

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 15B

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

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Ordinary 15 - Year B
11th July 2021



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

21 STF – Born in song! OR

44 STF – Come on and celebrate

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

727 STF – God in his love for us lent us this planet OR

56 STF – King of Glory, King of Peace

Readings: 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

338 STF – There is a Redeemer OR

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

What are you being called to?

Hymn:

72 STF – Father God, I wonder OR

357 STF – Jesus – the name high over all

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

477 STF – Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart OR

742 STF – We trust the mighty love of God

Blessing

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Call to Worship

We gather this day, to worship the living God.
We gather together with the body of Christ, around the world and across history
We gather to pray, to sing, to reflect and to be transformed,
By your Spirit, Lord God.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

21 STF – Born in song! OR
44 STF – Come on and celebrate

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.

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

We are sorry for the pollution, destruction and pain that we inflict on each other, and on your world.

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

It is believed that many of the psalms were written by man called David. That same David who fought Goliath – do you remember that story?

Psalms 24 is the Psalm chosen for this Sunday, and it is said to have been one of David's Psalms. This is a great one for telling us facts about God.

Verse 1: The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it.

This shows that God is the creator of the earth and everything we see and think of was in fact created by God!

Verse 2: for he founded it on the seas
and established it on the waters

Can you tell me the names of some fish?
And some other sea creatures?

Each one of these is made by God, and their home in the ocean is created for them.

David goes on:

Lift up your heads, you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

² Opening prayers written by The Joint Public Issues Team.

Who is he, this King of glory?
The LORD Almighty—
he is the King of glory.

Ask the kids what truths about God they see in those verses- – the King of Glory, Lord, strong, mighty, Lord Almighty.

The Bible is full of facts and truths about who God is. That is why it is so important to read both the New Testament – the bit with Jesus in it – and the Old testament, the bit that comes before the Jesus stories and – in many ways – helps to set them up.

Each part of the Bible tells us something awesome about God and helps us have a relationship with God.³

Hymn:

727 STF – God in his love for us lent us this planet OR

56 STF – King of Glory, King of Peace

Readings: 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29

Reflections on the Reading

In Shakespeare's play, Macbeth, there is a memorable (and slightly scary) scene where Macbeth, about to take his seat at a great feast, is shaken to the core by the sight of Banquo already sitting in his place (*Act 3 Scene 4*). How can this be? Although initially friends, in his desperate lust for the kingship, Macbeth had had Banquo murdered that very day – how can he now be seated at the table?

Gradually Macbeth realises that no-one else can see Banquo, and what he is seeing is a ghost, perhaps conjured there by his own guilty conscience and the blood on his hands.

Perhaps the scene Mark describes in this passage is not dissimilar – as Herod hears more about this preacher Jesus, who is teaching in all the villages and even sending out his disciples to extend his mission, healing people, casting out evil spirits and becoming much talked-about - it is as if he too is seeing a ghost, someone whom he had had murdered, coming back to haunt him. One of the common opinions about Jesus seems to be that he is indeed 'John the baptizer, raised from the dead'. Herod has a guilty conscience about John, whose death he ordered to save his face at another banquet... perhaps Herod needed to hear Macbeth's own words later in the scene, 'blood will have blood'... such acts of violence and cruelty cannot be covered over, swept under the carpet and forgotten. They will reap a bitter harvest. Mark introduces this sad story about the death of John the Baptist at the point where the mission of Jesus is indeed spreading and bearing fruit, perhaps to remind the

³ All Age talk written by Matt Forsyth

reader that even in this time of apparent success, the shadow of the cross can be felt. Just as evil forces reacted against the moral goodness and teaching of John to kill him, leaving his disciples to take away the body and bury it in a tomb, so will Jesus himself be killed and buried. True goodness is always a threat to the powers of evil.

Yet it is to true goodness that God calls us – and always has done.

In the Jewish faith believers were invited, summoned even, to travel to Jerusalem, if at all possible, for the three great pilgrim feasts of the year, Tabernacles, Passover and Weeks. Psalm 24 seems to be about such pilgrimage, conjuring up the image of pilgrims climbing the hills of Jerusalem to worship. Who may do this? 'Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?' the Psalmist asks, and the answer comes immediately; 'Those who have clean hands and pure hearts'. Both Herod and Macbeth might have found themselves disqualified.

The later part of the psalm, which calls for the ancient gates and doors to be opened wide for the Lord to enter could well also be recalling the story told in today's Old Testament passage, from the 2nd book of Samuel. It is a strange story (stranger still if verses 6-12 are included, but these have been omitted from the reading appointed for today). Overall, the passage tells of how King David, having had a great victory against Israel's long-standing enemies, the Philistines, is now in a strong enough position and feeling secure enough as king to bring back to the Jerusalem the Ark of the Covenant. This mysterious piece of furniture – beloved in more recent generations by treasure hunters such as Indiana Jones – had been built to God's precise instructions and was, essentially, a wooden box, overlaid in gold, in which were held the stone tablets of the law and other items of great historical and religious significance. However, the Ark was no museum piece, far more significantly, it was understood to be the very dwelling place of God.

So we can understand the dismay of the Israelites back in 1 Samuel when the Ark was captured by the Philistines. Israel had re-captured it, but, strangely, had not taken it to Jerusalem, rather it had been left for twenty years in relative obscurity. Now David realises that to cement his kingship he needs to bring the Ark back to Jerusalem, which leads to a mighty procession – not unlike a modern-day carnival, it appears, with dancing and music, shouting and celebration.

