

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 30B

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

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Ordinary 30 - Year B
24th October 2021



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

134 STF – Christ, whose glory fills the skies OR

451 STF – Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

Opening Prayers [You will need a piece of paper and pen/pencil for everyone in the congregation – it might be best to hand these out as people arrive].

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

457 STF – Author of faith, eternal Word OR

493 STF – Come, Lord, to our souls come down

Readings: Job 42:1-6, 10-17; Psalm 34:1-8; Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52

Hymn:

303 STF – I know that my Redeemer lives OR

364 STF – O for a thousand tongues to sing

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

341 STF – All for Jesus – all for Jesus OR

568 STF – Alleluia! Sing to Jesus, his the sceptre, his the throne

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling OR

327 STF – Jesus is King and I will extol him

Blessing

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Call to worship

Amongst the brokenness, here we are Lord.
Amongst the pain of our world, here we are Lord.
Believing in hope and resurrection, here we are Lord.
Trusting in you and seeking to love you more, here we are Lord.
We have come, come Lord Jesus.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

134 STF – Christ, whose glory fills the skies OR
451 STF – Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

Opening Prayers

[You will need a piece of paper and pen/pencil for everyone in the congregation – it might be best to hand these out as people arrive].

When you arrived, everyone should have received a piece of paper and hopefully you are able to reach or access a pen or pencil. We are going to use these bits of paper now to help us pray.

Firstly, I invite you to tear or cut your piece of paper in half – the easiest way to do this is fold it in half, then open it out and tear carefully along the fold. The two halves will represent the two different halves of our prayers this morning.

[Pause to give people time to do that].

Now hopefully you have two, roughly equal, pieces of paper in front of you. Take one half of the paper and use it to write down the things you want to ‘hand over to God’ today. You will have brought all sorts of difficulties and challenges with you to church. There will be things you are worried about, people you are fearful for, the guilt you feel for mistakes you’ve made, for the times you have hurt someone, situations in your own life that are really difficult at the moment, grief you are carrying, illness you are dealing with, physical, mental or emotional pain you are bearing.

When our time together is over, when you return to your day, and the week ahead, those things will still be there, they are going to need you – and perhaps you are going to need them – in the hours, days and weeks to come. But, just for now, just for a moment, let’s try to unburden. Jesus says: ‘come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, I will give you rest.’

Just take a few moments now to do that. No-one is going to look at these and you don’t have to show anyone, so be as honest as you feel you can.

[Give people a couple of minutes to do that]

Now, as we pray, let’s screw up the piece of paper, and each of us bring our piece of paper and put it in a bin (or pile) in the corner of the church. This is our way of laying

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

our burdens before God, of taking a moment just to de-stress, to unwind, to say ‘I hand it over to you, Lord God’. Let’s place our paper-burden in the prayer-bin now...

[Show people what you mean by screwing up your own piece of paper and placing it where you want people to place theirs. Pause to allow people to do that].

Now we have unburdened, we have confessed, we can hear the voice of Jesus saying to us ‘your sins are forgiven’. All that we hold too tightly, all our mistakes, all our worries and fears, they often make it harder for us to know that we are loved, accepted just as we are. Listen to that encouragement now – you are accepted, accepted just as you are, in Jesus’ name.

Amen.

Thanksgiving and praise

Now we come to the other half of the piece of paper. Having said sorry, having accepted our own weakness and all the things that fill our head with negative emotions and concerns, we take a moment to focus on all that is good.

We are going to have the other half of this piece of paper in front of us for the rest of the service, whether you place it on the floor, the chair/pew in front of you, or next to you, we are going to put it somewhere you can see it for the rest of our time together today. So, before we do so, I invite you to spend a few moments writing down or drawing something that you would like to keep in your mind. If you’ve ‘unburdened’ the things you want rid of, these are the positive thoughts you want to keep hold of.

Perhaps you want to write a thank you to God for some way in which you have been blessed, perhaps you want to remind yourself that you are loved and accepted, perhaps you simply want to write down that God is love, perhaps there is some other message or thought of hope that you want to keep in mind as we worship, and in the coming week.

Let’s just take a few moments to write or draw a message of hope for ourselves.

[Give people a couple of minutes to do this].

These messages form our prayers of thanks and praise to God, as we recognise the hope, the love, the joy in the world and our lives. Remember to put your second piece of paper somewhere where you can see it.

