



Sunday  
28<sup>th</sup> July, 2024

**Pentecost 10B**

# The Abundance of God's Blessing: Sharing for True Prosperity

**Breaking Open the Word**

**Pentecost 10  
Liturgical Year B**



**St Peter's by the Lake  
PAYNESVILLE**

Anglican Diocese of  
Gippsland



Prepared by  
**Dennis Webster**

**St Peter's by the Lake**

Paynesville, Victoria Australia  
Anglican Diocese of Gippsland





Five loaves, two fish

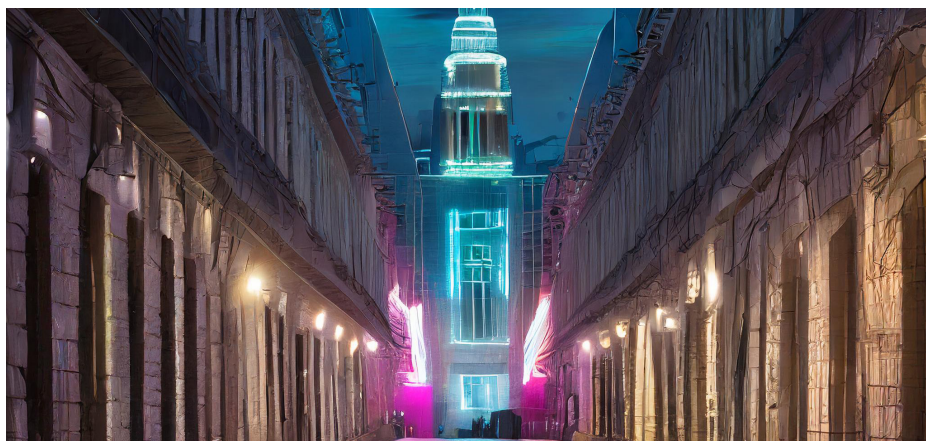


## READINGS

2 Kings 4.42-44  
Psalm 145.10-19  
Ephesians 3.14-21  
John 6.1-21



Short Summary	4
Introduction	5
Sermon	9
Icebreaker	8
Discussion Questions	9
Five Days of Meditation and Prayer	15



## Summary



“

**He gave it to them, as many as were ready.**

”

John 6

Dennis' sermon, "The Abundance of God's Blessing: Sharing for True Prosperity," delves into the Gospel story of Jesus feeding the five thousand to explore themes of abundance, sharing, and prosperity in God's Kingdom. By referencing the story of Elisha and Jesus' actions, Dennis emphasises God's provision and the importance of sharing blessings selflessly. The sermon challenges the congregation to embrace material and spiritual blessings, advocating for justice, unity, and community responsibility in sharing God's abundance. Ultimately, Pastor Dennis calls for a revolution of love and equality by living out God's generosity in a transformative way.



# INTRODUCTION

In the sermon titled “The Abundance of God’s Blessing: Sharing for True Prosperity,” Pastor Dennis delves into the theme of God’s abundant provisions and the duty of sharing to realise true prosperity.

Drawing one’s primary narrative from the Gospel of John and the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand, Dennis ties this miraculous event to Elisha feeding a hundred men with twenty barley loaves, showcased in the Book of Kings. Dennis elucidates that these biblical accounts underline God’s abundant provision, emphasising that there is always sufficiency for all in His kingdom.

In telling Jesus feeding the masses, Dennis reveals the clues it provides about Jesus’ identity and purpose, particularly mirroring the Exodus provision and thereby painting Jesus as a trustworthy prophet. This miracle, coinciding with the approaching Passover Festival, further accentuates its significance.

However, Dennis cautions his congregation about a misguided interpretation of prosperity. According to Dennis, true prosperity, in God’s terms, isn’t about hoarding blessings; rather, it involves realising that these gifts, be it material

wealth or life’s sanctity, are meant to be shared. This sharing, free from greed or selfishness, constitutes the basis of God’s love economy.

Tied to Saint Paul’s Ephesian teachings, Pastor Dennis also extolls the virtues of unity and communal responsibility, pressing the need to care for the less fortunate community members and advocate for justice and equality. In his convincing finale, Dennis urges the congregation to live a life of abundance, reflective of both material and spiritual blessings and selflessly serving others, following Jesus’ example.

In closing, Dennis cites an inspirational thought from Jane Williams, who believes in the power of God’s love to cause irrevocable change. Echoing the mantra of the French Revolution, “Liberté, égalité, fraternité. Viva la revolution!”, Dennis suggests that embracing and distributing God’s abundant blessings can lead to a world revolution symbolising love, equality, and community.



## Keywords

context	feast
history	retribution



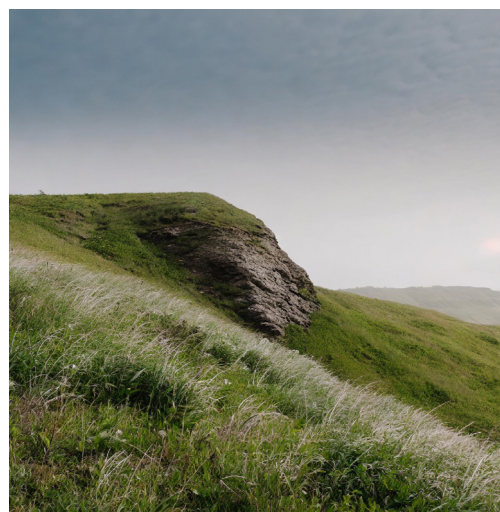
## Contemplation

signs	revolution
understanding	sharing



## Integration

prosperity	accountability
standing firm	know God



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.



The Abundance of God's Blessing: Sharing  
for True Prosperity

We interrupt the journey through Mark's gospel to switch back to the Gospel of John. One refreshing thing about Mark's Good News of Jesus Christ is that it is short and to the point. To account for this, our betters who design the yearly lectionary often draw on the Gospel of John to fill in the blanks or to extend our understanding, and today is one such case. But why they would do this to feed the 5000 men is somewhat puzzling as this is one story in all four gospels! Mark has it as he walks on the water.

In the Gospel of John, this story begins with a sign that helps point to who Jesus is and a long—and I do mean long—and deep understanding of Jesus in the life of the Christian community and how the sacrament is to be respected deeply.

Elisha was more gifted in power than Elijah, having caught his mantle as he sped off in the chariot of fire to the heavens. Despite being prominent in the Book of Kings, Elisha is not mentioned in the gospels. Elijah, though, gets lots of good press. Baal-shalishah asks Elisha how twenty barley loaves and the first fruits of the corn harvest will serve one hundred men. The devil is in the detail! The bread given was part of the offering to God; therefore, it was improper to feed this to the common folk. Elisha insists and promises that with God providing, there will be enough for all and then some.

Last week, in the Gospel of Mark, we hear how Jesus sent the twelve away to rest as the ever-growing crowds looked to Jesus to heal their sick. They see the signs of healing and understand that Jesus is, like the title given to Elisha, a man of God. Seeing the large crowds and knowing they would be hungry, Jesus challenged Philip to feed them, although he knew what he would do. In this story, a few more clues will be important in understanding what Jesus is

about to do, shaping our readings for the next few weeks.

The timing is the first thing that is to be understood. The Passover Festival was approaching. This would place the story around late winter or early spring. After being informed by Andrew that there was a small boy there with five barley loaves and two fish, Jesus invites them to sit down on the grass. As they reclined, Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks and distributed them to everyone sitting ready. He did the same with the fish. People took as much as they wanted. After the meal, Jesus asked the disciples to gather the remnants, and twelve baskets were over. The story of Elisha and Baal-shalishah was well-known; they immediately knew they were in the presence of a prophet, a true man of God.

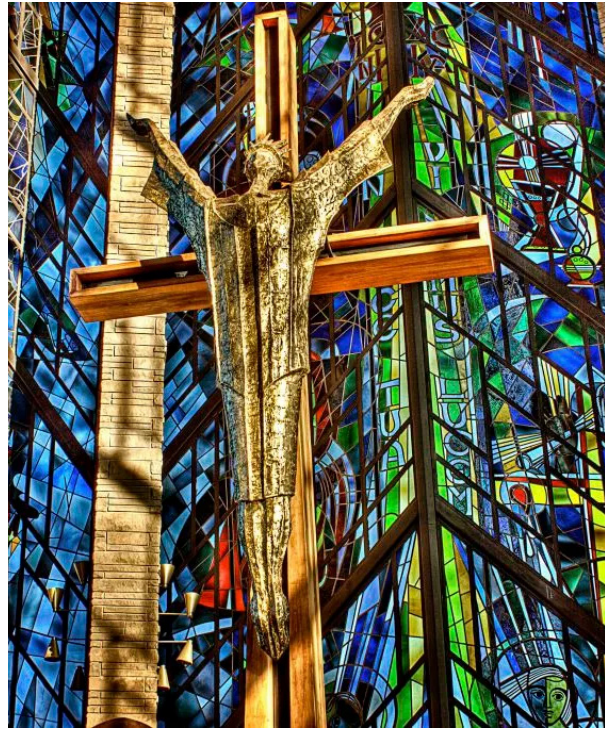
It is here that the story takes on a significant warning. Seeing the signs of healing, they now see that Jesus will provide for them physically. This is the same thing that Moses bargained with God in the wilderness. Hungry for any sustenance, God sent manna and birds of the air to feed the tribes of Judah as they were in the Exodus, following the Passover. They were not to store it, for God, on his abundance, as we heard in Psalm 145, will provide. The trusting in God to provide relies on the prosperity that all those in need will receive what they require, and there is still enough to share with others. "The eyes of all creatures look to you, and you give them food in due season." (Ps 145)

Furthermore, the psalm reminds us, "The Lord upholds all who fall and lifts those who are bowed down." Two signs are at work here – feeding and healing. Jesus, as the Son of God, is both generous and faithful.

In God's economy, these signs and gifts are not there to be stored and coveted but used to benefit all. I feel challenged and uneasy when I use the word "prosperity" in Church.



Modern interpretation of Genesserat



Christus Rex: Christ the King  
St John's Anglican Cathedral, Winnipeg

There is a school of thought in some parts of the world that perceives God will provide us with all we want. This distorts the economy of God, who gives us, as we ask in the Lord's Prayer, for what we need. "Give us today the bread for the morrow". In keeping that which is in surplice for ourselves, the real danger, if not sin, is that we deprive what is necessary and required by others from receiving. Our greed, gluttony or selfishness can lead to others going without. It is said that 90% of the world's economy is controlled by 10%. It is a saying, but I think there may be some truth in this.

Prosperity in God's economy means giving us what we need, whether that be material wealth or security of sacredness of life. The economy of God's love is embezzled by viewing God's gifts to us as a 'right' and self-satisfaction. This is not to say that being rich or wealthy is a problem; instead, it is a nod to say that we have a responsibility to care for those in need out of God's generosity and abundance.

The people had seen in the signs of Jesus that a misunderstanding immediately occurred. This man heals and restores. This man is one of justice who will lead us. This is a man who also provides for us when we are hungry. This man is of God. This man should be our King. Immediately, Jesus realises

that they do not understand what has just happened. It was approaching the Passover where Jesus' nature as being a king, not of this world, but his reign would begin not in a palace, but from the cross. Immediately, he withdrew from them.



Saint Paul implores us to "live a life worthy of your calling. Bear with one another in love (charity), be completely selfless, be gentle, and have patience. Do what you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the gift of peace that binds you together. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is the father of all, through all and within all. Through him, with him, in him: words at the very climax of the great prayers of thanksgiving. We are not living in unity if we do not take from our prosperity and share with others in the economy of God's kingdom. (Ephesians 4)

It would be so simple to wonder about God's blessing on us without caring for the enrichment of the wider community. As the body of Christ, we are Christ's eyes, ears, and hands in the community. We are also the ones given a voice to make a change. We are provided for, on the whole, but those in the community are going without. The very nature of having local schools running breakfast programs or a growing demand



for food banks indicates a greater need. Out of God's great love and mercy, we have abundant love (charity). The lesson that Jesus shows the people reclining on the grass is that God provides, with another often overlooked caveat, "when they were sitting ready."

As the body of Christ, in unity with the Holy Spirit, the call is not so much to marvel at what Jesus did but to look to that which this sign is pointing. There are injustices in the world. There is greed in the world and in the hearts of many. Power, wealth, and status are all beautiful attributes if you listen to what seems to matter to the election of a President of the US. Who can raise the most money? Just observing, but where are the policies on equality, egalitarianism, and community unity? Maybe I'm confused by the Olympics and the city of love, but the revolution in the US was built upon the principles of the Revolution in France.

How can we share God's blessings with others, ensuring they enrich the community rather than being hoarded for personal gain? As stewards of God's abundant blessings, can we embrace both materially and spiritually, following Jesus' example of selfless service?

Dear friends, we are called to commit to living out God's abundance in our lives, reflecting the divine love and provision to those around us. God's blessings are not just for personal enrichment but are meant to be shared generously, echoing the themes of provision, community, and

stewardship found in the passages from John, Psalms, and Ephesians. In doing so, one soul at a time, we can unleash the creative power of God's presence in the lives of all in the world, not just a selfish few. Jane Williams, the wife of former Archbishop Rowan Williams, sees this clearly as possible.

"If that creative power, God's unimaginable love is unleashed on the world and, even more frighteningly, is at work in us, then we are adrift beyond our limits. If we have to see the world with that shatteringly generous love, then we and the world will be irrevocably changed. It is not ours to control, but we could cooperate.

Liberté,  
égalité,  
fraternité.  
Viva la revolution!

## Icebreaker!



If you could have dinner with any fictional character, who would it be and why?





# GROUP DISCUSSION

## Question 1

**How does the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand demonstrate God's abundance and provision?**

## Context

Dennis discussed the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand found in the Gospel of John, where Jesus miraculously feeds a large crowd with five barley loaves and two fish.

## Application

In what ways have you experienced God's abundance and provision in your own life?

## Question 2

**What is the connection between the miracles performed by Elisha and Jesus?**

## Context

Dennis referenced the story of Elisha in the Book of Kings, where Elisha miraculously feeds one hundred men with twenty barley loaves and first fruits, highlighting God's abundance and provision.

## Application

How do these stories help you understand Jesus' identity and purpose?

## Context

Dennis mentioned that true prosperity means receiving what we need, recognising that these blessings are not meant to be hoarded but shared with others. Greed, gluttony, and selfishness can hinder the economy of God's love.

## Application

How can you practice true prosperity daily and share blessings with others?

## Question 3

**How does true prosperity in God's economy differ from the worldly concept of prosperity?**

## Question 4

### What is the role of unity and community in sharing God's blessings and living out his abundance?

#### Context

Dennis ended the sermon with the exclamation, 'Liberté, égalité, fraternité. Viva la revolution!' suggests that by sharing God's blessings, a revolution of love, equality, and community can be realised worldwide.

#### Application

What personal changes or commitments can you make to live out these principles in your own life and contribute to a more just and caring society?

#### Context

The sermon emphasised the need for unity and communal responsibility in sharing God's blessings, caring for the less fortunate members of our community, and advocating for justice and equality.

#### Application

What actions can you take to promote unity and community, following Saint Paul's teachings in Ephesians on living a life worthy of our calling?

## Question 5

### How can the principles of 'Liberté, égalité, fraternité' be applied to living a life of true prosperity and abundance in God's Kingdom?

## End notes and further reading

N.T. Wright, **Paul for Everyone, Ephesians**, Westminster John Knox Press

Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of John

Sacra Pagina

Author Francis Maloney

Publisher Liturgical Press, 2016

- Pray for the ability to trust in God's provision and not hoard resources for personal gain.
- Pray for opportunities to share God's blessings with those in need.
- Pray for a spirit of generosity and selfless service in our community.



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





# A winter interlude

## 5 Day Devotional

This five-day devotional will explore the sermon from this weekend in greater depth. We'll explore how the story of Jesus feeding the 5000, reflected in the Gospels of John and Mark, reveals God's abundant provision and our call to share God's blessings with the world. Join us on this spiritual journey as we reflect on the signs of healing, generosity, and unity in God's economy, which refers to the divine order and principles that govern God's provision and our responsibility to share it.

### Day 1 Scripture: John 6:1-14

Today, we reflect on the miraculous feeding of the 5000 as depicted in the Gospel of John. This story begins with a sign that points to who Jesus is and the deep understanding of God's role in the life of the Christian community. Jesus takes the loaves, gives thanks, and distributes them to everyone seated, symbolising God's transformative and abundant provision.

