Sermon 26 April 2026 Acts 2:42-47 | Sermons by email / St. Stephen, Kitchener

Do you have a favourite bible text? (Ask people to call out)

Have you picked scripture that you would like for your own funeral?
And have you told anybody about it?

Is there a scripture passage you would love to hear a sermon on?

Those would all be very personal choices

However, for most regular Sunday worship we use a set list of scripture passages
called **The Revised Common Lectionary** (RCL – for short).

It was created by a partnership of liturgical scholars
with representatives from Protestant and Catholic churches
in the United States and Canada **in 1992**,
and was designed to foster unity among dominations.

It was a revision the **1983 Common Lectionary.**
And was also based on feedback after a nine-year trial period.
So our **Revised Common Lectionary**
is a tired and tested list of scripture passages
for Christian worship around the world.

But why should we have a lectionary?

The most important reason is to ensure a balanced,
comprehensive diet of scripture that forces the church
to engage with **the whole** of God's message and teachings,
rather than relying on a pastor's personal preferences
or only just using familiar passages.

It is a structured three-year cycle that guides congregations
through the **entire narrative of salvation**
from Creation to Redemption
rather than cherry-picking verses.

The cycle has the years A, B and C.
We are currently in Year A which started with Avent in 2025.

The lectionary also creates unity in a catholic way – that is with a small "c" -
by having diverse congregations worldwide hear and reflect
on the same biblical texts on the same day,
connecting local worship to the universal Church.

The lectionary is also Christ-Centered Focus
by being **structured** around the liturgical year
starting in Advent, then through Christmas, Lent, Easter,
and long season of Ordinary Time,
each with their own liturgical colour.

This ensures that preaching and prayers are consistently centered
on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The lectionary can help in biblical education as it takes parishioners
through the core and essential texts of the Christian faith.
In case you wondered, we don't read the entire Bible in Sunday worship.

Today's sermon is an exploration of the Book of Acts text we just heard.
The scripture is pretty short for a Sunday worship – that's a good thing, right?
But it isn't the shortest:

Psalm 117 has 31 words – and is the complete psalm.
We last read this in August 2025 which was Year C in the three-year cycle.
It contains this beautiful sentence:
For great is his steadfast love towards us,
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever.

Genesis 12:1–4a has 102 words and our Sunday worship
would be deprived is we never heard these words a service:
I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you,
and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

And of course, without Luke 23:44–49 with its 116 words,
Holy Week would feel empty if these words were not spoken:
It was now about noon,
and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

So short readings in the lectionary are certainly NOT
any lesser in importance that the longer ones.

Today's reading is from the book of Acts chapter 2 only has111 words.

But try to think of missing this story about the beginnings of our Christians Church.
What would our Sundays be like without prayer and the breaking of the bread.

Our scripture today is the tail end of Book of Acts chapter 2
which contains Peter's speech, or rather, his sermon,
to his fellow Jews and the residents of Jerusalem.

Acts 2 starts with the day of Pentecost story, you know the one:
when that sound like that of a violent rushing wind came from heaven,
with tongues like flames of fire
and the disciples began to speak in different tongues
and the crowd was confused because each person
heard them speaking in their own language.

The preceding verse 41, just before our reading today reads,
"So those who accepted Peter's message were baptized,
and that day about three thousand people were added to them.

And continuing in verse 42, "they devoted themselves to
the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
to the breaking of bread
and the prayers."

The breaking of the bread is such a significant part of who Jesus is to us,
and also, a significant part our understanding
of God's actions of salvation though Jesus.

When I teach confirmation students and we talk about the story of the Passover,
I tell them that this is a "freedom" meal.
It is the meal connected to the tenth and final plague
against the Egyptians and Pharaoh,
and is when God sends the angel of death to kill all the first born sons
of each family, animal and human, however,
if the home has been marked with
the blood of the sacrificed lamb,
the angel will PASS-OVER that house.

The Passover meal of the lamb is then to be eaten in a hurry,
then the family are to flee.
So, this is the initial liturgical act
marking the escape of the Hebrew people from slavery.
It is a freedom meal.

Cast your mind back to Holy Week, and on the Thursday of every Holy Week,
Christians gather on Maundy Thursday evening to tell the story of
Jesus hosting a Passover meal with his disciples.

In **THAT** Passover meal, Jesus broke bread and shared it,
and he also picked up the third of four cups of wine,
the Cup of Redemption
and said the **HIS blood** was the new covenant.

This Passover with Jesus is his Last supper,
is marking both the Hebrew's freedom from slavery in 1313 BCE,
and now he has added new meaning through himself,
marking freedom from sin.

The following day – Good Friday in our calendars – Jesus is hung on the cross.
On that **first Easter Sunday**
Jesus appears to two of the disciples as they walked to Emmaus,
but they don't realize that it was Jesus.

As night falls, he goes into a house with them,
and he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.
Then their eyes were opened – they recognised Jesus.

Our story today takes place on Pentecost
– which is about 50 days after Jesus' resurrection
and about 10 days after his ascension.

And they are already breaking bread together
as a **regular** connection to the risen Jesus.

And we do **that** very thing every time **we** take Holy communion.
This is a long-standing tradition and a mark of being Christian.
We have been participating in this bonding and communion
with Jesus for almost 2000 years.

It is such a blessing
– and lets us participate in a physical way
in God's act of salvation for God's people.

Do you have a story about taking communion?
When was your first time?

I can tell you mine.
I was living in Belfast in Northern Ireland.
My Dad was one of the elders at our local Presbyterian Church.

Once a month, there was (at least to my 11 year old mind)
a holy huddle up at the front of the church as they took Communion.
At Sunday lunch one time, I asked my Dad,
"When can I take Communion",
and he said, "When the session thinks you are ready."
The session is like the council of elders.

I didn't maintain my church attendance back then
– mostly because the people outside were killing each other,
sort of, in the name of Jesus
– meaning the Protestants and Catholic terrorists
in the 1970's
whilst the preacher spoke of the Jesus of love and forgiveness.
It didn't make sense to 11-year-old me.

Eventually I moved to Canada in 1990,
and in 1996 I met a woman who parents were German.
I started to attend St. Ansgar Lutheran Church in Toronto.

That is when I first took my first communion aged 36.
We married in that church the next year.
Four years after that, I started seminary in Waterloo, Ontario.

That is the same freedom meal that we all get to share.
As pastor for almost 20 years I have many precious stories
of celebrating the breaking of bread:

– by campfires with confirmation students or camp councillors,

– or the time couple was having a very private marriage in the church,
and before the marriage, and with his adult children present,
we took communion together as a physical reminder
of the proclamation of forgiveness of sins.

That wasn't a judgement of his previous marriage,
but no matter what had happened then,
it had failed and there was brokenness.
Now with forgiveness declared,
the new couple could make a clean start.
We continued and the couple were married.

- or the many times with a family at the bedside of a dying parent,
when we held hands in a circle saying the Lord's Prayer
and sharing a last supper with the parent.

A few years ago, I heard an Anglican bishop making a statement
about the decline of church attendance.
He said, "even if our buildings close,
all we need is a bible
and place to stand and we can continue"

I think he missed two things;
all we need is place to meet with **bread and wine**
and **then** a Bible to read.

As we look at our scripture in Acts chapter 2
the scriptures had not been written down yet.

So the words I just read to you from the Book of Acts,
hadn't been written down as yet. That happen at least another 20 years,
and probably more like 30 or 40 years later.

Meanwhile, "the people of that time devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,
to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

So the next time you come forward to break bread and share wine,
remember Jesus is still ever present every time
in every morsel of bread
and in every sip from the cup of redemption,
and we have been doing this as Christan's for 2000 years.

This act of communion is timeless, and endless.
Thanks be to God.
Amen.