

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 11B

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Ordinary 11 - Year B
13th June 2021



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

161 STF – Speak O Lord OR

330 STF – Joy to the world

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Psalm 92:1-4 & 12-15

All Age Talk

Hymn:

123 STF – Come, you thankful people, come OR

408 STF – How small a spark has lit a living fire!

Readings: Mark 4: 26-34

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

158 STF – Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders OR

306 STF – Now the green blade rises from the buried grain

What are you being called to?

Hymn:

161 STF – Speak, O Lord, as we come to you OR

139 STF – Today I awake and God is before me

Intercessions

Offering / Collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy OR

158 STF - Lord you sometimes speak in wonders

Blessing

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Call to Worship

In this moment we pause to meet with God:
The God who welcomes us regardless of time and place,
The God who encourages us to learn and love,
The God who challenges us to change and grow.

In this moment we pause to meet with God.
To get ready, to praise, to contemplate the global community we are a part of and to
recognise the joy we have in every encounter with the one, who by their grace,
blesses us.
In this moment we pause to meet with God.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

161 STF – Speak O Lord OR
330 STF – Joy to the world

Opening Prayers

You may wish to play the tune to the hymn, Speak O Lord (Singing the Faith 161) in
the background, or in the pauses between lines in this prayer, based on the hymn).

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
Speak as we receive your Holy Word and seek to know you more.
Mould us that, as we encounter you, we also become more like you, and the light of
Christ shines through us, our actions and our way of being.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us,
All your purposes for your glory.

[Pause].

Teach us, O Lord, as we come to you,
How to obey your wishes, how to be reverent and humble.
Open our eyes to your love and desire for our lives,
Let your words flow through us that their truth and power might prevail over unbelief.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us,
All your purposes for your glory

[Pause].

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds
May we fulfil your plans for us, and forgive us when we stray from those.
May we know the truths that echo down through eternity, and live those truths out in
our day-to-day lives.
By grace, we stand on your promises,
By faith you walk with us.

¹ Call to Worship written by Jane Bingham

Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us,
All your purposes for your glory.

[Pause]

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

Let us continue in praise and prayer alongside the psalmists of old. Giving thanks.
Noticing the world around us. Recognising the blessings we receive.

Reading: Psalm 92:1-4 & 12-15 (ideally using The Passion Translation)

All Age Talk

It is good to worship God! Today, in our Sunday service, we are thinking about what worship means and how it changes and affects the rest of our life. As we explore one of the famous stories about 'seeds' in the Bible today, I wonder what seeds are being planted in your life?

Have a think for a moment:

- What new things are you learning at the moment?
- What are you being reminded of that you might have forgotten?
- Who are the new people in your life (perhaps new friends or reconnecting with people whom you have not seen for a while)?
- What do you think might be a 'next step' for you as you try to follow Jesus.

Perhaps some of these things are the 'seeds' that are being planted today.

As we worship, let's use this chance to reflect and learn more about ourselves and how God might be working through us.³

Hymn:

123 STF – Come, you thankful people, come OR

408 STF – How small a spark has lit a living fire!

Readings: Mark 4:26-34

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

³ All Age talk written by Tim Baker

Reflections on the Reading

I love this quote from Renee Swope the Christian writer and commentator from the USA.

She says this: “The lens you look through will determine what you see.”

It’s quite fabulous isn’t it!

To be able to sum up in a few words a truth that many of us recognise for ourselves. Our own culture uses images like “glass half full” or “seeing through rose tinted spectacles” but Renee’s quote goes much deeper than this.

She seems to suggest that everything we see, everything we seek to explore or engage with will be determined by our starting point. The people we encounter, the situations we find ourselves in even the way we see God’s word revealed in scripture, are all affected by the things we already hold as important. The views and opinions we have might well start us off from a certain place that doesn’t give us the full picture and indeed might prevent us from looking again from a new perspective.

For me one of the joys of studying scripture is that strange duality of the assurance and familiarity it brings, mixed together with the ever changing possibility that God has something new to say if only we take a risk to look afresh.

Our reading today contains a very familiar passage about the mustard seed. (It’s a story that can be found in Matthew & Luke’s gospels too, told in pretty much the same way.) If, like me you’ve been going to church for a good long while then I’m pretty sure you’ll recognise it and I’m also pretty sure you will have heard lots of sermons on how planting small seeds can make a big difference, or how even a tiny bit of faith is enough to make a change and how God can use it. I have and they are undoubtedly valid views of how we might discover what God has to share with us through this particular story that Jesus tells.

But what if it’s something completely different and unexpected we are to notice. I want you to imagine for a moment you have never heard this story before. Look through a different lens if you like and pay attention to what you might see.

I want to introduce you to a few other ideas and questions. They’re drawn from the thinking and writing of other Christians who are interested in the way we interpret scripture and want to think harder about the lessons we might learn. I have a list of about 10 I guess but I’m going to focus on just three.

Here’s the first.

Do we dismiss tiny new ideas without thinking or do we nurture them?

As people of faith we often find ourselves in the middle of discussions and meetings about what we do next. At the moment it’s often what’s going to happen after lockdown say, or how will church be in the future in a way that makes a difference to our whole community and the world and not just us few folk who worship together in a particular setting. All manner of things and ideas are being floated at the moment

about all aspects of church and societal life and many of them are really tiny ideas because we've genuinely not had to face life after a pandemic before.

If God's kingdom is to grow and grow as the result of a tiny seed what attention do we pay, and how often are we guilty of dismissing a tiny new idea or thought because it doesn't suit us or we "don't get it". Are we happy to take advantage of the great tree someone else planted for us but not bothered about doing the same for the next generation of Christians who will of course be very different people and need very different things? Are we happy to live safely under the umbrella of a great tree canopy forged by people of faith but unwilling to plant the seeds of safety for others living in tougher conditions in our world? Are we only too happy to avoid watering the tiny seeds of hope for a more just world because it might disrupt our way of living?

Here's number 2. Might Jesus actually want us to notice that our understanding of the Kingdom of God is beyond anything we can control or imagine.

Our vision of the mustard plant is probably drawn from the cultivated varieties we use for cooking etc. But the mustard plant had a bit of a reputation at the time of Jesus for running rampant and getting out of control. Almost getting into places it wasn't wanted and growing beyond the confines of what was normal. Indeed, it was seen as a bit of an annoying weed that might be likened to our dandelions or moss found in our lawns. It wasn't really cultivated at all and often grew on scrubland or actually wherever it liked. The picture Jesus paints then of the kingdom of God is one that, all of a sudden, is a bit of an irritant and can't be controlled. Something that grows beyond its usual confines and gets into places it maybe shouldn't. A kingdom that makes its presence felt whether others like it or not. So what might that teach us then here in the 21st century? Maybe that God doesn't work through conventional channels. That normal isn't the way of God. That our God is a God of protest and resistance against anything that would try to put a stop to his world full of grace and love. Maybe that our God brings the truth home to roost even for those who deny equality and diversity. Simply put our God is a God who stops for nothing and one that will make what they want a reality regardless of those who seek to limit it. So what part do you and me play within that – are we gardeners of the conventional variety or are we wildflower enthusiasts?

Lastly and interestingly enough conversely.

Is it ok for mustard to really grow this way or are we completely missing the point? If this tiny mustard seed grows beyond all measure does it lose its real purpose. We know that plants used for food or other things get leggy and woody if we leave them alone and they are no longer fit for purpose. We know Jesus is no stranger to the concept of organic images. We have stories of sowers in fields. Stories of vines and branches. Stories of Men hiding in trees. Songs and psalms. So could Jesus be saying in this story concentrate on what the kingdom of God is really meant to be like. Work out what the purpose is and stick with it. Find the flavour of the kingdom right now because if you don't it will morph into something strange and not like a mustard plant at all. The moment you have to make an impact might be a tiny one and if you lose focus your precious mustard seed will become like a tree and be inhabited by things that are unexpected at best and at worst unhelpful.

Are we ready to do something right now that will ensure the integrity of God's plan for us before it gets consumed by things that don't matter?

I don't, of course, have answers to the questions? Which idea is right?

To be fair, I am not really interested in any particular answer to be honest but all of them. More the questions in fact. More the idea that every time you read a passage of scripture you really take time to start again and not always from the same place you have done before. To make no assumptions.

To very definitely think about what it meant when it was written and what, in this case, Jesus was trying to say to the people gathered there to listen BUT also to think about now and how God might be using scripture still to teach us.

To ask God - what do you have to show me today that's really new?

To ask God – what have I noticed?

To ask God – what do you require of me now in June 2021 and how do I respond?

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

158 STF – Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders OR

306 STF – Now the green blade rises from the buried grain

What are you being called to?

So as we prepare to respond to what we have heard let's take a moment of silence and imagine ourselves as that mustard plant.

[Silence]

What kind of plant are we?

Are we one that nourishes and sustains others through the fruit we bear and the shelter we offer?

Are we the kind of plant that infiltrates other gardens and wild spaces making a rich carpet of green?

Are we the kind of plant that chokes and takes over?

Are we one that grows so huge it goes to seed and is only in fact fit to provide shelter for vultures?

[Silence]

After you leave this space you might want to sit with these questions for a moment longer. You might want to make a note and keep them in your pocket so when you are out and about on a walk, sitting in the garden or on the bus you can have a think

⁴ Reflection written by Jane Bingham

with God about them. You might already have heard a new answer and now have a plan to make a change or reinforce an idea.

Whatever you do try, with God's help, to see it a bit differently and take time to work out what to do next.⁵

Hymn:

161 STF – Speak, O Lord, as we come to you OR

139 STF – Today I awake and God is before me

Prayers of Intercession

God of wondrous things,

We thank you for the variety of peoples and species that dwell on our planet.

For all the languages we hear, the customs we see and the faiths we encounter.

We pray your blessing on this richly diverse world and ask you to help us.

In particular help us to better consider how you would have us show your love to each person made in your image and to know how to act in support when they are faced with having to live with or flee from war or famine.

[Pause]

God of tiny ideas,

Help us to pay attention to even the smallest things happening around us.

Keep us alert to injustice even when it seems insignificant, because it isn't to those close to it, and help us to stand for what is right.

Help us to watch out for the new idea and the risk taker who might be planting seeds that we are called to water.

Watch over the ideas generators and the fledgling projects and pour out your spirit on them so that they can grow and bear fruit.

God of expansive thinking,

We thank you for those using their skills and intellect for the good of humanity.

Those focussed on issues of climate change and ideas around renewable energy or recycling. Those forging ahead with thinking and experimentation on new vaccines to combat diseases like malaria and HIV/Aids. Futurologists who seek to understand what will happen to our world over the coming years and are ready to embrace technology and efficient use of the world's resources for the good of everyone.

Specialist economists who seek to prove that there is enough for everyone to prosper not just the wealthy few. Help us not to be frightened of the new but embrace the richness of life you offer and "step up" to play our part so that the world is safe for generations to come.

[Pause]

God of revelation and all things beyond our understanding,

Make us ready for anything,

Keep us on our toes ready to join in the divine dance with you,

⁵ Reflection written by Jane Bingham

Ready to bathe in the grace that you shower down on us and ready to look for the next thing to be revealed.

Amen.⁶

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing the offering

Lord, you have called us to follow you,
And we seek to do that in any way we can.

Use us today, and use these gifts, that they may be a blessing to others, and to whole of creation.

Amen.⁷

Hymn:

255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy OR

158 STF - Lord you sometimes speak in wonders

Blessing

Go from this place awash with God's grace offered to you through story and song.
Share that grace so that others might learn how special it is.

Embody God's radical grace and strive to make the world a better place.

Do not cease until all are wrapped in the love of God and are able to flourish and grow.

Do not cease until the Kingdom of God is realised as she would want it to be

Amen.⁸

⁶ Prayers of intercession written by Jane Bingham

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁸ Additional prayers by Jane Bingham