

**1 Kings 8.22-30, 8.41-43**

<sup>22</sup> Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands towards heaven <sup>23</sup> and said: 'Lord , the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below – you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.

<sup>24</sup> You have kept your promise to your servant David my father; with your mouth you have promised and with your hand you have fulfilled it – as it is today. <sup>25</sup> 'Now Lord , the God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to him when you said, "You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me faithfully as you have done."

<sup>26</sup> And now, God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David my father come true. <sup>27</sup> 'But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!

<sup>28</sup> Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. <sup>29</sup> May your eyes be open towards this temple night and day, this place of which you said, "My Name shall be there," so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays towards this place.

<sup>30</sup> Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray towards this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.

<sup>41</sup> 'As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name – <sup>42</sup> for they will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm – when they come and pray towards this temple, <sup>43</sup> then hear from heaven, your dwelling-place. Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name.

**Psalm 84**

**1** How lovely is your dwelling-place:

O Lord God of hosts!

**2** My soul has a desire and longing to enter the courts of the Lord:  
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

**3** The sparrow has found her a home, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young:  
even your altar, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

**4** Blessed are those who dwell in your house: they will always be praising you.

**5** Blessed are those whose strength is in you: in whose heart are the highways to Zion;

**6** Who, going through the valley of dryness, find there a spring from which to drink:  
till the autumn rain shall clothe it with blessings.

**7** They go from strength to strength:

they appear, every one of them, before the God of gods in Zion.

**8** O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer:  
give ear, O God of Jacob.

**9** Behold, O God, him who reigns over us: and look upon the face of your anointed.

**10** One day in your courts is better than a thousand:

I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God than dwell in the tents of ungodliness.

**11** For the Lord God is a light and a shield, the Lord gives favour and honour:  
and no good thing will he withhold from those who walk in innocence.

**12** O Lord God of hosts: blessed are those who put their trust in you.

## **Ephesians 6.10-20**

<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

<sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

<sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

<sup>19</sup> Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

## **John 6.56-69**

<sup>56</sup> Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. <sup>57</sup> Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live for ever.'

<sup>59</sup> He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. <sup>60</sup> On hearing it, many of his disciples said, 'This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?'

<sup>61</sup> Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, 'Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup> Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! <sup>63</sup> The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you – they are full of the Spirit and life.

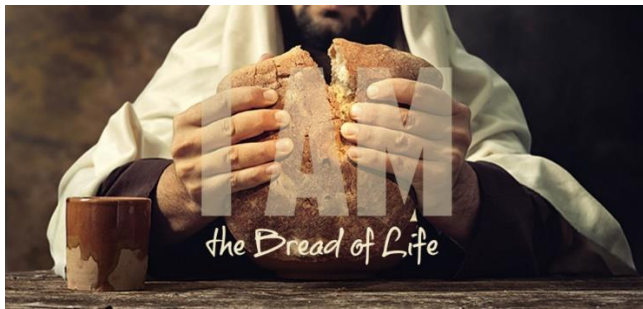
<sup>64</sup> Yet there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. <sup>65</sup> He went on to say, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them.'

<sup>66</sup> From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

<sup>67</sup> 'You do not want to leave too, do you?' Jesus asked the Twelve. <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

<sup>69</sup> We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.'

What wonderful readings we have today. I'm sure I could preach a wonderful sermon on all those readings and bless you all but perhaps if I preached on them all we might overrun our time, so, as is my habit, I will preach on the gospel and mention some of the other readings as we go. There is a definite theme of faith and trust in God which runs through all the readings.



The first couple of verses are a repeat of the end of our reading from last week, which carries on the theme from the past several weeks: *I am the bread of life, whoever feeds on me will live for ever*, then it goes on to tell us that Jesus preached these words in Capernaum.

Many of our teachings of Jesus were preached several times. Just as I normally preach the same sermon each week in Cooma then at one or more out-centres, so Jesus would often give the same message in a few places, depending on his discernment of what the people needed to hear. This explains why the disciples, having heard it a few times, were able to remember and pass on his teaching and why there are slight variations in different gospels.

On the occasion when he taught about this at Capernaum many who heard it just could not accept it. They did not understand, what he was saying, perhaps they thought he was asking them to be cannibals, and instead of asking him to explain, they walked away.

When things happen in life, when our Lord asks us to accept something hard, it would sometimes seem easier just to walk away, but where can we go?

I was sure that God had called me to be in full time ministry from my late teens, but after I had failed as a Deaconess in my early twenties, the call continued through the many ups and down of my life, when I finally thought the time was right, was rejected as a Deacon in the Anglican Church. I could not understand what God was saying to me, it would have been so easy to walk away and believe that He did not love me after all that everything I believed had all been a mistake, but I could not think of anywhere else to go.



Jesus knew that some disciples were grumbling, what they were grumbling about and even that they would walk away. He knew what they were thinking because his is the Son of God. As Hebrews reminds us: He is that essential Word that discerns the thoughts of the heart, (Hebrews 4:12,13)

He knew from the beginning who of the multitudes that followed him believed, and who of the twelve would betray him; Before they separated themselves by a blatant act, he could distinguish who believed and who did not.

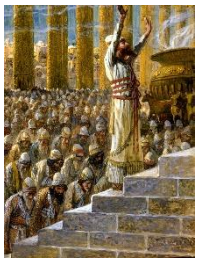
When the inconstancy of some is a grief to the Lord Jesus, the faithfulness of others is a great joy and delight. Even in his grief over losing so many he was glad that the faithful remained. The good shepherd searches for the lost sheep but his joy in the obedient sheep is never ending.



'Lord, to whom shall we go? Peter replies on behalf of all the disciples. What a wonderful reply, I'm sure he knew his fellow-disciples well enough to know their mind and said what was in their thoughts.

The disciples resolve to continue their pursuit of life, and will follow Jesus because he is their Lord, because he is the only one worth following. There is no philosophy, no religion, no other way of life that offers a relationship with the living God. Therefore, if we will ever find the way to happiness, it must be in following our Lord.

*You have the words of eternal life.* They themselves did not fully understand Christ's words, because they still didn't understand the cross and its meaning and implications; but they knew that he had the words of eternal life.

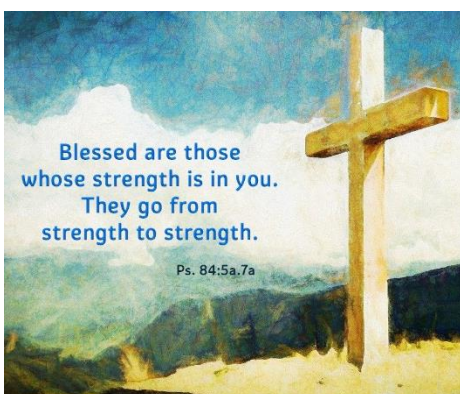
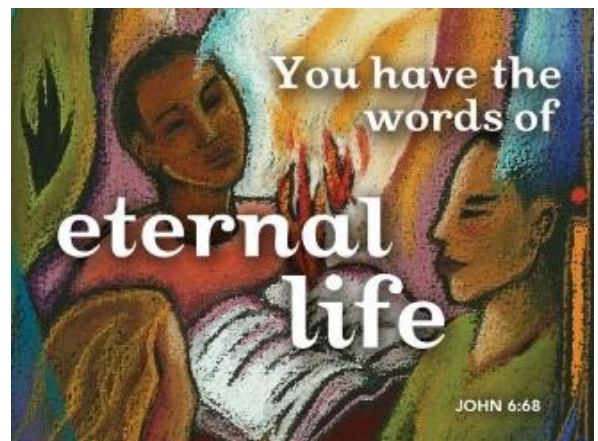


Solomon, in our Old Testament reading today had built the temple and was praying a prayer of dedication at the grand opening. Before he asks The lord to dwell in his temple and be the God who will lead all those who come to the temple, he makes his own confession of faith: *Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below - you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.*

That confession of faith is very like Peter's confession of faith. Even to the extent that he also includes the necessity of following wholeheartedly in God's way unlike those who choose to stop believing Jesus in our gospel today.

Knowledge is valuable, but it is not in knowing, but in believing, that we discover spiritual reality. If anyone waits until they "know," they will never believe; but if with all their heart they "believe" then they shall know with certainty the great truths in the word of the Lord. *"We walk by faith, and not by sight,"*

*We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.* It was not that God in some imperial, inscrutable election, before all time and eternity, had decreed that some should go, and others stay. Far from it! Peter listened to the word of God, Jesus' teaching; and that word was the anchor that held Peter, even though the metaphor must have shocked him as much as it did the multitude. Those who left did so due to their own choice, their character, and not for any lack of opportunity.



The whole of the psalm today is also a declaration of faith, it starts off in praising the temple but very soon turns to praising the God who dwells in the temple and extolling the joys of those who live with God.

We who have the spirit living in the temple of our bodies can say with the Psalmist: Blessed are those who dwell in your house: they will always be praising you.

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are those whose strength is in you: in whose heart are the highways to Zion;



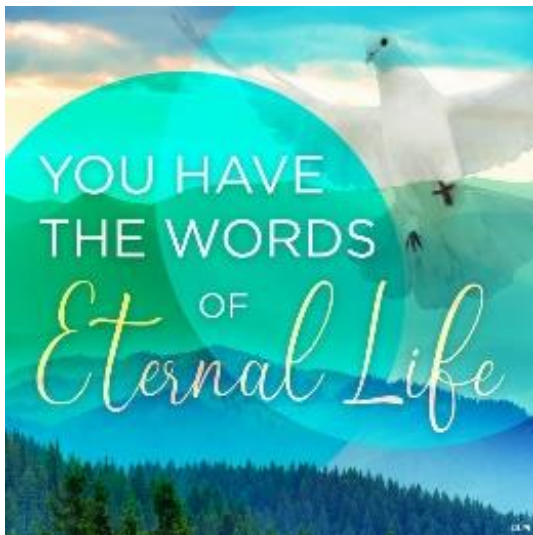
<sup>6</sup> Who, going through the valley of dryness, find there a spring from which to drink: till the autumn rain shall clothe it with blessings. <sup>7</sup> They go from strength to strength: they appear, every one of them, before the God of gods.

We, the body of the Lord, will always be praising Him, even when we go through tough times the Lord sustains us until we come to the good times again, we shall continue to grow in the lord until we see him face to face because:

<sup>11</sup> For the Lord God is a light and a shield, the Lord gives favour and honour:  
and no good thing will he withhold from those who walk in innocence.

<sup>12</sup> O Lord God of hosts: blessed are those who put their trust in you.

Peter had already found the Lord to be food and drink for his soul; and although Peter, like the others, was no doubt shocked by Jesus' metaphor, nevertheless, he already knew the reality of it in his own life. Of all the teachers in history, only Jesus Christ delivered a convincing truth regarding eternal life and how to receive it. To turn away from Jesus our Lord is to turn into darkness and despair.



In these words, Peter gives a brief summary of faith: *We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.* They believed: that this Jesus was the Messiah God had promised, and that he was not a mere man, but the Son of the living God.

In our lives, we are facing things we have never experienced before but other generation have faced epidemics, plague, war and pestilence. The lord has been faithful to all those generations, and he will be faithful to us. We cling to his words and trust him and he will bring us through.

<sup>10-12</sup> And that about wraps it up. God is strong, and he wants you strong. So take everything the Master has set out for you, well-made weapons of the best materials. And put them to use so you will be able to stand up to everything the Devil throws your way. This is for keeps, a life-or-death fight to the finish against the Devil and all his angels.

<sup>13-18</sup> Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an *indispensable* weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.

<sup>19-20</sup> And don't forget to pray for me. Pray that I'll know what to say and do. (Message Bible)

## **Sentence**

Jesus said, 'It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.' John 6.63

## **Collect**

Ever living God,  
by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church  
is governed and sanctified:  
hear the prayers we offer for all your faithful people,  
that in the ministry to which you have called them  
each may serve you in holiness and truth;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.