

# Breaking Open the Word

Pentecost 12C, Proper 17, Ordinary Sunday 22  
31<sup>st</sup> August 2025

**Refugee Sunday**



**Restorative Justice:**

**The Banquet of God's Heart**

A weekly reflection based on the preaching at St Peter's by the Lake, Paynesville, together with a study guide based on the readings, some liturgical resources RCL Lectionary, and a weekly devotion

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Revised Common Lectionary Related

**Pentecost 12C**

**Proper 17,**

**Ordinary Sunday 21C**

Proverbs 25.6–7;

Psalm 112;

Hebrews 13.1–8, 15–16;

Luke 14.1–14



**SEASON OF  
CREATION**



**PEACE  
WITH CREATION**  
SEASON OF CREATION 2025

Garden of Peace  
Isaiah 52:14-15

Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collect

**O** God, who declarest thy almighty power  
most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity;  
Mercifully grant unto us  
such a measure of thy grace,  
that we, running the way of thy commandments,  
may obtain thy gracious promises,  
and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## INTRODUCTION

What if the most profound act of worship isn't found in the spotlight, but in choosing the lowest seat at the table? It is God's radical vision of a banquet where conventional status symbols are turned upside down. Drawing from Luke 14 and supporting texts, there is a glimpse of divine hospitality that challenges our natural inclinations toward self-promotion and selective generosity. The themes of humility, justice, and environmental stewardship demonstrate how they are interconnected in God's economy.

True righteousness isn't found in religious ritual, but in generous living and justice-oriented action, particularly toward those who cannot repay us—the poor, the disabled, refugees, and even creation itself. Sometimes, a fresh perspective reminds us that Christ's unchanging nature anchors this radical hospitality, making it not just a future hope but a present reality we're called to embody.

The message culminates in an urgent invitation to make God's heart visible in our world by choosing the path of humility, extending welcome to the marginalised, and treating creation as an honoured guest at God's table.

### Prayer Points

- Ask for prayer requests from group members.
- Pray for God to help us live as people of mercy and justice.
- Ask for the strength to stand tall in the freedom given by Christ.
- Request guidance to align our hearts with God's mercy and compassion.

As we walk on this sacred ground, teach us  
Lord to make known your kingdom, and let  
this reflect in all that we do and speak.

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### The Banquet of God's Heart

Proverbs 25.6–7;

Psalm 112;

Hebrews 13.1–8, 15–16;

Luke 14.1–14

#### Introduction – Where Do We Sit?

Picture yourself arriving at a banquet.

The tables are laid, candles flickering, chairs set out in rows.

Where do you sit?

Do you edge forward toward the head table, where the high-status guests are?

Or do you quietly slip into a seat further back, waiting to be noticed?

Jesus tells us today that in God's kingdom, the seating plan is surprising:

- "All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

And more—he says,

- "When you give a banquet, don't invite those who can repay you. Invite the poor, the disabled, the blind, and the lame—those who have no way to pay you back."

It's an unsettling picture.

But it is also profoundly hopeful.

Because in this banquet, no one is left out.

Here, God's heart is revealed: a banquet of justice, humility, and welcome.

The Way of Humility  
(Proverbs 25 & Luke 14)

Proverbs puts it:

- "Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence..."

better to be told, 'Come up here,' than to be put lower  
in the presence of a noble."

Jesus presses this further: at God's banquet, we take the lowest place. We step down so that others may rise.

Humility here is not false modesty.

It is a deliberate choice—to align ourselves with the heart of God.

A heart that does not cling to privilege, but lays it down so that others are lifted.

Humility is the soil where justice grows.

When we humble ourselves, we make room for the poor, the stranger, the refugee, and even the earth itself to be honoured and restored.

#### Generosity and Justice (Psalm 112)

Psalm 112 paints the picture of the righteous life:

- "They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright. They are gracious, merciful, and righteous. It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice."

Here, righteousness is not about piety or rituals.

It is about generosity.

It is about justice.

It is about compassion.

This is restorative justice:

not punishment or exclusion,

But setting things right—so the poor are fed, the broken healed, the forgotten remembered.

And notice—it is not a heavy-duty. It is a blessing!

- "They are not afraid of evil tidings; their hearts are firm, secure in the Lord."

The righteous reflect God's own character: gracious, merciful, steadfast in love.

In this Season of Creation, we hear that same call: generosity and justice must extend to the earth itself.

Creation thrives when we live gently, not greedily.

When we share, not hoard.

When we treat the land, the waters, the creatures—not as resources to exploit but as gifts to cherish.

## Hospitality to the Stranger (Hebrews 13 & Luke 14)

Hebrews says:

- “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

Hospitality is not just dinner with friends.

It is opening the door to the stranger.

It is standing with the prisoner, the displaced, the ones pushed to the margins.

Jesus sharpens it even more:

- “When you host a banquet, invite those who cannot repay you.”

The poor, the disabled, the lame, the blind—these are the honoured guests at God’s table.

And so, on Refugee Sunday, these words cut close.

Refugees arrive with little more than their lives. They cannot repay us. And yet—Jesus says they belong at the head table of God’s kingdom.

In a world where refugees are locked away, demonised, or ignored, the Church is called to mirror God’s hospitality: not only charity, but dignity; not only shelter, but belonging.

## Christ’s Constancy and Creation’s Renewal (Hebrews 13)

Right in the middle of Hebrews’ instructions, we hear this anchor:

- “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

In a world that feels so anxious, unstable, and fragile, this is our hope.

The Christ who welcomed strangers, who ate with sinners, who fed the hungry, who healed the sick—that same Christ is here with us now, and will be with us

always.

And as we step into the Season of Creation, we remember: this covenant love is not just for people, but for the whole creation.

The Christ who reconciles “all things, in heaven and on earth” is faithful still.

Our care for the planet is not an optional extra—it is part of our worship, our justice, our hospitality.

## Conclusion – Living the Banquet Now

So—where do we sit? And who do we invite?

God’s banquet is a feast of humility, generosity, hospitality, and constancy.

A feast where the poor are lifted, the refugee welcomed, and creation itself cherished.

We align ourselves with God’s heart when we choose the lower place so others may rise,

when we act generously and justly,

when we open our doors to those who cannot repay, and when we treat creation as a guest at God’s table.

And when we do this, God’s banquet is no longer just a future hope.

It becomes visible now.

Every time the poor are welcomed,  
the refugee embraced,  
creation cherished—  
the heart of God is made known.

And Christ is among us.

In Luke 14, Jesus challenges social norms by inviting those who can't repay us to banquets. How does this differ from our typical social gathering plans?

- Jesus says, 'When you host a banquet, invite those who cannot repay you - the poor, the disabled, the lame, the blind.'
- Think about your last few social gatherings - who did you invite and why? How might you make your hospitality more inclusive?

Humility is not false modesty, but a conscious choice to align with God's heart. How can you tell genuine humility from pretending to be humble?

- The sermon states: 'Humility here is not false modesty. It is a deliberate choice—to align ourselves with the heart of God.'
- Can you think of a time when you had to choose between maintaining status and showing true humility? What did you learn from that experience?

How does treating creation as a guest at God's table change our approach to environmental stewardship, and what are the concepts of hospitality and justice that are connected to this?

- The sermon mentions that 'Creation thrives when we live gently, not greedily. When we share, not hoard. When we treat the land, the waters, the creatures—not as resources to exploit but as gifts to cherish.'
- What is one way you could show more 'hospitality' to creation in your daily life?

How might viewing strangers as 'entertaining angels,' as suggested by Hebrews 13 and the sermon, alter our perception and treatment of refugees and outsiders in our community?

- The sermon emphasises that hospitality means 'not only charity, but dignity; not only shelter, but belonging.'
- What fears or hesitations do you have about showing hospitality to strangers, and how might you overcome them?

The sermon examines the connection between Psalm 112's description of righteousness and generosity and justice, challenging our traditional understanding of righteousness.

- The sermon notes: 'Here, righteousness is not about piety or rituals. It is about generosity. It is about justice. It is about compassion.'
- In what ways might God be calling you to express righteousness through acts of generosity and justice rather than just religious observance?

This five-day devotional will take the form of a five-day walking pilgrimage within the community where you live and/or walk. You are asked to tread lightly on sacred ground.



### Day 1 – Walking in Humility

**Scripture:**

"Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence... it is better to be told, 'Come up here,' than to be put lower." (Proverbs 25.6–7)

**Reflection:**

Humility is not weakness—it is making space so others may flourish. The heart of God is revealed not in self-exaltation but in stooping low to lift others up. Jesus himself "took the lowest place," washing feet, eating with sinners, carrying the cross.

**Prayer:**

Lord, teach me to walk humbly with you. Strip away pride and self-seeking. May I find joy in serving and delight in lifting others higher.

**Pilgrimage Step – Activity:**

Take a slow walk today through a familiar place—your street, a garden, a park. Walk slightly slower than usual, yielding space to others. Notice where you can step aside, let someone pass, or hold a gate. Feel what it is to choose the lower place with quiet joy.

### Day 2 – Walking in Generosity

**Scripture:**

"They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright; they are gracious, merciful, and righteous. It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice." (Psalm 112.4–5)

**Reflection:**

The righteous mirror God's own mercy and generosity. To live generously is to shine with God's light in a dark world. Generosity restores dignity, shares abundance, and reflects the justice of God.



**Prayer:**

Generous God, open my hands to give freely as you give. Let my life be a blessing for the poor, the vulnerable, and all who long for hope.

**Pilgrimage Step – Activity:**

On your walk, take a coin, a loaf of bread, or some simple food. As you walk, pray for those without enough. Consider quietly offering it to someone in need, or leaving it at a food bank collection point afterwards. Let the walk itself be an act of generosity.

**Day 3 – Walking in Hospitality****Scripture:**

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Hebrews 13.2)

**Reflection:**

Hospitality is not only about meals; it is a way of life. To open ourselves to strangers is to open ourselves to Christ, who comes in the face of the refugee, the prisoner, the one without a place to belong.

**Prayer:**

Christ our Guest, open my heart to the stranger. May I never overlook you in the faces of those who come seeking welcome.

**Pilgrimage Step – Activity:**

As you walk, deliberately greet someone you do not know—a passerby, a neighbour, a shopkeeper. Offer a smile, a kind word, or a listening ear. See this as a sacrament of hospitality: making space for Christ who comes disguised as a stranger.

**Day 4 – Walking with Constancy****Scripture:**

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13.8)

**Reflection:**

The world shifts and changes, but Christ is constant. His presence steadies us in uncertainty. As the seasons turn, as

creation blossoms and withers, Christ’s love anchors us, calling us to walk faithfully with hope.

**Prayer:**

Faithful God, in a changing world you remain steadfast. Keep my steps firm in your love, and let me trust your constancy in every season.

**Pilgrimage Step – Activity:**

Walk to notice creation—the trees, sky, water, or soil around you. Observe something that has endured—an old tree, a rock, a familiar path. Pause and thank God that Christ’s love is as constant and enduring as these signs.

**Day 5 – Walking to the Banquet****Scripture:**

“When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed.” (Luke 14.13–14)

**Reflection:**

The kingdom is a banquet of welcome and justice. To align with God’s heart is to open our tables and our lives to those who cannot repay us. This is where true blessing is found: in the fellowship of God’s wide embrace.

**Prayer:**

Lord of the Banquet, make my life a table of welcome. May I be a companion to the poor, a friend to the lonely, and a steward of creation. Gather me always in your feast of love.

**Pilgrimage Step – Activity:**

End your walking pilgrimage with a shared meal. Invite someone to eat with you—perhaps a friend, a neighbour, or someone who may not often be invited. If you cannot share in person, prepare a meal prayerfully and give thanks that God’s banquet stretches across every distance.



# End notes and further reading

Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke (St Paul's Press) (Johnson)

Rev Dr Andrew McGowan: Andrew's Version: <https://substack.com/@abmcg>

David Adams, Glimpses of Glory, Year C

The following authors as featured at The Worship Cloud

[www.theworshipcloud.com](http://www.theworshipcloud.com)

N. T. Wright,

Jane Williams,

P James Woodward,

Paula Gooder

Mark Pryce,

David Perry

## Brabarlung Totem

This is produced on  
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our respects are made to  
the First Nations people  
everywhere.

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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