

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 6C

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

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Ordinary 6 - Year C
13th February 2022



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

493 STF – Come, Lord, to our souls come down OR

499 STF – Great God, your love has called us here

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

351 STF – In Christ alone my hope is found OR

60 STF – My soul rejoices in God my Saviour

Readings: Jeremiah 17: 5-10; 1 Corinthians 15: 12-20; Luke 6: 17-26

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

455 STF – All my hope in God is founded OR

639 STF – Through the love of God our Saviour

What am I being called to?

Hymn:

617 STF – O blessed spring, where Word and sign embrace us OR

304 STF – Jesus is risen, alleluia!

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

504 STF – May the mind of Christ my Saviour OR

313 STF – Thine be the glory

Blessing

The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

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Call to worship

Be with us Lord, in our singing, our prayers and meditation, and as we meet together bless and encourage us, that we might become a blessing for those outside these walls.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

493 STF – Come, Lord, to our souls come down OR

499 STF – Great God, your love has called us here

Opening Prayers

A prayer of adoration

You are our fortress and defender, our protector from the storm, in whom we take refuge until the calm descends.

You are our foundation, the solid rock in whom our confidence rests.

You are justice, compassion, love and peace. You are the everything that fills our emptiness.

Amen.

A prayer of confession

When faith is tested to the limit and we stumble, forgive us.

When feet stray from the path and we wander, forgive us.

When our neighbour is in need and we walk by, forgive us.

When the voices of this world drown out your whisper, forgive us.

When love draws us to your feet in repentance, forgive us.¹

[Pause]

And, in the stillness, we hear the gentle words of forgiveness: ‘you are accepted, accepted by that which is greater than you’. We are forgiven and invited to begin again, by your liberating Spirit.

A prayer of thanksgiving

God of love, you are worthy of our thanks.

For love that offers refreshment to all who drink of it, light to all who walk in it, strength to all who hope in it:

God of love, you are worthy of our thanks.

For love that offers healing to all who have need of it, wholeness to all who live in it, blessing to all who give of it:

God of love, you are worthy of our thanks.

Amen.²

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers taken from John Birch's The Act of Prayer

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We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Jesus' gave various different versions of the 'Beatitudes', his famous 'blessed are the...' sayings. Later in our service we will hear the version from Luke's Gospel, which includes:

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.
Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.
Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven."

A man called Colin Smith was once asked to write a set of 'Beatitudes'. Perhaps he was feeling particularly upset with the way the world works that day, or perhaps he had a serious point to make, but he wrote these sayings, which clash strongly with the sayings of Jesus:

"Blessed are the talented, for they shall gain fame and fortune.
Blessed are the rich, for they shall know not need.
Blessed are the wealthy, for they shall have care in their twilight years.
Blessed are celebrities, for they shall be honoured by many.
Blessed are the articulate, for they shall access justice.
Blessed are the healthy, for they shall live long without pain or suffering.
Blessed are the influential, for they shall twist and turn, duck and dive out of all responsibility.
Blessed are you who have many children, for you need not fear a lonely old age.
Blessed are you if you have inner peace, for life's troubles will pass you by.
And Finally:
Blessed are you my brothers and sisters in Christ, for we have eternal life and an assured future with our Lord."

[Pause]

What do you make of these alternative sayings? This is our chance to reflect a little bit on these Beatitudes, and compare them to the ones Jesus spoke.

[You may wish to use all or some of these questions and hold a discussion with the whole congregation, or it may be helpful to print off the questions individually and invite small groups to look at one or two of the questions, then have a short time of conversation and feedback].

- Are Colin Smith's Beatitudes just mockery or does he have a point? What point?
- Are the beatitudes about circumstances/situations or are they about aspects of character? Or something else?
- What does it mean to be blessed?
- What are we doing when we bless someone or something?

- And, as for his final blessing, is that satirical too? Is it arrogant or even wishful thinking for us to assume some kind of eternal happiness just because we come to church?³

Hymn:

351 STF – In Christ alone my hope is found OR

60 STF – My soul rejoices in God my Saviour

Readings: Jeremiah 17: 5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20; Luke 6:17-26

Reflections on the reading

Imagine yourself gazing on the waiting room in a busy hospital. Pale walls bear replica Monets and dull still-lives of sallow fruit, and these are meant to calm you somehow. Lino echoes with each nurse's step. People sit around, some chatting quietly, others gaze ahead, each person hiding their worry and symptoms. The elderly are brought in wheelchairs, and small children wriggle on their parents' laps.

The patient experiences total helplessness. There will be talk and tests, and prodding and injections, results and maybe, at last, a diagnosis, followed by prescriptions and medications and operations.

But what people remember most after a spell in hospital is the kind word from the nursing auxiliary, the flowers sent from a sister who lives too far away to visit, or the hand held by the chaplain.

Consider Jesus' compassion for the needy in all their lack – lack of health, wealth, food or power, and even joy. After giving them a physical healing, he leaves them something more precious – hope, and a vision of an order of society where there would be no more oppression, physical or spiritual. Though he healed all who were there, he knew there would always be more. So he is moved to disclose the truths behind the sufferings of the world, and the depths of God's ways. First he starts with a hope, and reveals the promise in God's law, just as we heard it in Mary's great song (at the beginning of Luke's gospel).

Consider how Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount puts them all in a 'level place'. It is as well, for he then moves from consolation to the opposite, and brings us all down to earth with a bump. For after the blessings, he turns them upside down and prophesies the woes that wait for the rich, the well fed, those who laugh, and are well regarded.

Consider which category the vast majority of us reading these blessings and woes today fall into. We can persuade ourselves that Jesus means his descriptions to be spiritual, but reading this, it seems remarkably clear that he also meant it to be taken literally. The Jews of his time knew from their Scripture that the poor should be protected; but for the rich to be threatened this way was a further idea that would have punctured their self-satisfaction, and should puncture ours.

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

Contemplate Jesus' advice to us to 'rejoice' in the day when we are hated, excluded and insulted, and rejected because of him. What a giant thing it is that Jesus asks of us!

Contemplate how it is that people who endure suffering with love and hope intact, and survive persecution with dignity and forgiveness in their hearts, are ultimately free in a way that their persecutors never will be.

Let us pray
Healing Lord, touch me with your power
And reveal to me the true blessings of your Kingdom.
Help me to find riches in leading a humble life.

Amen.⁴

Psalm 1 begins:

Happy are those
who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;
but their delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law they meditate day and night.

They are like trees
planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.

In all that they do, they prosper.

As a young child, I remember being fascinated by this image of the tree planted by streams of water, and the Psalm has remained with me ever since. I suppose I hoped never to be thirsty again, to be constantly refreshed, to bloom and blossom like a tree with a constant water supply.

Jeremiah in the lectionary passage for today is so clearly borrowing from Psalm 1, from that rich imagery of flourishing trees that litters the Old and New Testament. In a way, The Bible is a book about trees – with a few human stories interwoven. From the beginning in Genesis and the Tree of Life, next to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil...right through to the Tree of Life in Revelation whose leaves are 'for the healing of the nations'. Throughout, there are stories of trees: some of them cursed, some of them responsible for capturing fleeing rivals by the hair, and most of all the poetic references to the centerpiece of the New Testament – the cross on which Jesus was crucified – as 'a tree'.

Here in this story of trees, we are presented with an opportunity to choose which kind of crop we would like to be: are we to be trees rooted and grounded in love, able to share our goodness with the world and make it a better place. Or are we to be caught by the wind, following the latest fashion, unsure of who we are or how we are defined?

Marjorie Dobson's poem, based on the same Psalm invites us to consider which way we will go:

⁴ Taken from Gazing on the Gospels by Judith Diamond

Which Way?

Healthy trees need good roots,
gaining nourishment
from the earth
to grow fruit,
holding firm
when storms shake the branches,
providing a wide-ranging support system
giving strength and stability,
whatever happens above ground.

Chaff is a useless by-product
Living grain is stripped from the wheat
for its food value.

Only the chaff remains.
as leftovers,
not fit for any purpose;
so light they whirl away
in the wind
to wither and die.

The wise
root themselves in God's purpose
and grow.

The wayward
are blown wherever
the willful wind will carry them.⁵

In Luke's gospel, the Beatitudes are not just a series of blessings, there are also some 'woes', perhaps as a warning to those who are feeling smug or as a reminder that joining the Jesus movement is a radical and difficult act. It involves some self-sacrifice, it involves being able to let go of our selfish desires and the things that the world is 'selling' to us, it involves joining the counter-revolution.

But the invitation is to be like a well-watered garden, who could resist that?

It is my prayer for each of us that we can find a way to dig our roots into the boundless flow of God's love, that we can drink so deeply of that love that our entire lives are transformed and renewed – we become the kind of trees people want to get shade beneath and bear fruit for all to come and enjoy.

Heavenly father, come and do something in us, then through us, that the systems of injustice might crumble and the world might come to see your love.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

455 STF – All my hope in God is founded OR

639 STF – Through the love of God our Saviour

⁵ Taken from Full Worship Service by Marjorie Dobson and Andrew Pratt

⁶ Additional reflections by Tim Baker

What are you being called to?

Today, you are invited to enter into a community of prayer.

Perhaps you have heard of the Methodist Way of Life? It is a resource produced and supported by the Methodist Church to enable and equip us on our journey of discipleship. The Way of Life begins with a simple invitation and challenge, to pray daily – as far as we are able. Is that something you currently do? How could you enrich your prayer life?

In the days ahead, you might like to commit a certain part of the day to regular prayer, and use it in different ways to see what works for you. If you don't already have a rhythm or a resource to help you with that, you could look up The Vine at Home resources from Twelvebaskets, which include daily prompts and ideas for prayer pointers.

Enter the community of prayer, and discover a richer connection with the divine, with yourself, and with the world around you.

Amen.

Hymn:

617 STF – O blessed spring, where Word and sign embrace us OR

304 STF – Jesus is risen, alleluia!

Prayers of intercession

Gracious God, weary of our own efforts to change ourselves or the world, we come to you in prayer

- We hold before you all those for whom we pray this day...
- All those who we love and see no more...
- All those who have no knowledge of your love for them

And we offer our prayers as a sign of our weakness and of your strength.

Creator God, by your Word and your Spirit you brought order out of chaos at creation:

- Speak again to all those who feel in danger today – in physical danger, emotional danger, economic danger – and send your Spirit as a dove of peace.

Creator God, by your Word and your Spirit you brought freedom out of slavery at the Exodus:

- Show your power today on behalf of all who are oppressed or abused; victims of human trafficking and domestic violence – send your Spirit as a dove of peace.

Creator God, by your Word and your Spirit you brought community out of tribalism in the Promised Land:

- Act today where nations are fractured, where sectarianism causes division, where neighbours cannot accept difference – send your Spirit as a dove of peace.

Creator God, by your Word and your Spirit you brought healing out of hopelessness through the life of Jesus:

- Come amongst us again to show us the values of the Kingdom, the upside-down nature of compassion, the power of love – send your Spirit as a dove of peace.

Creator God, by your Word and your Spirit you brought life out of death at Calvary:

- Pour into our hearts the love which goes the extra mile, the sacrifice which puts others before ourselves, the grace which attracts others to you – send your Spirit as a dove of peace.

We ask all our prayers in the powerful name of Jesus, the Word made flesh and in the power of the gentle, energising Spirit. Thanks be to God.

Amen.⁷

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing the offering

Living God, we praise you for all you have done in our lives, for the rich blessings you have bestowed on us. We offer you these gifts as our appreciation of your generosity to us.

Amen.⁸

Hymn:

504 STF – May the mind of Christ my Saviour OR

313 STF – Thine be the glory

Blessing

Jesus is blessing us, if we dare to turn the ‘normal’ on its head. Jesus is blessing us, when we bring the counter culture, when we invite light into the darkness. Jesus is blessing each of us, by his grace.

Go in peace, and serve the Lord.

Amen.⁹

⁷ Prayers of intercession written by Jill Baker

⁸ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁹ Additional prayers by Tim Baker