



BE MY GUEST!

14TH SEPTEMBER 2025

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD BEGIN AGAIN

Dennis Webster

Pentecost 14C Ordinary Sunday 24C Proper 19

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

SEPTEMBER
14TH 2025

PENTECOST 14C

ST PETER'S BY THE LAKE



Revised Common Lectionary Related

Pentecost 14C

Proper 19,

Ordinary Sunday 23C

Exodus 32.7-14

Psalm 51.1-11

1 Timothy 1.12-17

Luke 15.1-10



**SEASON OF
CREATION**



**PEACE
WITH CREATION**
SEASON OF CREATION 2025

Garden of Peace
Isaiah 32:18-19

Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collect

Almighty and merciful God,

of whose only gift it cometh

that thy faithful people do unto thee true and laudable service:

Grant, we beseech thee,

that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life,

that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly promises:

through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

INTRODUCTION

First, a confession! This is based on the third sermon I prepared for this week. I will put a link to the first on the breaking-open-the-word.org website, but given the journey and trauma seen in Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine, the remembrance of 9-11, and the assassination of a high-profile activist shown graphically in real-time, a different direction pastorally seemed more appropriate

Have you ever wondered what it truly means to live out Jesus' mission in today's broken world? Reflecting on the Messianic mission, drawing from Luke's Gospel, here Jesus proclaims good news to the poor, restores sight to the blind, and liberates the oppressed. Through vivid examples of contemporary violence and injustice, we are challenged to move beyond mere thoughts and prayers to embodied action.

Drawing inspiration from theologian Miroslav Volf's work on reconciliation, we are called to weave together biblical narratives of transformation – from Moses' intercession for wayward Israel to David's journey from sin to redemption – demonstrating how God's embrace in Christ enables reconciliation across seemingly insurmountable divides.

Authentic Christian faith demands more than pious thoughts; it requires us to actively participate in God's redemptive work. Just as Jesus shared meals with society's outcasts and restored the excluded, we too are called to open our eyes, listen attentively, and extend warm embraces to those in need. The urgent message is clear: prayer must be coupled with action, for we cannot genuinely pray "Your kingdom come" while refusing to live kingdom-shaped lives..

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.

breaking-open-the-word.org

Given the recent week's violence, bad news, recriminations, and questionable piety, it's understandable why Jesus' first mission, the Messianic mission, begins with opening the eyes of the blind. It's crucial to see and hear the cries of those in need. The mute are given the freedom to speak, and those with disabilities are accepted. Justice is proclaimed, and God's favour is upon all.

Jesus announced his mission in a synagogue, reading from Isaiah, and it was fulfilled before the crowd. As he ascended to heaven, he disappeared from their sight, but the disciples were entrusted with the Messianic mission. Men in white instructed them to stop looking up and continue the work. The mission, starting in Jerusalem, was to be extended to the ends of the world.

Luke's Gospel portrays Jesus' mission through several key actions. He proclaims good news to the poor, restores sight to the blind, and frees the oppressed. Jesus also includes sinners, Samaritans, and tax collectors in his meals. Finally, he commissions his disciples to embody and extend his mission.

At its core, the Messianic Mission is both redemptive (God's action in Christ) and participatory (our action in response).

Riots, violent home invasions, and murder. A woman without remorse, isolated, as her family rebuilds, losing loved ones and a trusted protector. An eloquent father of two, addressing gun rights for community safety, is tragically killed. Thoughts and prayers pour in, and flags fly at half-staff. Critics are criticised for not being holy enough to point out that prayer alone isn't enough.

Praying is essential, but if we're called to the Church's transformative mission, we must act. Silence and inaction will disrupt the essence of creation, respect, and acceptance that we're all equal in God's sight and capable of redemption.

Miroslav Volf, a Croatian-American Christian theologian and public intellectual, was born in Osijek, Yugoslavia, in 1956. He witnessed the Balkan Civil and Cultural War firsthand and explores how Christian faith intersects with public life, including culture, politics, economics, reconciliation, forgiveness, and interfaith dialogue. His book 'Exclusion and Embrace' explores themes of identity, otherness, reconciliation, and community unity amidst conflict.

Volf, currently at Yale, urges world leaders to live their beliefs before seeking awards. Redemption is key to God's action in Christ. As Messianic inheritors, we must respond with action. A pertinent quote by Volf is: 'Praying for a problem you won't resolve is hypocritical.'

Today's readings highlight bad behaviour, pious thoughts, and restoration. Jesus' simple parables emphasise finding a lost sheep or coin. I've been in similar situations, wasting time searching for misplaced keys. Jesus' response is encouraging.

Moses faced a dire situation after receiving the Ten Commandments. When he returned, he found the Israelites worshipping an idol and partying around it. Devastated by their actions and God's promise to wipe them out, Moses pleaded with God to let Israel start anew.

David, while his army was away, met a beautiful woman and married her. In lust, he committed adultery, and she became pregnant. To cover up his sin, he condemned an innocent man to death. When the woman gave birth, David was confronted with his sin by a story that initially enraged him. As he realised it was about him, his remorse was unbearable.

The 51st Psalm, the Miserere, is David's plea to God to spare the innocent child. Despite facing pain and punishment, Bathsheba would bear the wisdom and dignity of providing an earthly home on the Temple Mount. From the ashes, God breathed life into the fire of love and acceptance.

Jesus's mission and our calling as God's people are to change, engage in what's right, and overcome big sins and lost causes. Prayer alone and holy thoughts alone won't

change things. We must share our gifts individually and collectively. The recently held Community Summit showed the depth of caring and respecting others' work.

Volf's book, *Exclusion and Embrace*, makes significant observations. God's embrace in Christ enables reconciliation across hostility.¹

True prayer aligns with God's mission and requires consistent action. Embracing our sameness and difference is at the heart of the mission.

"The will to embrace precedes any 'truth' about others and any construction of their 'justice.'"

God's embrace of humanity in Christ is the foundation of our mission, and we're called to embody it with others. Human flourishing is intertwined with God's vision, and Christian faith shapes our society, politics, and culture. Jesus' Messianic Mission, entrusted to the disciples, was never meant to end with him.

Prayer alone is hypocritical; we can't pray 'Your kingdom come' and refuse to live kingdom-shaped lives. Reconciliation is at the heart of being a Church member, as God's people, we're called to heal broken relationships with God, others, and creation. Reconciliation is essential to the gospel mission.

Jesus restores the excluded (lepers, women, Gentiles) throughout the gospel. Volf argues that Christian mission is meaningless if it excludes, marginalises, or ignores justice. His line 'embrace precedes truth' mirrors Jesus' scandalous table fellowship, which begins the gospel passage we read today. Prayer is authentic only when it leads to action—locking hands in prayers without standing up for justice sins in thought, word, and deed. Thought, word, and deed are interconnected.

The good news is that new life is always possible through the cross, resurrection, and the Holy Spirit. Our experiences may sometimes be scars and wounds, like the resurrected Jesus. Still, if new life, beginnings, and change are possible, it must start with us opening our eyes, listening attentively, offering a warm embrace, and helping those in need. This is

at the heart of discipleship.

We may not always get it right, but the Spirit empowers us. It takes our hands, as Teresa of Ávila prays and uses them. It takes our voices, allowing us to sing praise and demand change. It keeps us alert to the fact that Christ Jesus came to redeem sinners.

Soon, we'll hear in the Gospel, "Lord Jesus, Son of David. Have mercy on me, a sinner." That's everyone's prayer. Heaven rejoices if even one sheep is found or a lost coin is recovered. Heaven is equally happy when we dine with the others whom society would exclude.

God gives us all a chance to start anew. A simple act of hospitality can actually bring healing and peace to those oppressed, and leave the problem where it should be: in the hands of those who should know better.

1: Volf, Miroslav: **Exclusion and embrace : a theological exploration of identity, otherness, and reconciliation** 1996, revised 2019, Nashville : Abingdon Press

Discussion and Reflection

"There is something deeply hypocritical about praying for a problem you are unwilling to resolve."

There are two parts to this week's discussion. Firstly, the questions at face value.

Secondly, reconsider each from the following view points:

1. Democratic ideals / politicians enacting change

"If we pray for justice in our nation but refuse to hold our leaders accountable—or fail to use our vote and voice—our prayers risk becoming empty words rather than the seed of change."

2. Personal growth / healing (Teresa of Avila)

"If we pray for healing in a broken relationship but will not take the first step ourselves, we forget Teresa of Avila's reminder that Christ has no hands but ours, no voice but ours, to carry his reconciling love."

"There is something deeply hypocritical about praying for a problem you are unwilling to resolve."

1. What do you think this statement means?
How does it challenge the way we usually think about prayer?
2. Read James 2:14-17.
How does this passage connect faith, prayer, and action? Can you think of a time when prayer led you (or someone you know) into concrete action?
3. Consider Micah 6:6-8.
Why do you think God values justice, mercy, and humility above ritual offerings? How does this shape our understanding of authentic prayer?
4. Where might we be tempted to pray about something but avoid taking responsibility for it?
(Examples: reconciliation in relationships, care for creation, addressing injustice, forgiving someone.)
5. How can prayer move from being a way to "hand off responsibility" to God, to becoming a partnership with God that transforms both us and the world?



This five-day devotional will take a risky dive into the sermon from this weekend. We will explore themes such as the Messianic mission, the importance of justice, reconciliation, and our role in God's plan. Each day will focus on a scripture that connects with the overarching themes from the sermon, encouraging you to reflect, pray, and take action.



Day 1

Scripture: Luke 4:18-19

The beginning of Jesus's mission was not just a proclamation but a transformative announcement that the prophecy was being fulfilled in their sight. His role in bringing sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed challenged societal norms and inspired change. As recipients of this mission, we are called to reflect this light into the world and embrace those marginalised by society.

Our mission aligns with God's action in Christ, encouraging us to partner in the divine work of realigning our lives with the values of justice and inclusion. It urges not only for prayers but also for actions that manifest God's intentions for humanity.

- In what ways can you bring "sight" and "freedom" to those around you?
- How can Jesus's transformative mission change your perspective on justice?
- Reflect on a time when you witnessed or helped bring about change. What was learned?
- Pray for the courage to embody the Messianic mission.
- Ask for guidance in finding ways to offer inclusion and justice.

Day 2

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-2

In the synagogue, Jesus proclaimed the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, marking the beginning of His redemptive mission. Grounded in the values of justice and hope, this mission was tasked to transcend geographic and cultural borders, actively calling all disciples to participate.

The ongoing call to act, rather than look up helplessly, reminds us that our actions are integral to carrying forward the mission

established by Jesus. It encourages us to tackle issues in society and offer hope and love where there's despair.

- How does understanding Jesus's mission inspire you in your daily life?
- Consider the areas where you feel justice is lacking. How might you help?
- Reflect on the call to action. What steps can you take in your community?
- Pray for clarity in understanding your role in Jesus's mission.
- Seek strength to act where there is injustice and need.

Day 3

Scripture: Matthew 5:14-16

We are encouraged to be as lights that shine brightly in a world filled with darkness. The sermon emphasises our collective and individual responsibilities to reach out, engage, and transform society into one rooted in God's love and justice.

By embracing the act of participation in Jesus's mission, we not only transform others but are transformed ourselves. It is a journey of self-discovery and community renewal, opening up pathways for profound change and unity amongst diverse groups of people.

- Identify ways you can serve as a light within your community.
- What barriers do you face that prevent you from fully living this call?
- Reflect on instances where you've seen light cast out darkness.
- Pray for courage and wisdom to be a beacon of light.
- Seek divine assistance in overcoming personal and communal barriers.

Day 4

Scripture: John 13:34-35

Through acts of love and inclusion, the teachings of Christ instructed us not only to pray but to contribute actively to change by following Jesus's example. Society is transformed when we work together to embody Christ's mission and show genuine love to others, regardless of their circumstances.

This love is not just declared through words but demonstrated through deeds and the acceptance of all people. In today's world,

extending a hand of friendship and breaking down walls of exclusion becomes an act of grace and a step towards realising God's Kingdom on earth.

- Reflect on how you demonstrate love and inclusion in your interactions with others.
- Reflect on a moment when someone offered you unexpected acceptance.
- What steps can you take today to emulate this act of love?
- Pray for a heart open to loving others as Christ loved us.
- Ask for humility and patience in efforts of reconciliation and acceptance.

Day 5

Scripture: James 1:22-25

James reminds us that faith is not passive but an active engagement with God's word, prompting us to live out the teachings we profess. The essence of this transformative mission is that it extends beyond the individual to impact communities and society as a whole.

Participation in God's mission is a testament to faith seen through our works. Each act of kindness, moment of reconciliation, and gesture of acceptance is a movement towards the realisation of God's vision, as we continue to contribute to the greater spiritual journey.

- Reflect on areas where your actions may not yet align with your faith.
- How can we encourage others to actively live out their faith?
- Identify simple steps you can take to embody God's message daily.
- Ask for insight and strength to align your actions with your faith.
- Pray that your works may reflect the glory of God's kingdom..

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

N. T. Wright,

Jane Williams,

P James Woodward,

Paula Gooder

Mark Pryce,

David Perry

1: Volf, Miroslav: **Exclusion and embrace : a theological exploration of identity, otherness, and reconciliation** 1996, revised 2019, Nashville : Abingdon Press

Brabarlung Totem

This is produced on
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our respects are made to
the First Nations people
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Email: dennis-at-breakingopentheword.org