And so, as we have said our prayers of confession and thanksgiving, or prayers of praise and our offering up of burdens, we say, Amen.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord’s Prayer

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

All Age Talk

We live in a broken world, when we turn on the news or pick up a newspaper, or click to a news website, we see so much of the pain and sorrow from around the world. War, poverty, climate change, people fleeing for the lives and seeking refuge in other countries. And in all that we have a sense of how lucky we are – I'd like us to try this next activity together as a church, to see if it helps us understand how we fit into the world.

Firstly, can we all stand, please (if that is something you are comfortable doing). I invite you to remain standing if you have food in your fridge, clothes on your back and a roof over your head (or somewhere to sleep tonight)... If we have all three of those things, we are already wealthier than 75% of the world's population.

And please remain standing if you've got those three things and you also have some money in the bank, or some cash in your wallet/purse... If you have access to money as well as food, clothes and shelter, you are now in the richest 8% of the world's population.

And please stand up if you have access to a working toilet. 1/3 of the world's population (over 2 billion people) don't have that, with all of the issues around disease and ill health caused by poor sanitation.

And finally, the richest 26 people on earth have the same combined wealth as the poorest 3.5 billion (i.e. half of the world's population). Now I doubt any of us are in the top 26 most wealthy people in the world so, at this point, you can sit down! What these numbers show us, however, is that we live in an unequal world, an unequal society. So many of these things that we take for granted are enjoyed by very few people on the planet. There are large sections of our world population that battle against poverty and injustice every day. I wonder if one of those numbers particularly strikes you: that might be God's way of calling you into action. 'Be careful of what makes you angry', the saying goes, as it might just be the divine inviting you to do something about it...

As Methodists, we are fortunate to have an organisations that respond to some of this work on our behalf, and with whom we can work to make a difference to those numbers, to the human beings behind the statistics and to share God's love with a broken world. Our international development charity, All We Can, is working in some of the world's poorest communities to help people overcome the barriers to fulfilling their potential. This movement is working to help people to be 'all that they can', even if they have been born in some of the poorest parts of the world, or have suffered at the hands of conflict or natural disaster. Their invitation is to us to do 'all we can' to help respond to the needs of God's world. This week, perhaps you'd like to take up their invitation – do have a look at the All We Can website for ideas of how you could be part of making a change: allwecan.org.uk

There are many ways God is calling us to respond to injustice, to inequality, this week, let's look at how we can be part of creating the world we want to see.

Amen.³

Hymn:

457 STF – Author of faith, eternal Word OR

493 STF – Come, Lord, to our souls come down

Readings: Job 42:1-6, 10-17; Psalm 34:1-8; Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52

Hymn:

303 STF – I know that my Redeemer lives OR

364 STF – O for a thousand tongues to sing

Reflections on the reading

Earlier in our service we touched on some of the injustices affecting people around the world. We touched on issues of inequality, hunger, poverty, conflict and the impact of a long and difficult pandemic, still being felt around the world. However, you don't need me to tell you about the difficulty of life in the world in 2021, do you? We may be lucky to be in this country, to be relatively safe and affluent and have access to a Covid-vaccine for everyone, but we all carry our stories of pain...

You don't need me to tell you about grief, about discomfort, about concern for children and grandchildren, about illness and pain, about redundancy and separation. You don't need a sermon about cancer, defeat, financial ruin or depression. Because you have lived through these things, your families have borne much pain, your stories are marked with difficult periods and painful chapters. That is the human condition. Brokenness is real, and at some point – it affects us all.

The book of Job is one of the places in the Bible that openly addresses the question of suffering, and attempts to make sense of why this man has suffered so much. The central section of Job is a long poem in which Job is in dialogue with his friends, who offer a varied degree of bad advice about how to deal with grief and suffering. And now, here at the end of the story that the lectionary has been following over the past month, we have the final part of the poem, and a few paragraphs of the narrative that has been added either side of this poem, in an attempt to interpret and make sense of it. Bible scholars debate about whether the narrative chapters at the beginning and end of Job were added later and whether they try to change the meaning of the story, but what is clear from these verses is that there is a great deal of contradiction and confusion in Job's response to God's appearance at the end of the story.

The first lesson this passage has to share with us is: that is okay! Confusion and contradiction are rife in the book of Job, and indeed across many areas of the Bible that deal with difficult subjects. Yet, too often, across the course of Christian history,

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

we have tried to make the answers simple, we have said to those in grief 'it is part of God's plan', or those living in pain 'you should pray about it more often'. We have simplified complicated human stories into 'good and bad', 'right and wrong', 'Godly or ungodly'. If Job teaches us anything, it is that things are more complicated than they seem!

Job appears to openly criticise and shout abuse at God, but is not chastised for this. Rather, God's anger has been at Job's assumption that he can understand how the world works, or has any idea about what it means to be the creator of the universe. In particular, Job 42:6 (where he appears to say he 'despises himself') is much debated and Bible scholars have identified at least five ways to translate the Hebrew here, which gives the sentence five completely different meanings. Perhaps, in some way, that's the point – it's complicated!

Because as you will know, from your own experiences, when we go through pain and confusion, it is easier to question our faith, we are more likely to turn away from God, and there are no simple answers. Brokenness is real, and it is confusing. We only have to look at that pile of burdens we created in our prayers to see that.

Brokenness is also present in the gospel story – Jesus and his disciples encounter Blind Bartimaeus. Here too, we see another of the ways the world fails to deal with a person in need: as Bartimaeus cries out for help, the people around him try to keep him quiet. How often has that been the case – that injustice in our world is caused or continued because people are kept silent, because the voices of protest or opposition are not heard, and the voices of those who have suffered are not listened to.

The brokenness is real – but how are we going to respond to it?

That is the other key message from today's readings: there clearly is injustice in the world, but injustice doesn't have the final word. For all that the ending of the book of Job is unsatisfactory – the birth of more children does not account for the grief for those departed, the restoration of wealth cannot compensate for trauma, the explanation doesn't seem to fit with the rest of the story...for all that, this is a book in which injustice eventually crumbles. Eventually, the forces of evil admit defeat and love wins.

The writer of the book of Hebrews, in our other reading this morning, looks at the issue of High Priests within Jewish practice at the time, and specifically how Jesus has become the great High Priest – the High Priest to end all High Priests! Whilst the writer is not particularly critical of the temple hierarchy and sacrifice system, these are implicit in the reference to High Priests. Again, this system, which has often been associated with injustice and too much power being vested in a single individual, is overthrown. The presence of Jesus leads to the collapse of injustice and corruption. That has to be our prayer for the world today too.

The story of Bartimaeus reflects the same impulse – the cure is received, hope is returned and Bartimaeus joins Jesus' growing group of followers. In his story, we see

an example of how pain and need can become hope and joy. But we also see the invitation from Jesus: what are we going to do with it?

Even as we pray for a better world, the dawning of a new morning, we recognise it is our responsibility to be a part of that. Even as he is healed, Bartimaeus demonstrates what good discipleship looks like – he sets off to follow Jesus. As we encounter a God who comes to us in our most broken, most painful places, perhaps we learn to follow him, to demonstrate that brokenness is real, but in the end, love wins.⁴

Hymn:

341 STF – All for Jesus – all for Jesus OR

568 STF – Alleluia! Sing to Jesus, his the sceptre, his the throne

Prayers of intercession

Let us open our hearts and be vulnerable before Jesus as we share what is on our hearts.

[If it is your practice, there is time indicated below to share prayer needs communally]

“The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all”

Each of us gathered today brings with us burdens that other people cannot see. These worries, hurts and concerns are carried by each of us daily. They are insubstantial yet may feel like a boulder on our chests. We carry them alone out of fear, worry or because we have been told to keep those concerns to ourselves. Yet Christ comes before you and invites you to take that weight off you. To give you a chance to catch your breath. A caring ear is waiting to hear all your fears. A gentle arm is ready to hold you and say, “We can do this together.” Through the love of Jesus, all things are possible. In this moment, let us share those burdens.

[Time of silence or to share prayer concerns]

May the Lord be close to you and those you love this week.

May the Lord strengthen and keep you, bolstering you to ask for help, and be ready to help when asked.

And when times and worries begin to press upon you, may you be bolstered in prayer, by the Spirit of God who is here amongst us as we pray, as we worship, as live our lives.

Amen.⁵

⁴ Reflection written by Tim Baker

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Annan-Hood

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing the offering

Thank you Lord for all the amazing gifts you have given us – and we return these gifts to you now: the gifts we have given here today, but also the gifts of our lives and all that we are.

In the days and weeks ahead, we commit ourselves to working for your kingdom, to build a better, fairer world.

In the name of the Creator, the Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling OR

327 STF – Jesus is King and I will extol him

Blessing

Amongst the pain, there is comfort. Amongst the suffering, there is hope. Amongst the brokenness, there is love. In a world of death, we are the people of resurrection. Go in peace and bring love to a world in need.

Amen.⁷

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker