



Living as Agents of God's Love
October 26th, 2025

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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

Revised Common Lectionary Related
Twentieth Sunday of Pentecost C
Ordinary Sunday 30
Proper 25

Jeremiah 14.7-10, 19-22
Psalm 84.1-7
2 Timothy 4.6-8, 16-18
Luke 18.9-14



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Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

O God,
forasmuch as without thee
we are not able to please thee:
Mercifully grant, that thy Holy Spirit
may in all things direct and rule our
hearts:
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



INTRODUCTION

The sermon delves deeply into the profound theme of change and growth, drawing insightful parallels between the evolution of music and the spiritual journey of faith. It begins by acknowledging that just as music has transformed over the decades—adapting to new styles, rhythms, and cultural influences—so too does our faith experience evolve in response to both personal and societal shifts.

Throughout the message, the sermon emphasises the importance of lament as a crucial component of our faith journey. It reflects on how lament allows us to express our pain and struggles, creating space for healing and growth. The scriptures from Jeremiah remind us of the weight of sorrow and the need for God's compassion in our lives.

Similarly, the passage from Luke encourages us to maintain hope, illustrating that even in our darkest moments, there is a promise of light and renewal. The reference to 2 Timothy serves to reinforce the notion of nurturing love and perseverance, urging us to remain steadfast in our commitment to God and to one another.

The sermon ultimately encourages the congregation to fully embrace change as an essential part of life and faith. It speaks to the importance of trusting in God's unwavering mercy as we navigate our personal journeys and the world around us.

Furthermore, it challenges us to live as active agents of His love, inspiring others through our actions, especially in an era marked by rapid technological advancements and continually shifting musical styles. By doing so, we can cultivate a community rooted in love, hope, and faithfulness amidst the inevitable changes we encounter.

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

Living as Agents of God's Love

I must admit to some hesitation in preaching today, given the extraordinary and spirited testimony from Sue last Sunday. In the words of Bob Dylan, before he betrayed the natural guitar movement and went electric, “The Times, They are a’changin’!” Sue and I discussed the sermon on Wednesday and ended up working out how annoyed we both were to take five moves to solve that day’s Wordle!

In 1965, Dylan shocked the world at Newport by going electric, but his performance was subpar. Pete Seeger attempted to adjust the PA system, only to discover the guitar effects were linked to the microphones. While some fans objected to changes like “The Times They’re A-Changin’,” others recognised that change is not only inevitable, but also an opportunity for growth, though they hoped it would be done with style.

The following concert in New York was much better received, as the sound engineers managed to get it right. Who would have thought that when this very Church was only one year old, there was a debate about music, styles, and performance, with a group of young people (some still with us) finding the change in folk music performance just too much to bear.

In 1982, I enrolled in a two-year course in electronic music at the Conservatorium of Music in Hobart, and it was an incredible experience! We had our treasured Moog synthesizer, which could only play one note at a time, along with our multi-track machines where we recorded each sound. We would literally cut and paste these recordings with demagnified scissors and splicing tape to craft our musical masterpieces. Then, everything changed when the shiny, digital Yamaha DX-7 arrived. It could handle up to four notes simultaneously, opening up a whole new world of possibilities for us.

The device could directly record onto four-track machines and memorise phrases for easy repetition. It even produced sampled sounds imitating rich string sections, a particularly alarming development given the Sedivka dynasty’s control over strings at the Conservatorium. This potential obsolescence sparked a protest-like unrest among those of us in the electronic studio bunker, making us

feel pressured and overlooked. We turned to Jan Sedivka for guidance, asking what we needed to do to inherit our degree?

Jan looked at us with love in his eyes. We just wanted to keep the music alive. When the drum machine came on the scene, the percussionists weren’t impressed at all. The keyboardists complained about the keys lacking proper weight. The flute and French horn sounds were decent, but we tended to group most woodwinds and horn sections as a lesser breed. Only the vocalists could hold their heads high, enjoying their moment of privilege. I can’t help but wonder how they feel now, knowing that even my laptop can take their place with just the touch of a key.

The ultimate insult for the Sedivkas came when the ABC-TV “Imperial Fanfare” that heralded the News was digitally remastered and then eventually rewritten to be played on synths. Et tu, Auntie?

Thus, from 1965 to the early eighties, and now well and truly in the twenties of plenty, a familiar tale of lament, hope and love is being played out. And, in our readings today, the same thing is a’-changin’!

So, let us turn to today’s Word of God as a story of lament, hope, and faithful love—a journey from our human frailty into God’s enduring mercy and the life of service that flows from it.

1. Jeremiah’s Lament and Our Need for Mercy

We begin in the raw honesty of Jeremiah 14. The prophet cries out, “Although our sins testify against us, do something, Lord, for the sake of your name... We acknowledge our wickedness.” Israel is parched, both physically and spiritually, wandering under the weight of its own unfaithfulness. And yet, even in the shadow of judgment, Jeremiah turns toward God with a desperate trust that His enduring mercy, like a constant beacon, will prevail.

This is a place we all recognise. Our prayers often begin in lament—naming the brokenness of our lives, our communities, our world. We, too, need to be honest about our dependence on God. Psalm 84 gives voice to that longing: “My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord.” Even in the valley of tears, the pilgrim trusts that God’s presence will bring life.

2. Jesus' Teaching in Luke: The Call to Childlike Faith

From this place of need, Jesus meets us in Luke 18, calling us to receive the Kingdom of God like a child. The child comes with empty hands, no claim to status, no illusion of control—only trust. This childlike faith, pure and straightforward, is what Jesus asks of us. In contrast, the rich ruler in the same chapter struggles to let go of what binds him. And here is a delicate truth: Luke focuses on the challenge, but Mark 10:21 adds a tender note—“Jesus looked at him and loved him.”

Even when we falter, God's love does not waver. He does not withdraw His affection because we stumble or hesitate. Instead, He invites us again and again into the simplicity of childlike acceptance—into a life where we do not cling to privilege, but open our hearts to grace.

3. Paul's Testimony: A Life Poured Out in Trust

Finally, 2 Timothy 4 gives us the voice of Paul looking back on a life lived in that trust. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith,” Paul speaks not of worldly triumph, but of faith forged in trial. He knows that the Lord stood by him, gave him strength, and will bring him safely into His heavenly Kingdom.

This is the life to which we are called: to confess our need like Jeremiah, to trust like the child in Luke 18, and to serve with the faithfulness of Paul—living as agents of God's love and compassion, not with the weight of privilege, but in the lightness of grace.

Conclusion

At the back of the Church, there is a Yamaha Claviola, an instrument that can be programmed to produce various sounds. It can store and play hymns from its memory or use an external memory card. However, despite its advanced features, the experience may lack the personal touch that a live musician offers. This is a metaphor for our lives. We can choose to live like the Yamaha Claviola, programmed and predictable, or we can live as agents of God's love, responding in real-time to the needs of our community, which is a vital aspect of communal worship.

The use of technology in worship raises important questions, particularly regarding the Claviola's potential to use AI to select only favourite hymns. However, we must value our live musicians, whether they use traditional or electronic instruments, as their contributions enrich our Parish life. This highlights the need to balance technological integration with appreciation for human musicianship in spiritual gatherings.

Who knows, one day, someone may look at me and say, “He put in a screen so he can bounce balls above the words...” But alas, my lament, I lack one thing...having the courage to let anything bounce anywhere...but God doesn't give up, and neither should we. God is constant in love and accepting that we're all a little mad, some madder than others. A child-like faith and imagination are essential.

Even as the music shifts, my thoughts turn to King David, dancing joyfully and unabashedly naked before the Ark of the Covenant—though he did wear a modest priestly ephod that covered his chest—during its procession into Jerusalem. It's a scene filled with simple, childlike joy. Yet, not everyone shared in his exuberance. One critic, Michal, the daughter of Saul, remained unimpressed.

²⁰ “How gifted the king of Israel looked today, shamelessly exposing himself to the servant girls like any vulgar person might do!”

²¹ David retorted to Michal, “I was dancing before the Lord, who chose me above your father and all his family! He appointed me as the leader of Israel, the people of the Lord, so I celebrate before the Lord. ²² Yes, and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, even to be humiliated in my own eyes! But those servant girls you mentioned will indeed think I am gifted!”

(2 Samuel 6)

Careful there, King David. You won't get a licence in the Anglican Church, a-dancin' and a-talkin' like that!

Are our times a'changin'? No, but one thing is sure: there is a constant that requires us to hang on to what is essential.

God's love does not let us go. It meets us in our lament, calls us into childlike trust, and sends us into the world as humble servants. Let us go as pilgrims and witnesses, carrying the mercy we have received into every valley, every home, every heart, no matter what the times are a-doing.

Living as Agents of God's Love

How do we respond to change in our lives and communities of faith?

Text Reference: The sermon draws parallels between the evolution of music—from Dylan going electric to the arrival of the Yamaha DX-7—and the changes within the Church community.

Explorative Question: In what ways can embracing change enhance our spiritual growth and witness in today's world?

What does Jeremiah's lament teach us about our need for God's mercy?

Text Reference: Jeremiah 14 highlights Israel's acknowledgement of its sin and need for God's intervention: "Although our sins testify against us, do something, Lord, for the sake of your name."

Explorative Question: How can recognising our own brokenness open us to more profound experiences of God's grace and forgiveness?

How can we cultivate childlike faith in our daily walk with God?

Text Reference: Luke 18 presents Jesus' teaching that the Kingdom of God must be received like a child, with humility and trust.

Explorative Question: What practices can help us let go of control and approach God with the simplicity and openness of a child?

What does Paul's testimony in 2 Timothy teach us about a life of faithful service?

Text Reference: Paul reflects, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith," showing trust in God's sustaining love despite trials.

Explorative Question: How does living with a long-term perspective of faith shape our response to current challenges and opportunities for service?

How do we balance technology and tradition in our worship and spiritual life?

Text Reference: The sermon uses the Yamaha Claviola as a metaphor, contrasting programmed worship with the living, responsive nature of faith.

Explorative Question: In what ways can technology be a tool for worship without replacing the irreplaceable human connection in our communal life of faith?

This five-day devotional will seek to provoke from the sermon from this weekend. We will explore the profound themes of healing, what is required of us to indeed, live as agents of God's love.



Weekly Practice: Begin and end each day this week with a short prayer of trust: "Lord, I am Yours. Lead me in love today."

Day 1: Honest Lament Before God

Reading: Jeremiah 14:7–10, 19–22

"Although our sins testify against us, do something, Lord, for the sake of your name."

Jeremiah teaches us the power of honest lament. He names the brokenness of Israel and cries out for God's mercy. We, too, are called to acknowledge our own failings and the needs of our world, trusting that God hears even our most desperate prayers.

- Reflection: What areas of your life or community need God's healing?
- Are we willing to name our failures as being "sin"?
- To what extent are we prepared to be instruments of change, "for God's sake!"
- If God has no eyes, ears and hands but ours, what part do we play in the broader sharing of God's unchanging love for us?

Prayer: *Lord, I bring my lament to You. Please have mercy on me and on the world. Amen.*

Day 2: Longing for God's Presence

Reading: Psalm 84

"My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."

Psalm 84 expresses the pilgrim's deep desire to dwell in the

presence of God. Even through the valley of tears, the psalmist trusts that God will provide strength for the journey.

- Reflection: Where do you most feel God's presence in your daily life?
- What does it mean to 'yearn' for God's presence, here, and in the ages to come?
- How do you see the Kingdom of God? Is it a place? Is it a concept?
- John 14:1-6a tells us that the Lord is indeed preparing a place for us to dwell in the presence of God. Is our daily mission based on our desire to be with God, or the need for reward?

Prayer: Lord, draw me closer to You. Let my heart always long for Your presence.

Day 3: Receiving the Kingdom Like a Child

Reading: Luke 18:15-17

Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

Jesus invites us to approach God with childlike trust—open, humble, and free of pretence. Letting go of control allows us to rest in the simplicity of His love.

- Reflection: What would it look like for you to trust God with childlike faith today?
- The rich young man in the Gospel was told he lacked one thing. What could you give away to love and serve the Lord?
- In Mark 10:21, we read, "Jesus looked at him and loved him." How does that unconditional love help shape and reshape your life?

Prayer: Lord, teach me to come to You with an open heart, trusting fully in Your love.

Day 4: A Life Poured Out in Faith

Reading: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

Paul reflects on a life of faithful service, strengthened by God's presence through every trial. His example reminds us that perseverance in faith leaves an eternal legacy.

- Reflection: How can you live today in a way that reflects long-term faithfulness to God?
- What indeed is a 'good fight'?
- Must our faith journey be shaped in a spiritual battle between God, me and others?
- Is there another way?
- When does the 'race' finish?

Prayer: Lord, help me persevere in faith and serve You with all my heart.

Day 5: Living as Agents of God's Love

Reading: Luke 18:27 & 2 Timothy 4:17

"What is impossible with man is possible with God." / "But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength."

To live as an agent of God's love means embracing change, trusting His guidance, and being ready to serve others with grace. We are not programmed like machines—we are called to respond to God's Spirit in real time, with joy and imagination.

- Reflection: Where is God calling you to show His love this week?
- To live as an agent of God's love means embracing change. What changes are you prepared to honour?
- The hymn, *Abide with Me* talks about 'change and decay in all around I see.' Is decay necessarily a bad thing?
- The hymn continues, "O Lord, that changes not, abide with me." If God does not change, then why should we change?

Prayer: Lord, send me out today as an agent of Your love. Give me the courage to live and serve in Your grace

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

Brabarlung Totem

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