If you do read the part of the story which is missing, you discover that, along the way, someone reached out and touched the Ark and was immediately struck dead... that might seem rather extreme to us but serves again to highlight the absolute holiness of God. The incident delays the Ark's journey for three months, but David then completes his mission to bring it back to Jerusalem and as it makes its way, with frequent sacrifices being offered, we read for the second time that 'David danced before the Lord with all his might'. However, David was clothed only in a linen ephod, a kind of short tunic, which, it appears, was not sufficient to retain his modesty in such energetic dancing. His wife, Michal, seeing him from the window is

embarrassed and upset; it is the first sign of a crack which will, before long, end their marriage.

Perhaps David's dancing might connect our thinking again with the gospel passage and the description of Herod being so pleased with the dancing he and his cronies are watching that he ends up beheading John the Baptist as a gift or reward for the dancer (and her mother).

In times gone by, both of these stories have been used to suggest that dancing is a rather suspect activity in which no respectable Christian should be engaged! Church history has many sad tales to tell of how we have misread and misinterpreted bible passages to say almost anything! Yet it is strange that both these stories include feasting and dancing, along with marital disharmony, jealousy and ultimately relationship breakdown. So what are we to think?

Are we being faced again with the question of what is pure goodness? Are we being asked to consider how we demonstrate such goodness in our lives?

In his beautiful prayer for the Christians in Ephesus, Paul writes of how they have been chosen in Christ 'to be holy and blameless before him in love'. The prayer is 12 verses long and full of rich and poetic language. Apparently in Greek the whole passage can be written as one sentence! The main theme of the prayer is the glorious grace of God through which – and only through which – we can attain a life which will be 'holy and blameless'. Through God's generous gift of grace, which has been 'lavished on us' we can have redemption and forgiveness.

This is a passage to read and re-read at all sorts of times:

- When we feel disheartened by our own attempts to follow Christ.
- When we have found ourselves drawn into ways of living which are neither holy nor blameless and we don't know how to break free again.
- When we think that our discipleship depends on the strength of our own faith, and forget that it really depends on the extent of God's grace – which is 'freely bestowed'.

When the Ark is securely back in Jerusalem, inside a specially made tent, worship is offered to God, food is shared and the people are blessed.

Three times in the psalm, the little Hebrew word 'selah' is used. It means 'pause' and is inserted there to remind those reading, chanting or singing the psalm to do just that, to pause and reflect on the grace of God of which the psalmist is singing... we do well to pause too and ask what God is saying to us through these – admittedly rather challenging – passages...

[Pause]

Hymn:

338 STF – There is a Redeemer OR

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

What are you being called to?

Let us hold another one of those ‘selah’ moments now.

[Pause]

As we turn towards Christ again, setting our hope on him, not on ourselves, we are given the ability to ‘live for the praise of his glory’, as David sought to do in his dancing, as John the Baptist had done in his preaching, as the disciples were learning to do in their mission, as Jesus demonstrates all the time. There may be a cost; there was for David, there was for John, there was for the disciples, there was for Jesus, but the end result is that wonderful circle of blessing with which the prayer for the Ephesians begins – blessed be God...who has blessed us...with every spiritual blessing.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

72 STF – Father God, I wonder OR

357 STF – Jesus – the name high over all

Prayers of intercession

God of all grace, we come to you today to pray for the world you made.

Gracious Jesus, we come to you today to pray for the world you loved and in which you lived.

Holy Spirit of grace, we come to you today and ask your help as we offer our prayers for others.

We pray for the world in which evil so often seems to have the upper hand;

We hold in your love those who are caught up in human trafficking... those who are exploited... those who are abused... those who are victims of violence...

We pray too for those who perpetrate such violence, oppression and exploitation and for all who work for justice, peace and dignity for all people...

God of all grace, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the church, seeking a path of goodness and holiness which glorifies you;

⁴ Reflection written by Jill Baker

We hold in your love all who lead the church in this and every land... those who preach... those who serve... those who speak truth to power... those who risk their own lives for the sake of others...

We pray too for churches which are divided, groups which feel marginalised or ignored, situations where individuals have been isolated.

God of all grace, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for this community, with its glimpses of glory and moments of inhumanity; We hold in your love all in hospital, or suffering at home and those who care for them... we hold in your love our schools, their pupils, staff and governors... we hold in your love our police force and all who work for peace... we pray for those who are in prison and all involved in support for those who struggle...

God of all grace, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our families, our church family, our friends and our neighbours; We hold in your love those who are most precious to us, each of us pausing to picture (or speak the names) of those for whom we pray today... send your grace and blessing we pray on all those known to us who are in particular need at this time... those who are sick, those who are broken-hearted, those who are grieving, those who are lost and confused...

God of all grace, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for ourselves, in our own journey of laughter and lament, wholeness and brokenness;

We offer ourselves afresh to receive your grace... praying that we may be given the resources we need to face this day, the next day and all the coming days with grace and courage. We offer ourselves to be moulded by your Holy Spirit that we may live to the praise of your glory – now and forever.

God of all grace, **hear our prayer.**

Thanks be to God. Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing the offering

Holy God, you are the source of all we have received and all we are. In this moment, we return to you the gifts we have received, and our whole lives. Take us as we are, and use us to bring about transformation and change,

In Jesus' name,

Amen.⁶

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Jill Baker

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Hymn:

477 STF – Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart OR

742 STF – We trust the mighty love of God

Blessing

Go out from this place, inspired and uplifted to bring about change in the world.
Go out into the world, amongst all the disheartening and disappointing moments of
life, and know that the God of love goes with you, before you, alongside you and
within you.

Go to be a people of love, grace and peace.

Amen.⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker