



BREAKING OPEN

Scripture Study



Pentecost 3a
14th June, 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

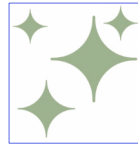
Pentecost 3A

Exodus 19.2-8a

Psalm 100

Romans 5.1-8

Matthew 9.35 - 10.8 [9-23]



Made with the assistance of AI,
including Grammarly® and ChatAtlas GTP5
Canva – Affinity Publisher and
Ulysses, Grok, and
church.tech



Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

O Lord,
who never failest to help and
govern them whom thou dost
bring up in thy stedfast fear and love:
Keep us, we beseech thee,
under the protection of thy good
providence,
and make us to have a perpetual fear and
love of thy holy Name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

INTRODUCTION

On Eagles Wings

What if life is like boarding a mystery flight—stepping into the unknown with only trust as your compass?

Can you recall if an Australian Ansett* airline passenger who bought tickets without knowing their destination, mirroring our journey of faith, where we rarely see the full itinerary but must trust we'll be brought home safely.

Through the stories of Abraham, Israel, and the disciples, Dennis reveals a profound truth: pilgrimage isn't about travelling toward God, but discovering that God has been travelling with us all along. Like his own peaceful moment by the lakeshore, God meets us in ordinary places, weaving connections through conversations, friendships, and everyday encounters we often overlook.

This week challenges us to shift our perspective from seeking certainty to recognising divine presence in our daily lives.

As our congregation navigates its own uncertain seasons, we are reminded that God doesn't promise to remove all difficulties or explain every route—only to carry us on eagles' wings.

This week, commit to ending each day with a simple reflection: "Where did I glimpse God's kindness today?" Don't wait for the destination to recognise the sacred journey already unfolding around you.

Cover Image: Bunjil (Wedge Tailed Eagle)

AI Pencil rendition of an original photo by the Dennis Webster, taken in 2022, Macedon Ranges, Victoria Australia.

* Ansett Airlines was part of Australia's national airline duopoly together with Trans Australian Airlines (later Australian, and Qantas. Despite being the official carrier for the 2000 Sydney Olympics, they were bankrupted out of the market in 2001, having been acquired and decimated by Air New Zealand.

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.

On Eagles Wings

Years ago, when my father worked for Ansett, the airline occasionally offered mystery flights. (Curran, 2020)

Passengers arrived at the airport with a ticket but no knowledge of their destination. Only at the last moment did they learn their destination, and their luggage journeyed into the unknown.

Some passengers found themselves in Alice Springs, while others landed in unfamiliar cities before returning home. One traveller flew to Wellington, New Zealand, spent less than an hour there and boarded the next flight back. (Passenger describes chaotic Wellington flight after being diverted due to gale-force winds, 2023)

Imagine such a journey. Chance it with Ansett!
Not knowing where you are going. Not knowing what you will find.
Simply trusting that, somehow, you will be brought home.

In many ways, that sounds remarkably like the life of faith.

Our readings this morning speak of people already on a journey.

In Exodus, God reminds Israel:

“I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.”

Notice that God does not begin with commandments; God begins with relationship.

God begins with relationship.

Before Israel is sent, formed, or fully understands its identity, God reminds them that they have already been carried. The journey begins not with human effort but with divine grace.

Psalms 100 sings the same song:

“Know that the Lord is God. It is he that has made us, and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.”

Before we ask where we are going, we are invited to remember whose we are.

Paul continues the journey in Romans.

Paul continues this journey in Romans: hope is formed through endurance, character and trust. Even while we were weak, Christ died for

us. God’s faithfulness precedes our certainty.

Then Matthew shows us Jesus looking upon the crowds. They are weary. They are scattered. They are, in his words, like sheep without a shepherd.

Before he sends the disciples, Jesus sees them. Before there is work, there is love.

Over the past few weeks, I have reflected on the nature of pilgrimage.

This includes both ancient pilgrimages to destinations such as Iona, Lindisfarne and Santiago, and the hidden pilgrimages within everyday life. Last week I spoke about Jake, a young traveller from Yorkshire whom I met here in Paynesville. He had walked the Camino with his grandmother and, as is often the case with pilgrims, the most enduring memories are often those formed along the journey rather than the distance covered.

A study suggests that the number of people undertaking the pilgrimage has risen significantly in recent decades, and the connections along these routes reflect changing spiritual practices. (Courcier, Scar & Oviedo, Lluís & Farias, Miguel. (2013).

This also reminded me of a personal experience. Just a few days ago, while walking along the lakeshore in the early morning, I was unexpectedly filled with quiet peace. The usual concerns and plans that rushed through my mind seemed to dissipate. In that stillness, I sensed God’s gentle, reassuring presence beside me. It was a brief moment, but it reminded me that God often meets us in the ordinary places of our lives simply by being with us.

That is the secret pilgrims often discover.

**Pilgrimage is more than walking with intention.
It is the weaving of connection—with God, with others and with meaning.**

Many of us imagine pilgrimage as travelling towards God.

Scripture suggests a different path. As Psalm 23 beautifully declares, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.” Or as God promises in Isaiah 43:2, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.” These passages remind us that the journey is shaped not only by our seeking God, but also by God’s faithful presence with us.

Abraham discovers that God is already ahead of him.

Israel discovers that God has carried them.
The disciples discover that Christ has been walking beside them.

And we discover, often in retrospect, that God was present in conversations, friendships, chance encounters, joys and disappointments, and ordinary days.

Like passengers on a mystery flight, we rarely know the full destination. We do not witness every stage of the journey and cannot always explain the route. Yet again and again God whispers:

“I carried you.”

The destination remains important. But perhaps the greater discovery is that pilgrimage is not solely about travelling towards God. It is about discovering, along the way, that God has been travelling with us.

This week, take a few moments at the end of each day to reflect. If it helps, try a simple reflection: quiet your mind and ask, “Where did I glimpse kindness?” Where did I sense God’s presence? You might like to write a few lines in a journal or pause for a brief prayer, such as: “God, help me to see your presence in the ordinary moments of my day.”

Perhaps that is why the mystery flight image resonated. At present, you seem to be living it. You know the next flight leaves, who your travelling companions are and who ultimately brings you home. But the itinerary is a little unclear. The irony is that this is exactly where Exodus, Romans, Psalm 100 and Matthew place God’s people. Not triumphant, not settled, not fully certain, but simply carried.

“I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.” Notice what God does not say: not “I gave you all the answers”, not “I removed all difficulties”, not “I explained the route”. Only:

“I carried you.”

For the pilgrim, these moments are never wasted. They are signs that we have never travelled alone. And perhaps that is the greatest mystery of all.

References

Curran, A. (2020). A Look At Ansett’s Mystery Destination Flights. Simple Flying. <https://simpleflying.com/ansett-air-mystery-flights/>

(2 August 2023). Passenger describes chaotic Wellington flight after being diverted due to gale-force winds. NZ Herald. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/passenger-describes-chaotic-wellington-flight-after-being-diverted-due-to-gale-force-winds/WCJQ5CNLGJG7LA7O4PDNOJP3G4/>

Courcier, Scar & Oviedo, Lluís & Farias, Miquel. (2013). Rise of Pilgrims on the Camino to Santiago: Sign of Change or Religious Revival?. Review of Religious Research. 55. 10.1007/s13644-013-0131-4.

Mulhearn, D. (2017). Pilgrimage in everyday life. The Sisters of The Good Samaritan. <https://www.goodsams.org.au/article/pilgrimage-in-everyday-life/>

Discussion Questions

Imagine taking a mystery flight where you don’t know your destination but trust you’ll be brought home safely. How is living a life of faith similar to boarding a plane without knowing where you’re going?

- Ansett Airlines’ mystery flights, in which passengers bought tickets without knowing their destination, were thrilling because they learned their destination only at the last moment. He connected this to faith as ‘not knowing where you are going, not knowing what you will find, simply trusting that somehow you will be brought home.’
- Think about a time in your life when you had to decide without knowing the outcome. How did you handle the uncertainty, and what helped you move forward despite not having all the answers?

In Exodus, God tells Israel, “I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.” What does it mean that God begins with relationship rather than rules, and why is this order important?

- God doesn’t start with commandments but with relationship, reminding Israel that ‘they have already been carried’ before they were sent or formed. The journey begins ‘not with human effort but with divine grace.’
- How does knowing that God carried you before asking anything of you change how you approach your relationship with God and others in your daily life?

The Sermon explored God’s presence during an ordinary morning walk by the lake. Why do you think God often meets us in everyday, ordinary moments rather than only in dramatic or religious settings?

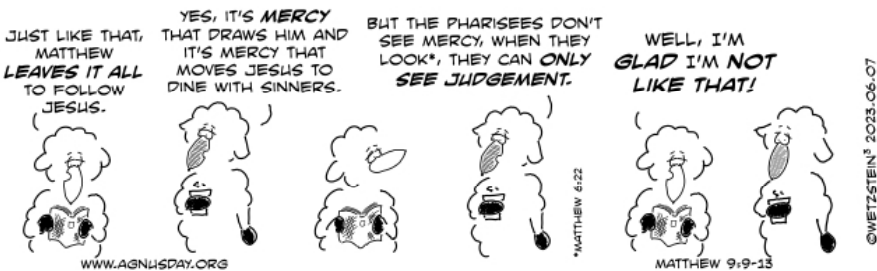
- Imagine walking along the lakeshore in early morning when ‘the usual concerns and plans that rushed through my mind seemed to dissipate’ and he ‘sensed God’s gentle, reassuring presence.’ He noted that ‘God often meets us in the ordinary places of our lives simply by being with us.’
- When have you experienced God’s presence in an unexpected or ordinary moment? What was happening in your life at that time, and how did recognising God’s presence change your perspective?

The Sermon suggests that pilgrimage isn't just about travelling toward God, but about discovering that God has been travelling with us all along. What's the difference between these two ways of thinking about our spiritual journey?

- “Many of us imagine pilgrimage as travelling towards God, but Scripture suggests a different path’. He pointed to how Abraham, Israel, and the disciples all discovered God was already with them, and “we discover, often in retrospect, that God was present in conversations, friendships, chance encounters, joys and disappointments.”
- Looking back over the past month, where can you now see signs that God was present with you in situations where you might not have noticed it at the time?

God doesn't promise to give us all the answers or remove all difficulties. Still, says “I carried you.” Why might this be more meaningful than having everything explained or made easy?

- The Sermon emphasised what God doesn't say: “not I gave you all the answers, not I removed all difficulties, not I explained the route. Only: I carried you, God's people as 'not triumphant, not settled, not fully certain, but simply carried.”
- Think about a difficult season in your life. How might it change your perspective to focus less on understanding why it happened and more on recognising how you were carried through it?



This five-day Devotional will rise to the Sermon from this weekend. We will explore the idea of life's journey as a mystery flight—a journey of faith in which the path is uncertain but God's companionship is constant.



Day 1

Core Scripture: Exodus 19:4

Today's scripture reminds us that God begins the journey with relationship, not commandments. Just as God bore Israel on eagles' wings, He carries us in His grace. Our spiritual journey is less about human effort and more about divine grace that leads and sustains us.

Consider the mystery flights of your own life. How often are you reminded that the destination is unknown, but God's presence is faithful? The Sermon invites us to trust in that divine companionship, knowing that we are never truly alone on our path.

- Reflect on a time when you felt carried by divine grace.
- How do you experience God's presence in ordinary moments?
- What does it mean to begin your journey with a relationship over commandments?
- Pray for openness to divine grace in your life's journey.
- Ask God to help you recognise His presence in your daily life.
-

Day 2

Core Scripture: Psalm 100:3

This scripture invites us to acknowledge our belonging to God. We are His people, cherished and guided by His gentle hands. The assurance of belonging gives us peace and direction, even when the journey is uncertain.

As you reflect on the Sermon, consider how recognising God's ownership has shaped your life. The journey of faith, much like a mystery flight, calls for trust and opens our hearts to the divine companionship that shepherds us through all of life's seasons.

- In what ways do you feel a sense of belonging to God?
- How does this belonging influence your faith journey?
- Where do you find peace in the assurance of God's guidance?
- Pray for a deeper understanding of your identity as God's cherished one.
- Seek the peace that comes from knowing you belong to the Creator.

Day 3

Core Scripture: Romans 5:8

God's faithfulness precedes our certainty. While we were still weak, Christ's unwavering love was demonstrated through His sacrifice. Our journey is sustained not by our own strength but by the powerful love of Christ who walks with us.

Immerse yourself in the truth that your significance is established in Christ's love. The journey of faith is filled with unknowns, but every step is accompanied by a Saviour whose love never fails. The pastor emphasises that this is the foundation of our hope.

- How have you experienced God's faithfulness despite uncertainty?
- Reflect on the love of Christ as your sustaining strength.
- In what areas of your life do you need to rely more on God's unwavering love?
- Pray for endurance in moments of weakness, anchoring your hope in Christ.
- Thank God for His continual presence and faithful love.

Day 4

Core Scripture: Matthew 9:36

Jesus sees the crowds, weary and scattered, and is moved with compassion. Before the work of discipleship, there is love and understanding. Our own journeys require compassion—for ourselves and others—echoing the love Jesus first shows us.

The Sermon speaks to the importance of seeing and being

seen by Christ. Our faith journey is nurtured by the empathy and love that God extends to us and challenges us to extend to others. It is in these moments of mutual recognition that the journey gains depth.

- Reflect on a time when you felt truly seen by Jesus.
- How can you extend Christ-like compassion in your current journey?
- What role does empathy play in your faith walk?
- Ask for a heart that sees and loves like Jesus.
- Pray for the ability to embrace compassion in your daily encounters.

Day 5

Core Scripture: Psalm 23:1-2

The Lord is our shepherd, and He leads us beside still waters. The journey isn't just about moving toward God but about recognising that He travels with us, restoring our souls. This divine accompaniment transforms our understanding of pilgrimage.

Pastor encapsulates the essence of a mysterious flight journey. It's not solely the destination but the realisation that God has been faithfully present throughout. Let us embrace the journey with a heart open to His guidance and faithfulness that never wavers.

- Where do you see God's presence in your journey today?
- How does the image of God as your shepherd offer comfort and assurance?
- Reflect on the ways pilgrimage has transformed your understanding of God's presence.
- Pray for awareness of God's presence throughout your journey.
- Thank Him for being your constant companion on life's path.

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

This is produced on
GunaiKurnai Country and
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.

Acknowledgement of use appreciated

Subscription to "www.breaking-open-the-word.org" is available.

Also substack: substack.com/@tastigr

Published every weekend, usually on Saturday, 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 generate tastigr.info

is registered to D. M Webster
and all rights are reserved. © 2026
www.breaking-open-the-word.org
Email: dennis-at-breakingopentheword.org