter 4 of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians offers a reality check regarding our pilgrimage through life. The Gospel concludes with a powerful promise that no matter what we face, we are in this as a community of faith that Jesus calls his family. As heirs and inheritors of the Kingdom of God, the promises made to us by our Lord are not mere words but a wellspring of comfort and strength bolstered by the understanding and belief passed through the generations.

Jesus's immediate family responds to what people are saying about him. His mother and siblings are aware that people think that not only Jesus has gone mad, and the pressure on him when surrounded by the crowd meant that not only Jesus but also his disciples were unable to eat or look after themselves. No wonder the Blessed Mary was concerned! What mother wouldn't be? But the answer given at first was, to our ears, harsh.

Typical of Mark's matter-of-fact writing, today's story is packed in a 'sandwich' or, if you prefer, chiasm. It starts with his earthly family, includes teaching about division and evil, and ends with a declaration that all who hear and obey the word of God are considered family. Mary's house is not divided but strengthened in listening and obeying the word of God and caring for Jesus and the disciples.

It is in the act of caring for those who share our pilgrimage of life that God's love is exemplified. On Thursday, as we celebrated Les Mills' life, I spoke of the care shown by the community and the team as being the eyes, ears, and feet of Jesus. This is a message from the writing of St Teresa of Avilla, a 16th-century Spanish mystic. Despite the atrocities of the Spanish Inquisition, Teresa

believed that the call to a more pure life of caring and encouragement was a message that everyone needed to share. This message resonates with us today.

"Love alone gives worth to all things," wrote Teresa. A community based on love, no matter what dilemma or issue is presented, will be a community that uses one of our Lord's parables, a house founded on rock, not sand. The strength of the community, underpinned by the teaching of the law and its application as sharing God's will for us to prosper, is as essential now as it was at the time of Jesus and Teresa.

A much-loved prayer of Teresa underpins how I see a life of action and prayer in the spread and work of the Christian community.

Christ has no body but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks

Compassion in this world,

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,

Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,

Yours are the eyes; you are his body.

Christ has no body now but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks

compassion in this world.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours. —
St. Teresa of Ávila

[^ <https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/lessons-from-st-teresa-how-to-be-the-eyes-hands-and-feet-of-christ>]



This inspired me to write a post-communion prayer or commission before the blessing and dismissal.

Take our hands and work through them;
take our lips and speak through them;
take our minds and think through them;
take our hearts
and set them on fire with love for you.

In our actions, based on our love of God and our neighbours as ourselves, we begin to see the word of God being made known through our thoughts, words, and deeds.

One of the many blogs I have been reading is entitled “Busted Halo”. That name alone was enough to create a desire to explore! Elizabeth Manneh, an English writer and sometime missionary to the Gambia, shares in her mission to “faith share joyfully”. [^ <https://bustedhalo.com/author/elizabeth-manneh>] As I signed up for the weekly email, I was somewhat amused to be prompted with the security captcha asking me to “prove my humanity”. I think that I will enjoy the weekly bulletins!

In addition to understanding Teresa’s prayer, Manneh explores different ways we can live our faith. Her article goes into much more detail



than I will here, but I think her points are worth considering.

Firstly, “Yours are the eyes that look with compassion” reminds us of all the times Jesus encountered people who were excluded or unable to change his life. He was moved with compassion, not pity. His eyes saw the person made in the image of the divine and what was not right or whole in their life.



Then, writes Manneh, “Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.” She reminds us that Jesus was a tradesperson skilled in creating with his hands. These are the same hands in which the Father, recounting last week’s Psalm 139, intimately knit us in our mother’s womb; who knows how many hairs are on our head or were! These hands look at us, no matter what stage of life or affliction, and declare us to be wonderfully made. No wonder I was asked to prove my humanity!

And as to our feet, Manneh reflects on the ministry of Jesus walking the length and breadth of Palestine. “Yours are the feet that walk to do good.” To quote another much-loved fandom of mine, “I always took you to where you needed to be.”

[^ Idris, in “The Doctor’s Wife”, [Doctor Who S06E04 BBC 2011](#)] To go where we need to be is the result of looking with the eyes of Jesus, responding with our creativity, and being where

we are supposed to be. Manneh sums this up with these words.

“ Learning to live St. Teresa’s prayer means looking for opportunities to bring God’s love to others, including small acts of compassion in our daily lives. Praying St. Teresa’s prayer has made me much more aware of God’s mercy toward people I meet daily — in line at the grocery store, waiting for the bus, or simply someone I pass in the street. I feel closer to God because I’m learning to see others through his eyes. So, every day, I’m trying to look for ways to use my hands, feet, and whole body to show God’s love to everyone”.

[\[https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/lessons-from-st-teresa-how-to-be-the-eyes-hands-and-feet-of-christ\]](https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/lessons-from-st-teresa-how-to-be-the-eyes-hands-and-feet-of-christ)

In his second letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul reminds us, as he reflects on his declining health, that there are many in the community for whom the passage of time and illness will challenge us to respond with compassion, creativity, and physical presence. Mission is not what happens overseas; mission is the core sharing of the love of God joyfully in all that we do.

For we know that if our earthly tent is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

[^2 Cor 5.1]

This is the dwelling place prepared for us in

heaven, where Jesus reminds us that we know the way. It is in being as Christ to those whom we meet. [see John 14.1-6a]

Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.’

[^Mark 3.35]

It is doing God’s will, not obeying God’s law, but responding with compassion first so that we become part of the family of Christ. My brothers, sisters, mother and father are all here. They are also in the streets and lanes of Paynesville, Eagle Point, Newland Arms and the entire region.

So, in hope, I pray, and I invite you to add your assent and do the American thing of shouting “AMEN!” to this prayer. In doing so, truly let it be so!

**Take our hands and work through them;
take our lips and speak through them;
take our minds and think through them;
take our hearts
and set them on fire with love for you.**

AMEN!

Icebreaker!



What’s the most hilarious or embarrassing thing ever happening to you in a public setting?

or

Has your compassion for others ever caused you to avert your eyes?



GROUP DISCUSSION

Question 1

How can we ensure that our community remains strong despite life's challenges?

Context

The importance of a community founded on love is like a house built on a solid foundation.

Application

What can you do to contribute to the strength of your community during challenging times?

Question 2

What does being part of Christ's family mean, and how can this understanding help us daily?

Context

Jesus tells us that those who hear and obey the word of God are considered family.

Application

How can you apply this concept in your interactions with others within and outside your faith community?

Context

This refers to a prayer by St. Teresa of Avila that focuses on embodying the role of Christ's body on earth.

Application

What is one specific action you can take this week to embody Christ's love in your interactions with others?

Question 3

How can we use our hands, feet, and eyes to show compassion and love to others, as discussed in the sermon?

Question 4

About Elizabeth Manneh's blog, how can we become more aware of God's mercy and show love in our daily lives?

Context

Manneh discusses the importance of compassionately looking at others, using our hands to bless the world, and walking to do good.



Application

Could you think of a recent interaction you had with someone? How could you have shown more compassion or love in that situation?

Context

Paul reflects on his declining health and the challenges of ageing and illness, reminding us of our eternal dwelling in heaven.

Application

What perspective or comfort can you find in this message when you face personal struggles or experience the decline of a loved one's health?

Question 5

How can we apply St. Paul's message in 2 Corinthians 4 to our experiences with ageing and illness?

End notes and further reading

1 <https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/lessons-from-st-teresa-how-to-be-the-eyes-hands-and-feet-of-christ>

2 Doctor Who S06E04 2011

3 <https://throughtheroof.org>

4 Praying with Purpose: <https://www.motherunion.org/praying-with-purpose>

5 Social Issues and Action <https://www.muaustralia.org.au/social-issues-and-action-department1.html>



Brabarlung Totem
This is produced on
Gunaikurnai Land, and our
respects are paid to the First
Nations people everywhere.



Five Days of Prayer

This five-day devotional will be taking a deeper dive into the sermon from this weekend. We'll explore the themes of community, compassion, and the call to act as the hands, feet, and body of Christ here on Earth.

Day 1

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

In our journey through life, there are times when the challenges we face seem insurmountable. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks openly about the trials and struggles but also offers hope in the promise of renewal. Our outer selves may be wasting away, but our inner selves are renewed daily.

This message of renewal is essential for us as heirs of God's Kingdom. The strength and comfort we find in the community of believers help us to overcome adversities. Through faith, we tap into a wellspring of comfort and stability, realising that these promises are not mere words but truth passed down through generations.

How have you experienced renewal in times of struggle?

In what ways has your faith community supported you during challenging times?

What promises of God bring you the most comfort and strength?

Pray for the strength to face your challenges with faith.

Reflect on the ways God has provided for you in times of need.

Day 2

Scripture: Mark 3:31-35

In the Gospel of Mark, we see Jesus's earthly family concerned about him amidst the pressures of his ministry. This passage teaches us about the importance of spiritual family, those who hear and obey the word of God. Jesus emphasises that anyone who does the will of God is his true family.

This lesson extends to us, urging us to see our fellow believers as siblings in faith. Caring for one another and living by the word of God strengthens our community and faith journey. It's a reminder that we are all called to be part of God's family through our actions and obedience.

How do you define your spiritual family?

What actions demonstrate your commitment to God's will?

How can you support your faith community more effectively?

Pray for unity and strength within your faith community.

Reflect on how you can better obey and act on God's word.

Day 3

Scripture: Matthew 7:24-27

Building a community based on love is likened to constructing a house on rock, as described in one of Jesus's parables. A strong faith and love foundation ensures we can withstand any storm. Jesus calls us to live lives of compassion and action rooted in his teachings.

The wisdom of St. Teresa of Avila speaks volumes to us today. "Love alone gives worth to all things," she wrote, reminding us that our actions should be grounded in love. In times of division and challenge, a community founded on love becomes unshakable and resilient.

What aspects of your life are built on the rock foundation of Jesus's teachings?

How can you exhibit more compassion in your daily interactions?

What are some ways you can strengthen your faith foundation?

Pray for a heart that loves unconditionally, as Jesus does.

Reflect on how you can build stronger relationships within your community.

Day 4

Scripture: Ephesians 2:10

We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works. Our purpose is not only to believe but also to act. St. Teresa's prayer beautifully encapsulates this calling by urging us to be Christ's body on earth, using our hands, feet, and voices to spread God's love.

No matter how small, every action we take contributes to the larger mission of showcasing God's compassion in the world. As

we walk through our daily lives, we must actively seek opportunities to reflect Christ's love to everyone we meet.

What good works can you attribute to God's influence in your life?

How do you feel knowing you are created for a divine purpose?

What practical steps can you take to fulfil this purpose daily?

Pray for guidance to recognise and act on opportunities to do good.

Reflect on your unique God-given talents and how you can use them for his glory.

Day 5

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:1

Paul reminds us that our earthly existence is temporary and we have an eternal home prepared by God. This hope encourages us to live with purpose and compassion, knowing that our ultimate destination is with Christ.

By doing God's will and showing compassion, we prepare ourselves and others for this eternal promise. Our faith and actions here on earth reflect God's love and grace, drawing us closer to the divine family.

How does the promise of an eternal home influence your daily life?

In what ways are you preparing yourself and others for this eternal promise?

What aspects of your life need more alignment with God's will?

Pray for the courage to live each day with an eternal perspective.

I'd like you to reflect on how your actions today can have a lasting, eternal impact.

Prepared by Rev'd Dennis Webster, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Paynesville, Diocese of Gippsland for personal or small group use.

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