

# twelvebaskets



## EPIPHANY 2A

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

Produced by **twelvebaskets**. Subscription available from **theworshipcloud.com**

**Epiphany 2 - Year A**  
15th January 2023



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**673 STF – Will you come and follow me OR**

**183 STF – Praise to the God who clears the way**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**186 STF – Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord OR**

**367 STF – When I was lost, you came and rescued me**

Readings: Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

**Hymn:**

**401 STF – Come, sinners, to the gospel feast OR**

**407 STF – Hear the call of the kingdom**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**564 STF – O thou who camest from above OR**

**556 STF – Just as I am, without one plea**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**610 STF – Best of all is God is with us OR**

**239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I**

Blessing

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The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

Many more resources and inspiration for this week's lectionary, leading worship and other church use are available on [www.theworshipcloud.com](http://www.theworshipcloud.com).

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## Call to worship

God of all grace,  
You have called us here, and here we come.  
In worship, in prayer, in listening and learning,  
In sharing and singing.

Come amongst us as we worship, Lord God,  
By your Spirit,

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## Hymn:

673 STF – Will you come and follow me OR

183 STF – Praise to the God who clears the way

## Opening Prayers

Let us pray.

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?

A personal invitation to you, to us, to follow Jesus. Not a generic shout or gesture or pressgang; it's personal. Will you answer? Will you follow?

Will you love the “you” you hide if I but call your name?

You are seen by God. They know your dreams, anxieties, the things that weigh heavy on you, the things you put off, the things you bury deep. They are calling you out, worries and all, to be the person they know you are. Be emboldened and supported to be you. Share your worries. Love yourself as you are called to love others.

Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around?

How can we build your Kingdom here amidst ongoing conflicts? A world where hatred and fear come easier than love and understanding? Where the greed of others causes families to choose who gets fed? A world where “Warm Spaces” and “Foodbanks” are fixes to systemic problems?

Guide, inspire, and support us as we use our faith and trust in you to face the injustices of this world.

Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.

On this journey through life, keep us aware to the world around us, to hear the sound of your voice, and cast our gaze on what is on your heart. May we be the change in the world. May we be transformed by your love, the love of others, and be the love that transforms others in our community.

We bring this all to you, with the words of your son,<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Tim Annan-Hood

## We say together the Lord's Prayer

### All Age Talk

Is there someone who you would really like to meet? Someone you'd be super excited to see if they walked in the room?

*[Encourage people to respond and shout out some of their answers. You might like to share your own.]*

I'll bet if you met someone really famous, especially someone who you have idolised or looked up to, you would be so thrilled that you would want to tell your friends and other people about it, right? Well, that happened when Jesus began his ministry on earth. We aren't told much about his childhood but in today's reading, we find the adult Jesus.

John the Baptist, in today's Bible reading, which we will hear a little later in our service, is one of the first individuals to fully realise who Jesus was and how important he is. Have you ever been so excited to see someone you have pointed and shouted 'LOOK!' This is exactly what John did, he pointed Jesus out to others and told them that they were looking at the Lamb of God. They ran after Jesus, and when they met him and understood who he was, they went to tell others about him, too. Meeting Jesus was something they didn't want to keep to themselves, and they couldn't wait to tell others who they had found.

This level of eagerness is what we want to feel towards Jesus. In fact, coming to church is an opportunity for us all to encounter Jesus through the stories, songs, and biscuits after the service...perhaps we can be even more excited about church than we would be about a weekly chance to meet with an exciting celebrity!

Think about it: the God who created the whole universe came to live as a person, on earth, and gave up his life so that we could be adopted into his family and live as children of God!

But the even more amazing truth is that this God is for all, and we are entrusted to use that excitement about Jesus to tell others the good news.

Let us pray.

Dear God,

Thank you for the love of Jesus and the power that this brings

Help us to remember the great news of his birth, death and resurrection

Help us to share that good news with one another

And to be excited about sharing it!

Thank you that we can be disciples, too and you include us.

In Jesus's name,

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by Matthew Forsyth

**Hymn:**

186 STF – Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord OR

367 STF – When I was lost, you came and rescued me

**Readings:** Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

**Hymn:**

401 STF – Come, sinners, to the gospel feast OR

407 STF – Hear the call of the kingdom

**Reflections on the readings**

Today's reflection is written by Rachel Allison, who describes herself as quite an indecisive person. She says that making small and relatively low impact decisions can take me a lot of time - the plethora of choices out there can be overwhelming. What kind of restaurant should we eat at tonight? What shall we watch on TV? Although, while sometimes being overwhelmed by the choice, I feel very blessed to have so much. There is always something different we can do, always a new show to watch or a new book to read.

Alongside these small choices, we go through life having to make huge life choices quite a lot, which university should I go to? Should I take that job? Should I ask that person to marry me? Should we have kids? Should we buy a house? These choices can feel less like a blessing, and can sometimes put a lot of pressure on us – especially when they have a big impact in our lives.

Making choices is an integral part of our lives and a big part of being human and choices or choosing runs as a theme in most of the readings today.

The language of choosing and being chosen is used quite a bit in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. The Jews in the Hebrew Bible are chosen by God. They are a chosen people, who God cares for and has set aside a land for. We see God protecting them, teaching them and punishing them when they choose false idols or disobey the laws set down for them. We see this quite notably in the story of Moses where God leads the Israelites out of slavery into the wilderness and on to the promised land – with a few hurdles along the way. God chose the Israelites to be an example, to live by God's way and to be different from the gentiles.

For me this kind of choosiness feels a bit like when you were picked for a sports team – you're standing in PE and the two sporty people are allowed to choose the team. You are left praying that you won't be the last one there – the person who ends up in a team by de-facto. But even if you do get chosen you have limited choice, you probably haven't chosen the sport and definitely haven't chosen the team or the rules. But you play the game, if you don't play you will get punished and if you play well you will be rewarded. Just like in the wilderness, if the Israelites followed God's commandments they were rewarded and if they didn't they were punished.

But in the readings we have today I think we see a shift from God's people being chosen people to being people asked to choose.

In the Isaiah reading we read about the expansion of the message to the gentiles so that God's "salvation may reach the ends of the earth". We feel the anticipation of the

coming of God to earth to redeem the whole world and all who are in it. This continues in the John reading where we see John baptising people with water and prophesying about the coming of Jesus. John the Baptist is offering people the choice to come and follow him in order to meet and follow Emmanuel, God with us.

When we look at the reading in Corinthians we see that the language again has moved on - Paul says:

“To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord.”

Paul talks about being called rather than chosen, and people ‘calling’ on the name of the Lord. After Jesus, we become called people rather than chosen people. God calls on us to be followers and we can choose whether or not to follow. By sending Jesus to earth as a living sacrifice, God gives each and every one of us the opportunity to choose. God also gives us the opportunity to share our faith and invite anyone to choose a life with Jesus. While God may call us to a particular role or place we are the ones choosing whether to take this up rather than being assigned to a way of life.

Having choices can sometimes be overwhelming and maybe in some cases we would quite like to just be chosen for the football team and follow the rules and know who we are playing with. But having choice opens up our world to new and exciting possibilities, having to make a choice rather than be chosen gives us the chance to jump in with both feet – to see and share our world with others. Jesus walked among us so that everyone had the opportunity to choose life in all its fullness and through our choice we can have a personal rather than collective relationship with God.

When we choose faith we choose to live our lives in a different way, we choose to follow the radical example of Jesus. It changes our lives, just like some of the big decisions I mentioned above. These big decisions are hard but can also be the most amazing decisions we make in our lives - choosing to marry that wonderful person can make you see life in a whole new way. Buying that house can give you that safe haven and wonderful home for your family. Taking that job may just be the best thing you’ve ever done and open so many more opportunities. Choosing faith and to follow Jesus will change your life. These choices shape us and make us who we are.

However, unlike the big decisions above that only have to be done once (like which university to go to) we have to choose Jesus every day (sometimes more than once a day). Each day we have to make the choice to have faith and be Christ-like - which some days is hard but it is through having this choice that we have the privilege of knowing Christ and making him known.

Amen.<sup>4</sup>

**Hymn:**

564 STF – O thou who camest from above OR

556 STF – Just as I am, without one plea

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Rachel Allison

## Prayers of intercession

For the everyday choices we make

Joyful God, we thank you that we can make choices about many of the things we do each day. We thank you for the opportunity to choose our clothes, food, entertainment, friends and partners. We pray that when we make these daily choices we think about all those who are affected by our choices. Those in the food supply chain, those making our clothes, those we have left out and those we have not shown love to.

Help us God to be caring, kind and conscientious in all the daily choices we make.

For the bigger life choices we are struggling to make

Courageous God, hear us as we call on you for direction in the big life choices we have to make. Give us courage to make the difficult decisions we have to make, give us patience with those who need more time to make decisions and give us wisdom to know which choice is the right one to make. We thank you for all the wonderful things that come out of these big decisions and we pray that you give us the strength to cope with the consequences when we get them wrong. Remind us that you are always by our sides during these times of great choice and change.

For those who have limited or difficult choices to make

Compassionate God, you know each of us by name and know all our struggles and challenges. We pray for those of us who face difficult choices. For those in poverty, who have to choose whether to heat or eat. For those in abusive relationships who can't see a way out and feel like they have no choice. For those pushed into crime and gangs through circumstance and a lack of options. Be with them in their challenges, show them they are loved, cared for and that their situation is known to you. Empower us God, to speak out and challenge the forces which limit their choices and work for a future where all may be able to freely choose their own path.

For those whose freedom to choose has been taken from them

God of freedom, we pray for your children who have their rights, freedoms and choices taken away from them. We pray for those who live under oppressive regimes all around the world, for those who don't have the right to speak their truth, for those who are not allowed to choose who they love, for those whose sex or gender gives them fewer choices, for those who are denied opportunities because of their race. Bring justice and freedom to these places God, give these people hope and passion for change and the spirit to keep challenging injustice.

For things which are beyond our control and choices

Caring God, we pray for all those things we do not choose and are beyond our control. We pray for all those affected by illness, natural disasters and terror attacks. Give them a passion to find out what can be done, a purpose to change the situation for the better and a peace with what has happened. God, encourage us to remember and support those in these unimaginable situations and not turn away when it gets too hard. Give us the energy and tools to be of use to those who need us.

We ask all these prays in the name of your son Jesus Christ,

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Rachel Allison

## **We will now take up the offering.**

Gracious God, who gives gifts so generously, who has blessed us so richly, accept these gifts here today, that they might be used to the transformation of this world, for the discovery of the love, hope, grace and peace that flows from you, out into the world.

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

## **Hymn:**

610 STF – Best of all is God is with us OR

239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I

## **Blessing**

We go from this place, hearing words of encouragement from the Creator,  
We go from this place, inspired to follow in the ways of the Christ,  
We go from this place, transformed by the power of the Spirit,  
Travel with us, triune God, that we may come to know you more each day.

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker

<sup>7</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker