

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 19C

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

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Ordinary 19 - Year C
7th August 2022



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

79 STF – I'll praise my Maker while I've breath OR

53 STF – How shall I sing that majesty?

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

116 STF – Sing for God's glory that colours the dawn of creation OR

183 STF – Praise to the God who clears the way

Readings: Isaiah 1: 1, 10-20; Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-16; Luke 12: 32-40

Hymn:

455 STF – All my hope on God is founded OR

411 STF – May the God of hope go with us every day

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

476 STF – One more step along the world I go OR

415 STF – The Church of Christ, in every age

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

440 STF – Amazing grace – how sweet the sound OR

661 STF – Give me the faith which can remove

Blessing

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Call to worship

Let us open our hands,
And our hearts,
To receive your Spirit,
To remind us that we are loved and accepted, just as we are,
And that we are ready to be the people of your Kingdom, here on earth.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

79 STF – I'll praise my Maker while I've breath OR
53 STF – How shall I sing that majesty?

Opening Prayers

Lord,
We gather today admitting that we are strangers and foreigners on earth,
Longing for a heavenly country,
A city filled with hope.

As we worship you in this place,
Side by side,
May we learn to do right,
To seek justice wholeheartedly,
Defend the oppressed and,
Take up the cause of the vulnerable and forgotten,
The marginalised and destitute,
The lonely and longing.

We pray that our hearts will be open to your word,
Our ears eager to listen to the prompting of the spirit,
And our mouths ready to sing your praises.
Be with us today,
Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Today, the 7th of August is International Friendship Day (it is always the first Sunday in August, if you want to put it in your diary!). This day began in America, with the card-store Hallmarks, who presumably wanted to have a chance to sell more cards

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Sheila Matthews

to their customers! However, it has become an internationally recognised day and one that has been picked up in countries around the world, including - to a certain extent - here in the UK.

We don't need to spend more money in card shops today, but perhaps we could use today as an excuse to think about, and pray for our friends.

Who are your friends? Are there people in your life who you used to call friends, but perhaps you have lost touch with? You could use the excuse of today to get back in contact: send an email, write a letter, drop them a text.

And secondly, are you and your friendships based on prayer? Do you have friends you can pray with? This friendship day, why not try to think of a friend or two who you could meet to pray with - whether online, on the phone, in each other's homes or at a coffee shop. Meeting together to talk and pray for each other, your walk of faith and the world is a helpful part of following Jesus. Is that something you could do this week? Find someone you trust to talk about how to make this happen or speak to one of the church leadership team / stewards / your minister.

Happy friendship day! Let's make this a day when our friendships can enrich our lives and our walk of faith, and a time when we can be a blessing to our friends.³

Hymn:

116 STF – Sing for God's glory that colours the dawn of creation OR

183 STF – Praise to the God who clears the way

Readings: Isaiah 1: 1, 10-20; Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-16; Luke 12: 32-40

Hymn:

455 STF – All my hope on God is founded OR

411 STF – May the God of hope go with us every day

Reflections on the reading

"Is NOT hamster. Hamsters are small and cuddly. Cuddle this, you'd never play the guitar again."

These are the immortal words of Basil Fawlty, Manager of "Fawlty Towers" during one of the finest half-hours of British TV comedy ever made. This episode, entitled "Basil the Rat" tells the story of when the health inspector visits the hotel and the temperature rises when Spanish waiter Manuel's pet "Syrian 'hamster" (confusingly also called "Basil"!)" gets loose in the hotel. Basil (that's Basil the Manager, not the

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

rat) in this scene is explaining to Manuel that his hamster isn't actually a hamster – it is in fact a rat, and panic abounds as everyone tries to avoid the catastrophe of the inspector discovering the rodent during his visit.

It's utter joy, and I would thoroughly recommend it to you if you haven't seen it either recently, or ever.

In real life I have some sympathy with the sense of foreboding that these circumstances bring about. I manage the Community Awareness Programme in Wakefield – a charity which provides hot meals to around 90 vulnerable adults per day – that's well over 20,000 hot meals per year - and does this from a kitchen which is of course registered with the Local Authority. This means regular inspections and assessments and so far we have maintained our 5-star rating for all of our 25 year history. The fear that we may lose that if standards fall, or we have a bad inspection day – maybe when there is a rat running around for example (!) – is real.

Anyway, the relevant point here is this: the Inspectors don't ever tell us when they are coming. The visits are always a surprise.

Whilst this makes for a tense day when they DO come, I happen to agree with the policy whole-heartedly. If we were given notice, we could make sure all the right boxes are ticked and that we would be able to “put on a show” when they came to assess us. This way... we simply have to be ready – all of the time. We simply - and justifiably - have to be working to a high standard all of the time so that we are “ready” if the Inspectors turn up.

Today Jesus teaches us all about this. He tells us in this passage today:

“You must be ready”

This is one of a series of very punchy “proverb-style” teachings in this short extract from Luke's record of Jesus' teachings - all designed to encourage us to not wait to change our lives, but instead to try to live every moment of every day in a way that we could be comfortable with should we sit back and analyse it.

But what does it mean to be “ready”?

The combination of our lectionary readings today intertwine very subtly to start to help us answer this question today.

Isaiah has a vision from God which spells out some of the ways in which we should try to live, especially summarised in one beautiful verse... *“learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow”*.

From Hebrews we have the well-known passage about living “by faith”... making specific reference to the example of Abraham who trusted God against all the odds... and we hear about a piece of that story in the passage from Genesis.

Then of course Luke gives us the account of Jesus simply telling them to be “ready”...

So I ask again... what does it mean to be “ready”?

Jesus uses the example of a thief “visiting” in the night which you might imagine would induce a sense of fear in the minds of the listeners... but I’m not so sure fear is the best angle to take on all of this. Maybe some of this is lost in translation, but it is certainly true that Jesus often talks of the urgency of the need for Kingdom values in the world and is clear in his assertion that the Kingdom is “near”... letting us know that we should not be waiting to bring change when there is a need for that change in the here and now.

It was true then and it is just as true for us now.

I heard a story lately about a policy at one of our local high schools. In their plans to help prepare kids for GCSE exams the school had opened up a number of “cramming” sessions to help them revise the specifics for the challenges that were facing them. I don’t doubt that targeted sessions like this have their place, but I was disturbed to find that one of them was on the morning of the exam! This left me aghast. I remembered when our kids were going through exams and all of our advice and encouragement was to guide them to have revised as much and as well as they were able in the lead up to the exam day... but above all the advice on the day itself was to relax... get a good breakfast... and in many ways not sweat and stress about what they knew or didn’t know... but instead to try to start the exam in a chilled way to allow their brains to be at their relaxed best.

The idea here was to try to reduce the fear and stress of the exam and all that went with it... and the idea that they will be encouraged to do lots of last-minute stress-filled and stress-induced cramming in the hours before sitting the paper filled me with horror. This would surely raise the fear element and do nothing to prepare well?

Fear is not a helpful emotion whilst trying to be at our best.

Fear is not a helpful emotion when we are trying to be “ready” – trying to live our lives in the best way we can.

Fear can be reduced by introducing faith and trust into our thinking and approach, as we heard in the Hebrews passage today. I have always loved the definition of faith by the comedian Milton Jones. He says this:

“Faith is like standing still in the noise, knowing that the bus is coming... and occasionally, through the fog and the traffic, catching a glimpse of something big and red”

We can be confident that the “bus is coming”, and that confidence can help to deal with the fear we feel. This can help us be at our clear-headed best.

Jesus’ promise to us all is that the love he has for all of us will never fail. He showed us this love in the way he dealt with people in the gospel stories we read. What Jesus is encouraging in us is that we are fundamentally aiming in the right direction with our intentions and emotions, and always remembering the call of our Christian basics... just as Isaiah said:

Do good. Seek justice.

If we can focus our basic thinking, our faith, our trust, our approach and outlook on life, our very selves in fact - on these simple principles, whilst all the challenges of the world are happening around us, then we will be as “ready” as Jesus would ever want us to be to face those challenges with love and grace.

*Are you “ready”?*⁴

Hymn:

476 STF – One more step along the world I go OR

415 STF – The Church of Christ, in every age

Prayers of intercession

Let us be still for a moment,

Remembering the image from our reflection – of the stillness of the person waiting for the bus, glimpsing something ‘big and red’ through the fog and the traffic.

Let’s clear our minds of fog, and traffic, and distractions.

Just listen to your breathing. To the stillness. To the still, small, voice.

[Hold a moment of quiet].

In this stillness, let us bring our prayers. Prayers for ourselves, and the world. Let us begin with each other. In the quiet, why not pray for someone else in this room, whether you know them really well or you only met them for the first time today. Whether you can remember their name or not. Just take a few moments to pray for each other, and know that you too are being prayed for.

[Hold a minute or two of quiet to allow people to do that].

In our prayers, we also remember those in our own communities and families who need prayer today. Those who need to know something of your grace, your love, your comfort, your healing, Lord God.

We think of people we know who are in hospital, or in pain,

Those who are battling with mental health challenges, and those who are providing for them.

Those who are lonely and isolated, and those who visit or call them.

Those who are overworked or underworked, burned out or feeling like a burden.

Those we miss, and those who are missing us.

Living God, show us how to be an answer to prayer for someone today. Show me what I can do.

God of the whole world, thank you for your goodness to us. We have received so much and are so fortunate, compared to so many people in our world.

In our prayers, we pray for people affected by war, those who have had to flee their homes or find themselves on the front line.

We pray for those who live in extreme poverty, or in an area affected by humanitarian

⁴ Reflection written by Kevin Dobson

disasters.

For those who may never get to see their potential fulfilled.

Living God, show us how to change and challenge systems and structures that create or maintain injustice. Show us what it is that we can do to help bring justice, and peace, and life in all it's fullness.

We pray these, and all our prayers, in Jesus' name and through the power of your Holy Spirit, Lord God.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing the offering

Gracious God, accept these gifts – the humble offerings of what we have and who we are. Take them, take us, and use us by your Spirit to see your Kin-dom come, your will be done. Amen.⁶

Hymn:

440 STF – Amazing grace – how sweet the sound OR

661 STF – Give me the faith which can remove

Blessing

God of all grace,
We leave this place, this moment, drenched in your grace.
Show us how to be the very best versions of ourselves this week,
To bring love and hope and joy into the world.

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker