

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 28C

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

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Ordinary 28 - Year C
9th October 2022



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

79 STF – I'll praise my maker OR

37 STF – You're calling us and so we're gathered here

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

40 STF – Blessed be the name of the Lord

270 STF – Come and see, come and see

Readings: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7; 2 Timothy 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-19

Hymn:

78 STF – Give thanks with a grateful heart OR

776 STF – In the Lord I'll ever be thankful

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

409 STF – Let us build a house where love can dwell OR

679 STF – Come build the Church - not heaps of stone

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

465 STF – Guide me, O thou great Jehovah OR

459 STF – Captain of Israel's host, and Guide

Blessing

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Call to worship

Christ has called us, to be here and be present.
The Spirit is here already, prompting and motivating us to make a change.
God is ready to invite us to do something new and exciting in the world.

Come amongst us as we worship,

Amen.¹

Hymn:

79 STF – I'll praise my maker OR

37 STF – You're calling us and so we're gathered here

Opening Prayers

Loving God,
For the healing care you have offered to us; for the patience you have with us; for your presence that will never fail, we give you thanks.

As we gather to worship we bring our hearts and spirits to you so that we may grow in our faith and service to you by serving others.

We ask this in Jesus Name. Amen

Ever patient and gracious Lord, you hear our cries, our moans, and our selfish desires. Yet you choose to forgive us when we confess our sins to you.

Grant us a new start, a clean slate as we worship you. Help us to always look to you for our healing and to return thanks to you by praise and serving others in your name.

For we offer this prayer of confession of our failures and gratitude to you the One who hears our prayers.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Jesus was a miracle worker. A miracle is 'a remarkable event or development that brings welcome consequences.' Jesus would do these often. In our reading today, we will see Jesus do something amazing.

There Jesus is, travelling either by foot or donkey, we presume, and ten people suffering from leprosy approach him. Leprosy is a disease that affects the skin and

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Matthew Forsyth

can have life-altering effects. At the time Jesus was alive it was a disease that was misunderstood. As a result, often, if you were found to have leprosy, you were kicked out of the place you lived and forced to live in remote areas by yourself. Thankfully there is now a cure for leprosy!

Back to the story. These men came up to Jesus and asked if He would heal them. Jesus told the men to go and show themselves to priests at the church, which was normally what you'd do after being healed. The lepers went, and they realised they were healed along the way to the church. How amazing! They must have been so excited, don't you think? But guess what: ten men got healed. Do you know how many of them came back to Jesus and said "thank you"?

Only one.

Just one man said thank you to Jesus! The Lord was glad this man came back, but I'll bet He felt a little sad that none of the others said thank you.

And you know, it's easy for us to think this is sad, or assume that we would do the right thing and say thank you if it was us that Jesus healed. But how often do we forget to say "thank you"? God gives us great things in our lives every day.

Every blessing we have, and every breath we have, comes from Him. We should say thank you all the time, every day, but sometimes we forget.

So here's a challenge for each one of us today. Think of someone that does something for you, maybe a teacher, friend, parent, or colleague. Think of them right now. Now, the challenge is for you this week to go and say thank you to them. Let them know how much you appreciate them.

The second half of that challenge is saying thank you to God for that person in your life. So will you accept the challenge?³

Hymn:

40 STF – Blessed be the name of the Lord

270 STF – Come and see, come and see

Readings: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7; 2 Timothy 2:8-15; Luke 17:11-19

Hymn:

78 STF – Give thanks with a grateful heart OR

776 STF – In the Lord I'll ever be thankful

Reflections on the reading

I'm not sure how many of you are football fans, but if you are you may well have the experience of having to sit in the wrong stand at some point. Whether it is going with a friend to watch your team with theirs, catching your home team when you are at

³ All Age Talk written by Matthew Forsyth

university, or just because it was the cheapest ticket. Either way, when (or if) your team scores, there is that urge you have to fight back: you cannot cheer, at pain of being thrown out or beaten up. You are an outsider in a foreign land, and all you want is to be at the other end of the stadium cheering along with your fellow supporters.

The two readings that we have before us both speak of exile, people who have been in a foreign land or people who have been pushed out by society and they tell us of how God, and God in Jesus, met with these exiles. Sadly, these two passages are not ones that we can read as historic “context”, they are passages that speak to the very reality of our society today, where people are still exiled, and they are still spurned by society. How then does the church minister and nourish the love of God that we have seen in these passages. Today then, we will think about what it means to be an exile, how did Jesus love the exile, how does the church love the exile.

How does it feel to be in exile? Even if we have had that football experience, or we have turned up at a “fancy dress” party dressed as a clown instead of in tuxedo or cocktail dress, we are unlikely to have experienced true exile. This was not a new experience for the people of Israel, exile is a significant part of their history and no matter who invaded, some would be taken off and others would stay under foreign rule. In this instance, Nebuchadnezzar had taken prophets, priests and nobles from Jerusalem to Babylon, and was not the first time this had been done to them.

In exile there is deep loss, hopelessness, a longing for what could be and a disconnect from that which you know and love. From the people of Israel, through the Roman occupation of the New Testament, to the present day, sadly exile has lived on. To find context, we must remember that the UK has experienced it and inflicted it, slavery is both a blight on history and a blight on present day society and we do not have to look far to find people in exile. Home is a place of security and comfort, of safety and sanctuary and to be in exile is to be separated from that. One of our most common forms of exile is the plight of the refugee forced from their home by famine or war and yet it is not the only form.

Across the globe, and in our own country, we see individuals and whole groups marginalised because of who they are – whether that is the colour of their skin or the way that they look. Simply because of someone’s disability or because of who they love, we are far too good at shunning, ignoring or ostracising and thus putting people into exile. The Luke reading shows us a practical example of this, with the lepers keeping their distance due to the way that society saw them. Jesus himself discovered that he, a prophet was not welcome in his own town and eventually he would be shunned all the way to the cross. He knew the pain of exile.

We tend to think that we are changing the story in this regard but the reality is that, when we truly reflect on our community or our church, people would still feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. How well would a person from an ethnic minority settle in your small village, would you embrace the homeless person who hasn’t had a wash for a year when they come to your church or would you put the kettle on and get the biscuits out for a drug addict who walked through your door? Exile is a reality and an invisible barrier and yet it is one that Jesus tried to overcome.

So how does God meet the exile? Sometimes we may be guilty of reading passages such as the Jeremiah one from a privileged position. In this passage, God promises

that they will build houses and settle down, plant gardens, marry and have sons and daughters and seek the peace and prosperity of the city. On first reading this may seem as though “it will all be ok”, this is a passage about not worrying for the future is in God’s hands.

On a second or third reading, and one would imagine that a first reading for someone in exile, we actually find a promise for something so much deeper than a house. This is not the promise of bricks and mortar, but the promise of a home. It is something that goes to the deepest need of the person who is in exile and seeks to satisfy the strongest cravings of their heart. God promises safety and security and it is the most likely of the two things given in the final sentence, peace will be welcomed so much more than prosperity. When you long for something, when you pine for something, there is a churning deep within the stomach and the exile knows that that churning will one day be satisfied.

I would imagine that, for the leper, the pain of exile feels a little different and in some ways, possibly worse. As an outcast of society, the lepers were pushed beyond the city walls but they can see that which they long for, they may occasionally see the people they love even if they cannot be with them, and so the pain is underlined each time they do. And they knew what was expected, they kept their distance.

Jesus’ words speak to what they long for, he does not have a long conversation with them, as he does with others. He does not ask them what they need. He simply tells them to go and re-join society. “Go and show yourself to the priests” he says with the subtext that, when they get there, all will be well. And they go in faith, would not many of us want to question this instruction and seek assurance that healing would come, but in faith they went. In some instances, such as the woman at the well, Jesus offers that reconnection with society, but in this instance he sends them off to be connected elsewhere, to be back in their homes and gardens, to know peace and prosperity.

For the church, we must ask ourselves whether we do the same. When faced with the people highlighted earlier in the sermon, do we connect them with our society and offer them a home. It is quite natural for human beings to have some inbuilt bias, but it is important that we notice that bias and correct it when it affects our decision-making. I would imagine that the disciples were a few paces behind Jesus when they met the lepers, and yet they knew the score. We see elsewhere in scripture that they did not react well to the people Jesus was mixing with, and yet they still tried.

Sometimes Jesus sought out the people that were unloved and sometimes they sought him out, but every time his reaction was the same – unconditional love. The prophets tell us that our Sunday worship is pointless if we do not act with justice and Jesus gives us one command – love.

On our doorsteps there are people in exile. Your community may be hosting a family from Ukraine, two doors down from church there may be someone with mental health problems, and a few houses down in the other direction there may be someone who is mocked when they go out because of the way that they look. In this community, God has drawn the exiles to himself, will you offer them a home and loving family, peace and prosperity? For that is our gospel calling – that in our midst the exiles find the fulfilment of their deepest desire.

Some questions for discussion in small groups, and for you to consider with your family, friends and neighbours in the week to come:

- Who would you find it uncomfortable to sit next to?
- How will you overcome that discomfort?
- How can the church love those that society would call 'unlovable' better than we do?⁴

Hymn:

409 STF – Let us build a house where love can dwell OR

679 STF – Come build the Church - not heaps of stone

Prayers of intercession

God of the lost,

For who have lost their way, those who have lost their homes and those who have lost all hope, reveal yourself and the love that only you can bring. Empower your church to be a beacon to those who are searching.

God of the lonely,

Many seek love from the wrong place, because they have not known the one who is love. Others wander, seeking a connection that reminds them of "home" yet are never satisfied in their wandering. May your church reach out, holding their hand and offering a connection to the source of all love.

God of the exile,

For all those who have been separated from home or family, for those who have escaped with their safety and not much else, may they know your promise of home and peace. Change our society, that we may embrace rather than shun, those who seek a better life. Help us to replace closed borders with open arms and model the love of Christ.

God of the leper,

Some are still exiled due to their illness, and many are suffering. May your words of healing echo in our churches that your words may reach out into our communities. In the silence we pray for all those who need the healing that you gave the leper ...

Silence

God of peace and prosperity. Minister to us and through us that all may know that in you, hope can be awakened, love can rise, and light can dawn. Speak to us and the exile and tell a new story in our midst.

Amen.⁵

⁴ Reflection written by Phil Jackson

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

Offering / Collection

In a world where injustice reigns, in a society where prejudice is everywhere, in a community where inequality lives on – may we be a people of justice, grace and harmony. Use these gifts to build your church, Lord, as a sanctuary for the broken and a hope to the oppressed.

Amen.

Hymn:

465 STF – Guide me, O thou great Jehovah OR

459 STF – Captain of Israel's host, and Guide

Blessing

God of all grace, we go from this place,
Hoping to seek to live out your plans for our lives,
Seeking to know more of you and be known by you,
Seeking to make you known in our friendships and relationships and the world
around us.

Amen.⁶

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker