

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 22B

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

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Ordinary 22 - Year B
29th August 2021



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

443 STF – Come, let us sing of a wonderful love OR

51 STF – Great is thy faithfulness

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

56 STF – King of Glory, King of Peace OR

185 STF – Sing we the King who is coming to reign

Readings: Song of Solomon 2:8-13; James 1:17-27; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Hymn:

545 STF – Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart OR

668 STF – Teach me, my God and King, in all things thee to see

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

706 STF – Longing for light, we wait in darkness OR

709 STF – Of all the Spirit's gifts to me

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

477 STF – Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart OR

498 STF – God of all power, and truth, and grace

Blessing

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Call to worship

This day, we step into the river of prayer and worship,
A river that is always flowing,
Around the world and throughout the cosmos.
For these next few minutes, we close our minds to the distractions of life,
And worship you, O God of all things.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

443 STF – Come, let us sing of a wonderful love OR
51 STF – Great is thy faithfulness

Opening Prayers

Gracious God, you have called us to be your people,
And we come to worship you this day,
Stepping aside from the distractions of the outside world, to tune our hearts to love
again.
You, O Lord, have blessed us richly, with your unchanging faithfulness to us and your
love for all people.
Today, we give you our thanks, our praise, and our worship.
Today, we come to you to seek to connect with the great spirit-of-life that is flowing
through all creation,
To be inspired, uplifted, reinvigorated, and reminded of your love for us.

May we be a people who take that love with us in all that we do,
This day,
This week,
And forevermore.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Think back to the last time you ate. Did you wash your hands beforehand? In the
Mark reading, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Jesus was saying people don't need
to wash their hands before eating. Nope, that's not what he's saying – it's good to
wash your hands and make sure they're clean from germs. Jesus was talking about
a different sort of washing.

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

Some groups of Jewish people at the time had a lot of rules to follow and this included ritual cleaning – cleaning through certain acts as a way of showing how religious you were. But Jesus didn't expect his disciples to follow these traditions. He saw them as human traditions – made by people, but not expected by God.

This got him into a bit of trouble with some of the people who thought it was important. But Jesus stood his ground and gave a good reason. Just because you're doing such acts, it doesn't mean you're showing you're a good person. What makes people show their love of God is what's in their heart and how it comes from the heart – it is this that leads us to do good things.

Sometimes we can be the same. We can get caught up in traditions – things we always do – and think they're the most important things, but forget it's the love in our heart that shows people the love of God. Sometimes things we do in church seem so important, but they're just human creations and not expected by God.

How shall people know we are Jesus' disciples? 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.' (John 13:35).

It is through our love as a community that we show God's love to the world. How can we put this at the centre of all we do? How can we make sure we focus on what's in our hearts and the love we show to others more than the human traditions we think important?³

Hymn:

56 STF – King of Glory, King of Peace OR

185 STF – Sing we the King who is coming to reign

Readings: Song of Solomon 2:8-13; James 1:17-27; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Reflections on the reading

Today's reflection comes from Holly Adams, part of the Methodist Church's 'Evangelism and Growth' team.

Have you ever saved up enough money to buy something that you've been really longing for? Maybe a pair of shoes or an item of clothing? Or maybe something even more costly, like a piece of furniture, a car or a house! Remember how cautiously you guarded its condition to begin with – hoping the dog wouldn't eat it, or the cat wouldn't scratch it, or the toddler wouldn't be sick on it. Maybe, for the first days or weeks or even months, you kept it in perfect condition. But then, one way or another, in more or less extreme ways, it ended up damaged or broken or just not quite as shiny as it once was. Perhaps there is a huge coffee stain on a once cream-coloured sofa. Or perhaps there is a dent in the car door. Our carefully guarded, once perfect belonging is defiled.

³ All Age Talk written by Gary Hopkins

I wonder if we can think of our hearts in the same way. Once whole, perfect, intact – but through the process of living our human lives, inevitably, over time, no matter how well guarded, they can become defiled: broken by grief or rejection, stained by suffering or selfishness, dented by bitterness or anger.

In our gospel today, we heard that the Pharisees and some of the scribes ask Jesus why it is that they eat with defiled hands, without washing them. And Jesus calls them hypocrites, and quotes from Isaiah, saying: “These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.” He goes on to tell the crowd that what matters is not what goes into a person, but what comes from a person’s heart. This is where defilement takes place and propagates.

Jesus speaks of defilement and lists adultery, theft, avarice, envy, pride. Ironically, he is challenging the purity laws around consumption, but each of these sins is in its own way about consumption - born out of a desire to have, to own, to take. And so, Jesus shows us, how we hopelessly attempt to self-satisfy the hunger of our broken hearts.

Facing up to the state of our own hearts is not a comfortable thing to do. Looking honestly at what we find there takes vulnerability. Just as it was for the Pharisees and the scribes, it is an easier task to worry about things on the surface. Exploring the matters of your own heart is a more costly task.

Our epistle today is on the same theme and calls us to reflect on the condition of our heart, to rid ourselves “of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness”. James writes: “If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless.” If our living – our words and actions - don’t match up with the deeper truth of our hearts, we are as hypocritical as the Pharisees and the scribes to whom Jesus spoke. If we pay lip service to God’s story, but our heart beats to the rhythm of our own story, our religion is worthless.

How might we, with self-care, investigate the condition of our own hearts, where rests a deeper truth than our words and actions. What brokenness, what defilement might we find there? What need, what desire, what love?

We might think the truths of our hearts are well hidden, but the matters of our hearts have a way of spilling out into our lives. James warns against this, writing that an angry heart, “does not produce God’s righteousness.” Our Psalmist today opens their song with the words “my heart overflows with a goodly theme.” The joy in their heart bubbles up into their living and speaking. Eventually, ultimately, the matters of our hearts are revealed in what we do and say, in what we prioritise, in the way we spend our time and resources, in what we celebrate and mourn. All these things are windows into our hearts and souls – into our true selves.

What is the story of your heart that overflows into your life? Is it one of peace, joy and love, or one of fear, anger, or desire? Are our lives defined by our defilement? And this isn’t just a question for each of us as individuals, but as communities too. What is our shared heart, what is the true identity of us as a group of Christians?

Our mission and our evangelism – both as individuals and as church congregations – deeply depend on our ability to do this work: with kindness and vulnerability to examine our hearts, and with repentance and humility to set our hearts right before God.

When we set our hearts right before God, our lives will follow suit. But sadly, it is not always so easily done. Because, like cream-coloured sofas, human hearts are so easily ruined and not so easily restored.

The good news is that we have a God who pitches their tent in the ruins of human hearts. The good news is that we have a God who is in the business of heart-restoration.

God sees our defiled hearts, broken by grief or rejection, stained by suffering or selfishness, dented by bitterness or anger, and God's heart breaks for us.

Remember that thing you saved up for and took care of that eventually got ruined? How much more does God regard us, God's precious children, with grief and heartache as God sees our brokenness.

We can try to self-satisfy the hunger of our broken hearts – through our insatiable consumption of things, of people, of our own energy – but in this way our lives will continue to be defined by our defilement. Instead, let us welcome Jesus as guest into our hearts to pitch his tent of love there. Love which comes into the brokenness just as it is, with forgiveness and healing, and through which the loving is redeeming. Love which is powerful enough to restore each one of our spoiled hearts. Love which spills over in fullness into our lives and into the lives of the people around us. If we want to know what living with a heart overflowing with love looks like, then we can look to the reading today in Song of Solomon. These verses are a testimony to the transformational power of love:

“...for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance.”

These verses speak boldly of true love – in words of fruitfulness, abundance, beauty, creativity, flourishing. They testify to the out-workings of a heart defined by love and not by its own defilement. They testify to the possibility of transformation for the whole world – a mission which God invites us into.

As people of Christ, we have invited his healing, redeeming love into our broken hearts. We are called to let that love overflow into the lives and communities around us. We are also called to boldly testify, through what we say and what we do, to the goodness of God we have experienced. And as we do so, if we keep our eyes open, we might just notice the in-breaking of God's kingdom of justice and joy as transformation happens around us.

Hymn:

545 STF – Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart OR

668 STF – Teach me, my God and King, in all things thee to see

What are you being called to?

[You might like to use The Vine Video for this section – helping you and your congregation to reflect on the themes from today’s service].

Two questions for you to consider today, as you reflect on Holly’s words and the readings we’ve heard.

How might you and your church community, through prayer, worship and fellowship – investigate the condition of your hearts and invite God’s love to transform them?

How might you and your church community, through service and evangelism, intentionally testify to God’s transforming love in words and actions?

Let us reflect on those questions together and share with one another this week what some of our answers might be.

[Make some space for conversation]

Let us close with reminding ourselves of these words from Holly’s reflection: “we have a God who pitches their tent in the ruins of human hearts.”

Amen to that. Amen.

Hymn:

706 STF – Longing for light, we wait in darkness OR

709 STF – Of all the Spirit’s gifts to me

Prayers of intercession

God of renewal, we pray for the Church,

thank you that you call us to participate in your mission.

Help us to speak more boldly of your presence in our hearts and lives.

Equip and send out your Church to love our neighbours more faithfully and courageously,

make us builders and proclaimers of your Kingdom of justice and joy.

God, may your transforming love renew our Church,

In the name of Christ, hear us.

God of restoration, we pray for your creation,

we know that this world testifies to your goodness and creativity.

Forgive us, we pray, for all that we have done to destroy and defile your Earth.

Help us to repent and to devote ourselves through prayer and action to protect and sustain the delicate systems of life on this planet.

Thank you that your good news story is big enough for each of us, and for all creation.

God, may your transforming love restore our world,
In the name of Christ, hear us.

God of redemption, we pray for humanity,
thank you that you look on us with love and forgiveness and compassion.
Thank you that you offer abundance, not abandonment.
Forgive us, we pray, for all we do to perpetuate systems of injustice and oppression.
Show us the way to build your Kingdom through our living and our praying.
We lift up the lost and the lonely – may they know your closeness today.
We remember our leaders – may they be guided by your wisdom and mercy.
We offer ourselves – you know the deepest truths of our hearts. Heal us, help us,
send us.
We pray for all those people on our hearts in the silence now.

God, may your transforming love redeem our lives,
In the name of Christ, hear us.
Amen.⁴

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing the offering

Gracious God, we give you praise for your goodness to us. Take these gifts, and use them in the ongoing transformation of the world, in the name of all that is good, and right, and just and loving.

Amen.⁵

Hymn:

477 STF – Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart OR

498 STF – God of all power, and truth, and grace

Blessing

Go and enter into the flow of love that is at work in the universe.
Go and discover that God is out there, moving, transforming, touching lives and all creation.

Go and encounter the Spirit of God.

Amen.⁶

⁴ Prayers of intercession written by Holly Adams

⁵ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker