

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 17C

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

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Ordinary 17 - Year C
24th July 2022



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

425 STF – God of forgiveness, your people you freed OR

318 STF – Christ, our King before creation

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

64 STF – Praise is rising, eyes are turning to you OR

608 STF – All praise to our redeeming Lord

Readings: Hosea 1:2-10; Colossians 2:6-15; Luke 11:1-13

Hymn:

528 STF – Pray, without ceasing, pray OR

254 STF – Seek ye first the kingdom of God

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

429 STF – Lord, we turn to you for mercy OR

591 STF – Let all mortal flesh keep silence

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

503 STF – Love divine all loves excelling OR

313 STF – Thine be the glory

Blessing

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Call to worship

Come let us sing to our Creator,
Come let us pray to our God,
Come let us worship Jesus the Christ,
Come let us be transformed by the Spirit.
Come with me, come wander

Amen.¹

Hymn:

425 STF – God of forgiveness, your people you freed OR
318 STF – Christ, our King before creation

Opening Prayers

Let us just be quiet for a moment.

[Pause]

Think of a place that you love to be in, a place that brings you peace – perhaps it reminds you of God or reveals something of God's nature to us. It might be by the sea, in your garden, at home, a favourite holiday spot, a mountain or a skyscraper. Perhaps for many of us it will be connected to a beautiful landscape or a special view.

Let us just pause for a moment, imagining yourself into that place. What can you see? How do you feel?

Firstly, let us pause and give thanks.

Lord of our special places, we give thanks for these special places and all that they mean to us. We give thanks for the memories this place connects us with, and the special people associated with this place, perhaps faces, names and stories we remember when we come here.

Living God, we give you thanks for your creation and all the joy and wonder it brings us. We pause to give you thanks.

[Quiet]

Secondly, still imagining ourselves in this special place, we pause to say sorry, sorry to you Lord God.

As we look out on our special places, we feel a sense of connection to all the other special places people are imagining in this room and all the other precious parts of your creation, no matter how popular or appreciated. We say sorry.

We say sorry for the damage we have done to these places, and the ways we have been part of systems that have damaged your world, or the people who live there. We are sorry for the pollution, destruction and pain that we inflict on each other, and on your world.

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

For the sake of these special places, the people of your world, and all that we love we ask that you would move, inspire and transform us. Accept us as we are, and use us for your work to create a better, safer, fairer world.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Imagine you are on holiday in a place you have never been before. You've never been there, but a friend of yours has and tells you that there is a really, really nice ice-cream shop somewhere in the village, but it's rather hidden, and it's not always open, your friend hopes you'll be able to find it, as it sells the best salted caramel ice cream in the world (other flavours available!)

You arrive in the village, it's a hot day, and you can't stop thinking about ice cream. From the car on your way to the campsite you peered out of the window at what you could see, but couldn't see an ice cream shop – but then, your friend said it was hidden. As soon as the tent is up you suggest a family walk back into the village, and you make sure someone in the family has some money... up and down the high street you walk, but no sign of an ice cream shop anywhere. The rest of the family are getting a bit fed up with your determination to look up every little gap and footpath so in the end you pluck up courage to go into the Post Office and ask where the ice cream shop is. Everyone thinks you're a bit mad, as the Post Office sells ice cream too, but you know that's not the ice cream you're looking for... and the Post Office staff know that too, for straightaway the woman behind the counter leans over and, with eyes alight, says, 'Ah, you know our village secret then? We make the best chocolate chip ice cream in the world, but you won't find it easily...'. She mutters some directions and draws a scribbly little map on the back of an old envelope. 'Good luck with your searching!'

Complaining quite loudly now, the family follow you back down the high street, between two shops selling clothes, through something which looks like an abandoned back garden and into a tiny courtyard. No-one is around, and there are no signs anywhere to be seen – this can't be the right place. The only thing in the courtyard is an old-fashioned barn door in the corner, painted pale green – hardly a colour to attract attention.

The family think it's time to give up and go back to the Post Office for an ordinary ice cream, but you can't give up yet... there is only one more thing you can think of to do, so you do it, you march up to the door and bang very loudly on the door with your fist. Silence follows and you feel yourself going red – why on earth did you do that?? But just as you are about to turn away, the top half of the door opens and a cheery man looks out, wearing a rainbow-striped umbrella. 'Good afternoon', he says, looking straight at you, 'You wouldn't be looking for an ice cream, would you? We make the best raspberry ripple in the world!'

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

Sometimes, it takes effort to track down really good things... and Jesus suggests that God has lots of good things on offer which might just be worth a bit of investigation. Don't settle for an ordinary life, but ASK those you see who have something special about them, where they found it; listen to what they say and SEARCH for more in life. Although sometimes that might feel like a waste of time, don't be afraid to KNOCK on doors of opportunity until you find the best life in the world.³

Hymn:

64 STF – Praise is rising, eyes are turning to you OR

608 STF – All praise to our redeeming Lord

Readings: Hosea 1:2-10; Colossians 2:6-15; Luke 11:1-13

Hymn:

528 STF – Pray, without ceasing, pray OR

254 STF – Seek ye first the kingdom of God

Reflections on the reading

'Short cuts make long delays' says Pippin to the other hobbits as they are trying to find their way out of the Shire to go on the epic adventure which will become 'The Lord of the Rings' by J. R. R. Tolkien.

'Short cuts make long delays' - it's often true – unless you know your way very well indeed around the back streets of a village, or around the footpaths of a mountain range, or around the intricacies of computer programming, you are probably better sticking to the full directions and the main paths. It may look quicker to descend to the river and cross at this point – but if there are no stepping-stones here, the time taken in removing your socks and shoes, crossing safely on the slippery and shingly riverbed and then getting dry, warm and clothed again afterwards may far outweigh the time it would have taken to walk half a mile to the footbridge! I know, I've done it!

So when the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray, Jesus does two things. Initially he gives them a short model prayer, what we now know as the Lord's Prayer, which has been used by Christians ever since. Then he immediately follows this by telling them stories which suggest that this might be a long and challenging path, not a quick hop. There are no short cuts to a life of prayer. But that is not to suggest that prayer is necessarily difficult or alien, indeed, the stories Jesus tells are all of common occurrences, everyday happenings which we all know about. Firstly, Jesus suggests, it's a bit like discovering after all the shops have closed that you don't have any bread in the house, but you really need to make someone a sandwich. What can you do? Maybe we need to take a mental step backwards to appreciate this story – backwards into a time when shops didn't stay open all night, and when we didn't have internet shopping. Or maybe you can imagine yourself in the sort of village which sells very special ice cream but doesn't have a supermarket and where the phone signal is non-existent. Where can you go? Perhaps that man over the road, or the woman next door will be willing to help out – they seemed friendly enough; but it is late, and they're not exactly enthusiastic about the idea – you have to be determined or this is not going to happen. In the end, the result is worth the effort, however. Is that what

³ All Age Talk written by Jill Baker

this story is telling us? To be persistent? Probably, but we'll come back to it again in a few minutes, from a different direction.

The second story also seems to be about being proactive, being persistent. Many of us are not very good at asking for help, because we prefer to go through life pretending we know everything we need to know... (I know, I've done it!) What do we miss along the way by not asking, not searching, not knocking? More than the best ice cream in the world, if we are to listen to Jesus' words here.

Take a few more steps backwards and think about the scenario Luke describes. The chapter begins by telling us that 'Jesus was praying in a certain place...'. Jesus is quite often found praying in Luke, so we imagine that the disciples were familiar with seeing him at prayer – and perhaps had noticed too how Jesus drew strength and peace from this, perhaps he was energised by his times of prayer, or given a renewed sense of purpose. Whatever it was that the disciples saw in Jesus and his prayer life, they wanted it too. 'Lord, teach us to pray'. He responds with a simple outline prayer with about five ideas. Let's take a quick look at the prayer:

It's a prayer which begins by recognising the mystery and holiness of **God**, revealed as Father, then expresses a longing for the **Kingdom**, the rule of God to come. It's a prayer which refers to that daily gift of manna in the wilderness, in a request for **daily bread**, then moves straight into a challenging 2-sided approach to **forgiveness** – forgive us as we forgive others and it finishes with a supplication not to be led into situations which might overpower us, an appeal to God's **grace**... God – Kingdom – Provision – Forgiveness – Grace.

That's what's included – but almost as interesting is what is missing; when we think about the breadth of Christian theology and spirituality, so much is not mentioned in the Lord's Prayer! There is no reference to any of the points we might make if we were trying to tell someone what is important about becoming or being a Christian. There is no mention of salvation or even of faith, belief or trust in God. Nothing is said about sacrifice or good works and whilst Jesus begins by addressing the First Person of the Trinity, he makes no mention of the Third, the Holy Spirit. Instead we have these five emphases - God – Kingdom – Provision – Forgiveness – Grace. Such a structure might challenge us about what we regard as important. We might even begin to wonder what our church meetings would look like if these were the five elements of the agenda; God – Kingdom – Provision – Forgiveness – Grace. Exciting?

To close, let's look again at that story of the friend at midnight. We usually understand it to be an exhortation to persist in our prayers, to keep on asking... certainly that meaning is there and is a valuable reminder not to give up. But what if we were to put ourselves in the shoes not of the petitioner, but of the neighbour; the neighbour who is already in bed, who has gone through their nightly rhythm of locking up & putting their family to bed and who is very unwilling to get up and respond. To them, this is a story of the unexpected, of intrusion, of interruption, of surprise. Does that approach also have something to teach us about prayer and the life of discipleship?

The story is literally a 'wake-up call'. Do we need to wake up to the possibility of God coming to us in interruptions to our normal routines and in the disruption of our usual ways of working? In the past two years of pandemic and lockdown, we have seen people respond in extraordinary ways to unprecedented times and circumstances, in our homes, in society and in the church. In a myriad of ways people have shown kindness, compassion

and creativity and have worked to provide a better environment, a kinder society, a fairer world.

Then again, in recent months, the war in Ukraine has been like a knock in the night for many – for those directly involved, of course, who have had to flee their homes and cope with unimaginable disruption and distress. But there has also been a wake-up call to churches and individuals across Europe, who have responded to that call by offering hospitality, raising funds for medical care and psychological support, helping people to complete complex forms, campaigning about unjust immigration law and unnecessary bureaucracy... it has been remarkable to see that wave of humanity respond to an unwanted knock in the night.

Perhaps sometimes the big things are easier to respond to than the little things... the minor bumps and blaring horns of everyday life to which we sometimes try to turn a deaf ear, turning over in bed and saying no... is there something in these stories Jesus tells, which is asking us not only to be persistent in our praying, proactive in our searching for a better world, but also challenging us to be more attentive to the needs of the world and more generous in our response?

The final words of Jesus in this passage again call upon an everyday occurrence; if a child asks a parent for a fish or an egg, they don't expect to be given a snake or a scorpion instead. The implication is that if even foolish and sinful human parents know how to respond to their children, how much more will God give good things when asked – and in particular, the Holy Spirit. It seems that all of our praying might be summed up in a very simple request that God would give us the very best gift of all – God's own self, in the daily gift of the Holy Spirit. When did I, when did you, last ask God for that gift?⁴

Hymn:

429 STF – Lord, we turn to you for mercy OR

591 STF – Let all mortal flesh keep silence

Prayers of intercession

For our intercessions, we will hold three short periods of quiet, in which each of us is invited to bring our own prayers to God.

Firstly, we pray for those close to home, calling to mind the name or the face of somebody in our own family, amongst our church congregation or a close friend. In the quiet, we hold them and their situation up to God.

[Silence]

Living God, you know our hearts and our hurts. We commit them to you now, and invite you to come close to those we have prayed for, bringing them your healing, your comfort, your hope.

Secondly, we pray for situations further afield – taking a moment to pray for something we have heard in the news that troubles us, or for someone we have never met but whose story has affected us. In the quiet, we hold these people and situations up to God.

⁴ Reflection written by Jill Baker

[Silence]

Living God, you know the pains of your world. It can feel like a dark world when we switch on the news, or read our newspapers. In the darkness, bring your light. In the conflict, bring your peace. In the brokenness, bring your healing.

[Silence]

Finally, we spend a moment praying for the church: perhaps this church congregation, the wider Christian church, or all people of faith. In the quiet, we pray for all who are gathering in worship today.

[Silence]

Living God, help us – your people – to be your hands and feet in the world. May we find ways to be an answer to prayer, to bring transformation in our own lives, communities and our world.

We pray these, and all our prayers, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing the offering

God of all creation, we give you these gifts now – and invite you to bless them and to use them for your purposes. May we bring about redemption for a world in disaster, hope for a people in despair.

By your Spirit and in the name of Christ,

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

503 STF – Love divine all loves excelling OR

313 STF – Thine be the glory

Blessing

Until that moment which Wesley describes as ‘casting our crowns before him, lost in wonder love and praise’, until heaven finally calls us home, we have a job to do, a role to play in bringing love and hope into a broken world. Let us go out and do that job this week.

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession by Tim Baker

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker