



# BREAKING OPEN

Scripture Study



**Pentecost 4a**  
**21st June, 2026**

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## Dennis Webster

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

Revised Common Lectionary Related

Pentecost 4A

Jeremiah 20.7-13

Psalms 69.8-11 [12-17] 18-20\*

Romans 6.1b-11

Matthew 10.24-39



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Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

**O** Lord, we beseech thee mercifully to  
hear us;  
and grant that we,  
to whom thou hast given an hearty desire  
to pray,  
may by thy mighty aid be defended  
and comforted in all dangers  
and adversities;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

# INTRODUCTION

Remain at your Post

What do you do when a river stands between you and where God is calling you to be?

Opening with the striking image of Tasmania’s Batman Bridge — its great A-frame tower rising before the roadway even comes into view — as a lens through which to read a Sunday rich with difficult crossings: Jeremiah mocked and weary yet unable to abandon his calling, the Psalmist crying out yet trusting, Paul anchoring the Church in baptism’s death-and-resurrection, and Jesus warning that faithful discipleship may fracture even families.

Rather than offering a timetable or a map of the end times, there is a quiet but urgent distinction: the saints of every generation didn’t draw apocalyptic charts — they built bridges.

Bridges between neighbours, across misunderstandings, between fear and hope. The signature line lands with both humour and conviction:

“Build a bridge, Princess, and get over it”\*

— not to dismiss real pain, but to refuse the prison of permanent separation. The invitation is personal and communal: feed the hungry, tend the flock, remain at your post.

Because pilgrims cross bridges — but saints \*become\* them.

So wherever your river is today, don’t wait on the far shore.

Start building.

Cover Image: Modified from a picture on [www.bigrig.com.au](http://www.bigrig.com.au)

Batman Bridge over Whirlpool Reach, *kanamaluka*/Tamar River, *lutruwita*/Tasmania

The bridge was opened in 1968. Known in the Tasmanian Gazette as “Bridge 73”, its naming after local identity and controversial founder of Melbourne, John Batman, there exist considerable efforts to rename the bridge. At this point in time, with the Launceston City Council, some members of the Legislative Council, and The Greens supporting a change, there is no momentum from the Tasmanian Government to progress this.

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.

## Remain at your Post

*Lutruwita*, Tasmania, is a land shaped by rivers.

They carve the earth and the stories of those who live there. People joke about the rivers, the dams, the then-premier, Electric Eric Reece, and his bridges. Yet the rivers remain. They divide communities, so we build bridges not merely of steel and concrete, but of trust, hope, and perseverance.

Bridges exist because there is something difficult to cross.

One of the most striking is the Batman Bridge across the *kanamaluka*/Tamar. Approaching from the west, the great A-frame tower rises before you see the roadway itself. Beneath it lie deep waters, shifting currents, and long distances. Someone looked at that river and saw not a barrier, but a crossing.

That image has stayed with me.  
Because today's readings are full of rivers.

Jeremiah stands in troubled waters. He is mocked, opposed, and weary. Yet he cannot abandon the calling God has given him.

The Psalmist cries out from distress, yet continues to trust. Paul reminds the Church that through baptism we have been joined to Christ's death and resurrection. The journey of faith is not avoidance of difficulty but participation in God's life.

Then comes Jesus' challenging teaching in Matthew. These are not comforting words at first hearing. Families may disagree. Communities may resist. Following Christ may come at a cost.

The question is not whether the road becomes difficult.  
The question is: what do we do when it happens?

Many people today search for certainty. Some seek it in predictions, timetables, and claims about the end of the world. Every generation seems to produce voices claiming to know exactly how history will unfold.

Yet Scripture consistently points us elsewhere.

Jeremiah receives no secret timetable.  
Paul offers no chart of future events.

Jesus gives no date for the end.

Instead, they all point towards faithful discipleship in the present.

- Remain faithful.
- Remain hopeful.
- Remain at your post.
- The faithful servant is found at work.
- The shepherd remains with the flock.
- The prophet continues speaking.
- The disciple continues following.
- The pilgrim keeps walking.

That is why I find myself returning to the image of pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage is not simply about arriving somewhere. It is the weaving of connection—with God, with others, and with meaning. The pilgrim does not always know the destination. The pilgrim certainly does not know every turn in the road. But the pilgrim trusts that God is present in the journey.

And sometimes pilgrimage asks more of us than simply crossing bridges.

- Sometimes it asks us to build them.
- Bridges between neighbours.
- Bridges across misunderstandings.
- Bridges between fear and hope.

Bridges between where we are and where God is calling us to be. The saints of the Church understood this well. They crossed cultures, languages, and divisions. More importantly, they helped others cross. Pilgrims cross bridges. Saints become them.

Someone once stood at Whirlpool Reach and saw the need for a bridge. The crossing was difficult. The waters were real. Yet a bridge was built.

Faith often works in much the same way.

The Gospel does not deny the river.  
It provides a way through.

Many of us already carry heavy burdens. Many of us know disappointment, conflict, grief, or uncertainty. Christ does not promise that these things will disappear. Instead, he walks the road with us. Often, when we are hurt, we linger on our side of the river, waiting for someone else to build the bridge.

The Gospel asks for something harder: build the bridge yourself. Pain is

real. Not every relationship can be restored. But to remain forever apart is its own kind of prison.

And yet the call remains.

Feed the hungry.  
Tend the flock.  
Pray.  
Worship.  
Love your neighbour.  
Remain at your post.

Jesus does not describe a world in which everyone agrees. Quite the opposite. There are divisions.

Misunderstandings.  
Family tensions.  
Disappointments.

(recollections will often vary)

The question becomes: “What do faithful people do when they find themselves separated by a river?” Build walls, build watchtowers? Some start drawing maps of the Apocalypse.

The saints tend to build bridges.

Pilgrims cross bridges. Saints become them. And sometimes, when life gets difficult, the most practical spiritual advice available is:

**Build a bridge, Princess, and get over it.**

Some wounds run deep, and healing takes time. Building bridges is difficult and requires patience, gentle company, and grace before reconciliation. This isn't to dismiss pain but to encourage not living forever on its far shore. While we might not reach our destination, praise God for the journey.

For faithfulness on the journey matters more than knowing exactly where the road ends.

As Jeremiah finally discovers, beyond the lament there remains a song:

“Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered the needy.”

The river remains.  
The bridge stands.  
The journey continues.

## Discussion Questions

The sermon uses the image of a bridge — something built to cross what is difficult. What ‘rivers’ (hard situations, broken relationships, fears) are you or your community currently facing that might need a bridge built across them?

- The Batman Bridge over the Tamar River is an image of faith — someone looked at a deep, difficult river and saw not a barrier but a crossing. He connects this to the way the Gospel works: it doesn't deny the river, it provides a way through.
- Think of a specific relationship or situation in your own life where you have been waiting on the other side of the river for someone else to build the bridge. What would it look like for you to take the first step in building it?

Pointing out that Jeremiah, Paul, and Jesus all refuse to give their followers a timetable or a map of the future — instead, they all call people to faithful living in the present. Why do you think people are so drawn to predictions and certainty about the future, and what does it look like to resist that temptation?

- Every generation produces voices claiming to know exactly how history will unfold, yet Scripture consistently points elsewhere. Jeremiah receives no secret timetable, Paul offers no chart of future events, and Jesus gives no date for the end. Instead, the consistent call is: remain faithful, remain hopeful, remain at your post.
- Where in your own life do you find yourself looking for certainty or a guaranteed outcome before you are willing to act faithfully? What might it look like to take the next faithful step without having the full map?

Jeremiah 20 is referenced in the Sermon as a picture of someone mocked, opposed, and weary — yet unable to abandon the calling God gave him. He ends in a song of praise: ‘Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered people in need.’ How does lament and praise exist together in a life of faith, and have you experienced that tension personally?

- Jeremiah is described as standing in troubled waters, unable to quit even when it is costly. Yet beyond the lament there remains a song. This mirrors the Sermon's broader theme that faithfulness on the journey matters more than knowing exactly where the road ends.
- Can you think of a season in your life when you moved from lament to praise — or are you currently in a place of lament

where praise feels distant? What helped, or what might help, you find the song on the other side?

There is a distinction between pilgrims and saints — ‘Pilgrims cross bridges. Saints become them.’ What do you think it means to become a bridge for someone else, and who in your life or community might be waiting for someone to become that bridge for them?

- The Sermon describes how the saints of the Church crossed cultures, languages, and divisions — and more importantly, helped others cross. Being a bridge is presented not just as a nice idea but as a practical expression of faithful discipleship, connecting neighbours, healing misunderstandings, and moving people from fear toward hope.
- Is there a person or group of people you have kept at a distance — perhaps out of hurt, disagreement, or discomfort — where God might be calling you to become a bridge rather than a bystander? What is one small step you could take this week?

Paul’s teaching in Romans 6 — through baptism we are joined to both Christ’s death and resurrection — and connects it to the idea that the journey of faith is not about avoiding difficulty but about participating in God’s life. How does that reframe the way we think about hard seasons, conflict, or suffering in our own lives?

- Christ does not promise that grief, conflict, or uncertainty will disappear. Instead, he walks the road with us. The call to ‘remain at your post’ is not a call to pretend things are easy, but to stay present and faithful even when they are not.
- In what area of your life right now are you most tempted to step away from your post — to give up, withdraw, or go silent? What would it look like to remain faithful in that specific place, even without a guarantee of how it turns out?



This five-day Devotional will bridge the gap at this weekend’s Sermon and some uncomfortable words of Jesus. We will explore themes of faith, perseverance, and building bridges amid life’s challenges. Join us each day as we reflect on the teachings of scripture and their relevance in our lives



## Day 1 Jeremiah 1:19

Jeremiah stood in troubled waters, yet his commitment to God’s calling remained unwavering. His journey illustrates the theme of relentless faith in the midst of adversity. Just as bridges span rivers, our faith bridges us through trials and challenges, encouraging us to remain steadfast.

Like Jeremiah, we are called to embrace our struggles. The task is not to avoid the river but to consider how we navigate its challenges. This is the essence of faith: to trust that every hardship can be transformed into an opportunity for growth and connection.

- Reflect on a time when your faith helped you through a difficult situation.
- How can we build bridges in our own communities?
- What does a ‘faithful servant’ look like in your life currently?
- Pray for patience and understanding in times of adversity.
- Seek God’s guidance in building bridges in your life.

## Day 2 Psalm 18:6

The Psalmist’s cry from a place of distress serves as a reminder of the importance of trust. In trusting God, we find the strength to persevere. The rivers of life may threaten to overwhelm us, but through faith, we uncover new paths and bridges.

Our journey is not defined by our struggles but by how we respond to them. Trusting in God transforms vulnerabilities into vessels of hope and resilience, urging us to stay the course even when the path is unclear.

- Have there been moments when trust lifted you from distress?

- What bridges have you built in times of struggle?
- How does trusting God change your perspective on challenges?
- Pray for increased trust in God's plan for your life.
- Ask for the courage to face difficulties with hope and faith.

## Day 3

### Romans 6:4

Paul's reminder of our union with Christ through baptism illustrates the journey of faith not as the avoidance of hardship, but as a deepening connection with God's life. Each step we take is a movement toward becoming who God calls us to be.

Our path is a pilgrimage, a weaving of connections with God and meaning. At times, the destination remains unknown, but through trust and perseverance, we navigate the unpredictable roads of life.

- Consider the paths you have walked in faith. Where has God been most evident?
- How can you create connections with those around you?
- What challenges are you currently facing, and how can faith guide you through?
- Pray for the ability to see each day as part of the pilgrimage.
- Seek clarity and guidance in uncertain times.

## Day 4

### Matthew 10:34-36

Jesus' teachings in Matthew challenge us to acknowledge that following Him may create divisions. Yet even in such challenges, faithful discipleship continues to build bridges rather than walls. True faith lies in loving our neighbours and remaining steadfast in our convictions.

Discipleship requires humility and grace as we navigate differences, working towards reconciliation and understanding. Through learning and patience, we find new ways to connect.

- Have you faced divisions in your faith journey? How did you respond?
- What steps can you take to bridge gaps with those who differ from you?
- How does creating division contrast with building bridges?
- Pray for wisdom and grace to approach difficult

- conversations.
- Ask God to guide you in living out faith authentically.

## Day 5

### James 1:2-4

Life's trials are not meant to discourage but to develop perseverance and maturity in faith. Through each test, faith is forged not as a shield from pain, but as a tool for transformation that builds bridges across the chasms of life.

In embracing this perspective, we become instruments of peace and reconciliation. Our journey becomes a testament to God's faithfulness, reminding us that our paths are part of His greater plan.

- Reflect on how past trials have shaped your faith.
- What bridges can you actively work on today?
- How can you promote peace in your relationships?
- Pray for the strength to endure trials with trust and hope.
- Seek God's hand in becoming an agent of reconciliation.

### Further Questions to ponder:

What river am I facing?

What bridge has someone built for me?

Where is God asking me to remain faithful?

What does it mean to stay at my post?

How might I become a bridge for someone else?

# End notes and further reading

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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

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



## Tatungalung Totem

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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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