



**BREAKING
OPEN**

Scripture Study

From Dust to Breath Preparing the Ground

for Those Still to Come

**PENTECOST
2026**

Dennis Webster

A weekly reflection based on the teachings 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

Pentecost

Acts 2.1-21 or

Numbers 11.24-30

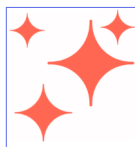
Psalms 104.26-36, 37b*

1 Corinthians 12.3b-13 or

Acts 2.1-21

John 20.19-23 or

John 7.37-39



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Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

God, who as at this time didst teach
the hearts of thy faithful people, by
the sending to them the light of thy
Holy Spirit:

Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right
judgement in all things,

and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort:

through the merits of Christ Jesus our
Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee,
in the unity of the same Spirit,

one God, world without end.

INTRODUCTION

Greetings from the Pallawa country, Tasmania.

Have you ever watched the little penguins return to shore each night, emerging from dark waters in their humble procession toward home?

Imagine their journey as the very essence of our Easter season—from the dust of Ash Wednesday to the wind and fire of Pentecost, we’ve traced humanity’s movement from mortality to resurrection life.

Through Lent’s wilderness wanderings, Holy Week’s towel, table, and cross, Easter’s empty tomb, and Ascension’s victory, we learn that resurrection isn’t just a future promise but a present reality that fills our world.

The risen Christ breathes peace into fearful rooms, walks dusty roads, and calls our names beside morning waters. As the Spirit descended at Pentecost, ordinary people—fishermen, widows, doubters—became a community learning to breathe together, preparing sacred ground for those still to come.

Here in Australia, in the ancient Pallawa country, and around the Gippsland Lakes, we’re called to stand rightly on this sacred earth, honouring those who walked before while preparing the way forward.

Every act of mercy, justice, and reconciliation becomes holy ground preparation. Like the penguins returning through darkness under Southern stars, we too are invited home—breathing resurrection together, preparing the way for future generations who will follow in this endless story of God’s life filling creation.

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.

From Dust to Breath

Preparing the Ground for Those Still to Come

We began Lent with dust upon our foreheads, not as an act of humiliation, but as an acknowledgment of truth.

Across this vast Australian landscape, we are familiar with dust. It settles on boots and verandas and rises from dry roads behind passing vehicles. After prolonged summers and harsh winds, it accumulates. Dust serves as a reminder that life is fragile, borrowed, and dependent upon rain, breath, and mercy.

On Ash Wednesday, we did not simply remember our mortality. We stood honestly within the creation.

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Yet even then, the story was never about abandonment, because the God who formed humanity from dust also breathed the breath of life into that dust.

Thus, our journey began. We turned from confronting mortality, not to despair, but toward restoration. Through Lent, we walked known paths: wilderness, thirst, questions, blindness, grief, betrayal and tombs. Like the disciples, we moved often uncertainly. Like Nicodemus, we approached in partial darkness. Like Samaritan women, we carried old thirsts. As Lazarus, some parts of our lives still felt bound.

Yet throughout the journey, Christ called people not simply to belief, but to life. Again and again, the Gospel revealed something astonishing: the resurrection is not only a future promise. It is a present.

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

Not “I will be.” “I am.”

Jesus, standing before the tomb of Lazarus, does not simply speak about life after death. He calls life forward among death itself. Lazarus emerges, blinking into the daylight. He remains bound and unfinished, requiring others’ assistance to be unbound. Alive yet learning freedom. Breathing yet still healing. Raised yet still becoming.

After this passage through Lent, we entered Holy Week.

The towel. The table. The cross. Blood and water flowing from Christ’s side: sacrifice and new creation together. And in the silence of Holy Saturday, the earth itself seemed to hold its breath.

At Easter, the stone was rolled away, not so that Jesus could escape, but so that the world could see that death no longer held final authority. The tomb stood open under the pale light of the morning. Not stuffed with answers. Teeming with possibility. The resurrection was never solely about resuscitation; it marked the beginning of anastasis: humanity being raised into the life of God.

As Easter unfolded, the risen Christ continued to appear. He breathed peace into fearful rooms, shared meals, walked roads, and called names beside water at dawn. Gradually, the disciples recognised that the resurrection was not an interruption to ordinary life. Christ was not absent; the risen Christ was filling the world.

At Ascension, Christ was lifted.

Too often, we imagine this event as a departure, as if Jesus vanished upward into distant skies, but the Ascension is not abandonment. It is a victory. Humanity, wounded and mortal, was carried into the very life of God. The reign of death broken open. The living Christ is no longer bound to one place, one shoreline, one road, one room.

And so the disciples waited, not passively. Prayerfully.

Like the land waiting for rain, like parched earth retaining the memory of water. From the expectant waiting of the Ascension, we moved into Pentecost.

Wind. Breath. Fire. Speech.

This was not a spectacle for its own sake, but a creation breathing new life. The Spirit descends not just to make the Church powerful, but to make humanity alive in Christ. The frightened begin speaking. The divided begin hearing. The isolated become community.

Pentecost is resurrection becoming communal.

The breath first given in Genesis, the breath breathed by Christ in the upper room, now moves through ordinary people. Fishermen. Widows. Strugglers. Doubters. The grieving. The hopeful.

The Church becomes not a society of the perfected, but a community

learning to breathe together. After telling this early story, we shift to consider how these movements resonate here in Australia.

We know what the wind sounds like across open water. We know the smell of rain before it arrives. We know bushfires and regeneration. Flood and drought. Silence and birdsong.

Around the Gippsland Lakes, across Pallawa country, through desert and coast, the land itself imparts patience. It teaches humility and dependency. Long before our towns and churches were built, the land already had story, grief, ceremony and belonging. Beneath our feet is the memory of those who walked before us, cared for this land, named it, sang it and were formed by it.

Resurrection faith does not erase this reality; rather, it deepens our reverence. For the God of resurrection is not the God of the dead, but of the living: the living, the departed, and those still to come.

This is where the journey from Ash Wednesday to Pentecost now leads us: not to triumphalism or certainty over others, but toward uprightness. We become a people learning to stand rightly on sacred ground, to breathe deeply without grasping, to belong without possessing, and to receive creation as a gift. We become the ancestors of promise.

The Spirit does not merely comfort us for today. The Spirit prepares the ground for those still to come. Every act of mercy. Every work of justice. Every tree planted. Every child is nurtured. Every truth spoken gently. Every reconciliation sought. Every Eucharist is shared. Every prayer whispered beside the dying. Every moment of forgiveness.

All it prepares is holy ground. Perhaps this is the soft promise unfolding toward the Trinity: that under all things is not chaos, emptiness, or domination, but communion.

The Father breathes life. The Son enters death and raises humanity. The Spirit fills creation with living presence. And we are invited not just to observe this mystery, but to live within it. Together. Breathing resurrection on sacred ground—preparing the way for those who follow. That closing image may already belong somewhere in the final form. It is not forced or ornamental, but gently sacramental.

The noisy return of the little penguins to shore is far more than a charming scene; it is a living image of promise renewing itself. Each night these small creatures emerge from dark waters and cross the sand, returning together home. In their humble procession, we glimpse the resurrection in nature: the movement from darkness to light, from absence to presence, from solitude to community.

While we reflect on resurrection, breath, belonging, and those still to come, the penguins' journey serves as a sign of creation's persistent rhythms. Their homecoming echoes our own longing for return, for welcome, and for Spirit to step forward for the sake of future generations. For all of us, the sight of the penguins coming ashore speaks of God's invitation to travel together and prepare a way for those who will follow.

Creation continues its ancient rhythms beneath the Gospel story, not just as a backdrop, but as a witness. And perhaps that is part of the inward digestion here: the movement from abstraction towards attentiveness.

The Christian story is not about escaping the world; it is about learning to dwell within its truthfulness and with reverence. All are welcome to find their place in this story, regardless of background, tradition, or journey. Here, we are invited to belong, to listen, and to walk together.

Dust. Breath. Water. Fire. Wind. Birdsong in the dark. The return of creatures to shore. People gathering around tables. The grieving is learning to breathe again. All of it is held within the life of God. And the penguins returning through darkness may yet become a final image:

Even now, under Southern stars, creation remembers. The small ones return to the shore. The breath of God moves! We learn, at every step, to come home upright upon sacred ground—preparing the way for those still to come.

Jesus told Martha 'I am the resurrection and the life, not 'I will be.' What does it mean that resurrection is a present reality, not just a future promise?

- When Jesus stood before Lazarus's tomb, He spoke about life in the present tense. The resurrection isn't just something we wait for after death, but something we can experience now.
- Where in your own life have you experienced God bringing something 'dead' back to life - perhaps a broken relationship, lost hope, or a dream you thought was over?

We are called to prepare 'holy ground' for those still to come through acts of mercy, justice, and care. What does it mean to be 'ancestors of promise'?

- Every act of kindness, every tree planted, every child nurtured, and every moment of forgiveness prepares the way for future generations. We become people who leave behind sacred ground.
- What specific actions could you take in your daily life to prepare 'holy ground' for the next generation in your family, community, or workplace?

How does the image of Lazarus emerging from the tomb - 'alive yet learning freedom, breathing yet still healing' - reflect our own spiritual journey?

- Lazarus came out of the tomb still bound and needing others to help unbind him. He was raised but still becoming, alive but still healing.
- In what areas of your life do you feel like Lazarus - brought back to life by God but still needing help from others to be fully free?

Connecting the Australian landscape and the little penguins returning to shore with the Gospel story: Why is it important to see God's story reflected in the natural world around us?

- The penguins' nightly journey from dark waters to shore mirrors the resurrection movement from darkness to light, absence to presence, solitude to community. The land itself teaches patience and reverence.
- What examples from your local environment or natural world help you understand God's character or the Gospel story more deeply?

The journey from Ash Wednesday ('remember you are dust') to Pentecost (the Spirit breathing life) shows God's complete work. How does understanding this full journey change how we view difficult seasons in our lives?

- Tracing the path from acknowledging our mortality and fragility (dust) through Jesus's death and resurrection to the Spirit giving new life. Each difficult season has its place in God's bigger story.
- Looking back on a challenging season you've experienced, how might you now see God's breath bringing life even in what felt like 'dusty' or dead circumstances?

This five-day devotional will take a deeper dive into this weekend's sermon. As we explore themes of life, mortality, and the journey of faith, may we find fresh insights and renewed hope in the teachings of Jesus and the experiences shared in the Gospel.



Day 1

Scripture: John 11:25

In this sermon, we are reminded of Jesus's profound declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life." This proclamation is key to understanding that resurrection is not merely an event to anticipate but a present reality to live in. Lent is a journey that challenges us to confront mortality, yet invites us to look beyond despair, toward restoration and life. Jesus's call at Lazarus's tomb is a reminder of the ongoing invitation to step out of our 'tombs' of fear and doubt and walk boldly into the light of new life.

As the Gospel demonstrates, life in Christ is an invitation to a present and continuous resurrection. It assures us that, like Lazarus, we can shed the bindings that hold us, learning to breathe unencumbered. This journey invites us to engage actively with the world around us, embracing the Spirit's power to transform ordinary existence into breathtakingly divine moments.

- What parts of your life feel bound and unfinished, like Lazarus's?
- How do you understand the concept of resurrection as a present reality?
- What would it look like to live each day as an expression of resurrection and life?
- Pray for courage to step out of 'tombs' and embrace new life.
- Seek understanding of how Christ is calling you to life today.

Day 2

Scripture: Genesis 2:7

The sermon illustrates how we began Lent with the symbol of dust, a humbling reminder of our origins and dependency on God. Dust signifies both the frailty of life and the genesis of God's creation. From dust, God breathes the breath of life, infusing our existence with divine purpose. Pastor speaks to the significance of remembering we are creation within creation: dependent, vulnerable, yet filled with the breath of the living God.

This understanding liberates us from fear of mortality and anchors us in the

reverence of life as intimate participation with God. As we dive deeper into recognising the everyday connections between creation's elements and our spiritual journey, we learn to appreciate life as a sacred gift to be honoured, celebrated, and deeply lived in connection with the Creator.

- In what ways does remembering your origin from dust change your view of life?
- How do you perceive the 'breath of life' in your daily experiences?
- What practices help you to remain aware of your dependency on God?
- Thank God for the gift of life and the breath sustaining you.
- Ask for God's help to honour this life as sacred.

Day 3

Scripture: Acts 2:2-4

Reflecting on the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the sermon draws parallels between the movement of the Spirit and the unfolding of creation. The Events of Pentecost marked a seismic shift: from fear to courage, division to unity, silence to proclamation. Just as the Spirit breathed new life into the early Church, so we are invited today into an experience of community that transcends barriers, creating spaces for healing, dialogue, and growth.

This section of the devotional challenges us to recognise the communal aspect of resurrection. By embracing diversity and moving beyond personal boundaries, we become active participants in the larger, divine narrative being written amongst us. The resurrection in community is evident when we engage with one another in honesty, embrace our shared humanity, and become intentional in our pursuit of mutual flourishing.

- How does Pentecost challenge your understanding of community?
- What barriers might you need to address to bring about unity and healing?
- In what ways can you contribute to the community as it moves from division to unity?
- Pray for unity within your community and the courage to bridge divides.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to open your heart to new ways of connecting with others.

Day 4

Scripture: Romans 8:11

Continuing in the theme of resurrection, this part centres on the Ascension as an invitation to see beyond departure and recognise victory and divine intimacy. Pastor shared that Ascension signifies not separation, but the union of humanity with God's Holiness. It's a reminder that Jesus' victory extends to all, and this connection transcends any single boundary or place.

This realisation invites us to live life as ascending citizens of heaven, understanding divine presence permeates all we do. As partakers in resurrection life, we grow into our calling to carry Christ's love and power into every sphere. The world becomes our mission field, full of sacred potential and transformative opportunities.

- How can the understanding of Ascension change your perspective on presence and absence?
- What does it mean for you to live as a citizen of heaven in your daily life?
- How does realising the Spirit's victory affect your interactions with the world?
- Pray for eyes to see divine potential in ordinary moments.
- Seek guidance on living life as an extension of divine love and purpose.

Day 5

Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20

The conclusion of the sermon and this devotional calls us into the Great Commission, encouraging us to prepare the way for those who come after us. Pastor reminds us of the penguins' journey as a powerful metaphor for communal hope and resilience. Our call is to be present and proactive, establishing holy ground for future generations to experience God's Kingdom.

This final reflection stirs within us a commitment to consider our legacy as believers. Every act of justice, mercy, and love builds upon the sacred foundation that others have laid before us. As stewards of resurrection faith, we are being shaped as ancestors of promise, ensuring a path of faithfulness for those still to come.

- How does the notion of 'being ancestors of promise' influence your current actions and decisions?
- What legacy do you want to leave for future generations?
- How can your life reflect a commitment to justice, mercy, and love?
- Pray for wisdom to build a lasting legacy rooted in God's love.
- Ask for the strength to act justly and love mercy in your relationship with others.

End notes and further reading

End notes and further reading

Harrington, Daniel J Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew
Moloney, Francis J, SBD, Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of John
Johnson, Luke Timothy: Sacra Pagina: The Gospel on Luke
Collins, Raymond F., Sacra Pagina: First Corinthians
Andrew McGowan substack.com/@abmcg
N.T. Wright, Twelve months of Sundays Year A
Andrew Pratt, pastor and hymn writer (theworshipcloud.com)

Let your faith and relationships
be shaped by love and patience
for God's love is
revealed in lives, not letters.



Brabarlung Totem

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