The timing of this miracle, close to the Passover, emphasises the connection between Jesus and the divine provision celebrated during this festival. Like Elisha and the barley loaves, Jesus shows that, with God, there is always enough. This event teaches us the importance of trusting in God's provision and generously sharing God's blessings.

How has God provided for you in unexpected ways?  
In what ways can you share God's blessings with others?  
How does trusting in God's provision change your perspective on giving?  
Pray for a heart that recognises and trusts in God's provision.  
Ask for opportunities to share your blessings with those in need.

### Day 2 Scripture: 2 Kings 4:42-44

In the story of Elisha, we see a foreshadowing of Jesus' miraculous feeding. Elisha insists on using the barley loaves as an offering to God to feed the people, promising that there will be enough for all and then some. This passage reminds us that God's abundance is meant to be shared, not hoarded.

Elisha's faith and generosity mirror Jesus' actions in feeding the 5000. Both stories highlight that in God's economy, there is always enough for everyone. As stewards of God's blessings, we must reflect this joyous generosity in our lives and communities, connecting us in a shared experience of God's abundance.

Think about a time when you witnessed or experienced generosity. How did it impact you?  
What can you do to be more generous with the resources you have?  
How does understanding God's abundance change your approach to giving?  
Pray for a spirit of generosity and an open heart to share God's blessings.  
Reflect on ways you can contribute to your community using your resources.

### Day 3 Scripture: Psalm 145:15-16

Psalm 145 beautifully encapsulates God's faithfulness and generosity: "The eyes of all creatures look to you, and you give them food in due season." This verse assures us that God provides for all God's creation, ensuring everyone has what they need.

In times of need, it's comforting to remember that God is a provider. The abundance we receive is not just for personal gain but meant to enrich our communities, providing a sense of security and reassurance in God's faithful provision. Reflect on how you can embody God's generosity daily, ensuring your blessings positively impact those around you.

Reflect on how God has been faithful in providing for your needs.  
How can you be a conduit of God's provision to others?  
How can you ensure you are helping to meet the needs of your community?  
Thank God for generosity and faithfulness.  
Could you ask for wisdom on how to share your blessings with others?

Day 4                      Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-6  
Saint Paul calls us to "live a life worthy of your calling." This includes being selfless, gentle, and patient, striving to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. As we share in God's abundant blessings, we are also called to foster unity and support within our communities.

Paul's message aligns with the teachings of Jesus, which emphasise community, compassion, and stewardship. Please reflect on how you can live out this calling, ensuring that your actions promote unity and generosity in the body of Christ.

How can you practice selflessness in your daily interactions?  
What steps can you take to promote unity within your community?  
I'd like you to reflect on your role in the body of Christ and how you contribute to its mission.  
Pray for a heart that seeks unity and peace.  
Ask God for guidance on how to fulfil your calling in the community.

Day 5                      Scripture: Philippians 2:3-4  
In Philippians, we are reminded to do nothing out of selfish ambition but to consider others above ourselves. This echoes the theme of Jesus' ministry – serving others selflessly and generously. As stewards of God's blessings, our actions should reflect God's love and compassion.

I'd like you to reflect on how you can embrace a selfless attitude daily. By doing so, you honour God and ensure that God's blessings are shared, enriching the lives of those around you and building a stronger community of faith.

How can you shift your focus from personal gain to serving others?  
Think of a way you can help someone in need this week. What will you do?  
How can you encourage others to embrace a spirit of generosity and service?  
Ask God for a humble heart that seeks to serve others.  
Pray for opportunities to reflect Christ's love through acts of service.

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

Acknowledgement of use appreciated

Subscription to "www.breaking-open-the-word.org" is available.  
Published every weekend, usually on Saturday evening, AEST.

Biblical Quotes are from The New Revised Standard Version - Anglicised, which is © 1990 the National Churches of Christ, USA.

Study notes are prepared in conjunction and by subscription of www.church.tech, an AI open source for pastors. Content is modified for local use.

Images are either from public domain, theworshipcloud.org, original work or Adobe AI generated.

