

# twelvebaskets



## ORDINARY 27C

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

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

**Ordinary 27 - Year C**  
2nd October 2022



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**495 STF – Dear Lord and Father of mankind OR**

**646 STF – Come, and let us sweetly join**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**293 STF – All heaven declares OR**

**463 STF – Deep in the shadows of the past**

Readings: Lamentations 1:1-6; 2 Timothy 1:1-14; Luke 17:5-10

**Hymn:**

**661 STF – Give me the faith which can remove OR**

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

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**696 STF – For the healing of the nations OR**

**682 STF – God of grace and God of glory**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

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

**470 STF – Lord for the years**

Blessing

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**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 mercy, God, by your grace you have called us here.

Guard us and protect us in all that you call us to,  
that we may be strong in our faith, and in our joy and love;  
through Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and always.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## **Hymn:**

495 STF – Dear Lord and Father of mankind OR

646 STF – Come, and let us sweetly join

## **Opening Prayers**

Lord, before us in our readings are the images of something small--the tiny mustard seed, the grain of yeast, the small treasure--they remind us that we, though we think of ourselves as small, are not insignificant in your kingdom.

Open our hearts, our ears and minds to you in thankful remembrance of the ways in which we can serve you throughout all our lives.

Holy God, in a world that often teaches us bigger is better, take away our need for the big possessions. Open our hearts to receive your word of love and healing, and let our spirits be ready to grow for you. Forgive our stubborn resistance to your faithful presence.

*[Pause]*

Thank you Lord, that you forgive and accept us, just as we are, and set us free in Jesus' name.

Giving God, we thank you for the gifts you have given to us. In a time of silence, we name those small gifts that you have blessed us with.

Lord take our offerings of thanksgiving and help us to say thank you a little and often so that we are renewed by your Spirit. Amen

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

## **We say together the Lord's Prayer**

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

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Matthew Forsyth

## All Age Talk

One of the things we often forget easily is that Jesus is surrounded by farmland! Animals and crops were a normal day-to-day occurrence for Jesus. So, Jesus would often use imagery from his surroundings to help people understand what he was saying. Remember, many couldn't read or write at that time!

So, Jesus, one day begins to explain to his friends the disciples about having faith like a mustard seed.

Jesus is reminding his disciples and us that things might look very small at the beginning, but they can become something much bigger and make a huge difference!

So sometimes in life, we can feel rather small. It's not uncommon to feel our actions are not making much difference. Take climate change actions, for example. If you recycle one bottle, that means a light bulb could be powered for 3 hours! Imagine how many light bulbs you could power just by recycling each bottle you use.

Here's another fun fact! Recycling one aluminium can save enough energy to run a 55-inch HDTV to watch your favourite movie.

So you see, your small actions can make a huge difference. What small actions, whether for the planet or someone else, are you going to try?<sup>3</sup>

### Hymn:

293 STF – All heaven declares OR

463 STF – Deep in the shadows of the past

**Readings:** Lamentations 1:1-6; 2 Timothy 1:1-14; Luke 17:5-10

### Hymn:

661 STF – Give me the faith which can remove OR

610 STF – Best of all is God is with us

## Reflections on the reading

Have you come across the social commentator and business consultant Simon Sinek?

He has written a number of influential and interesting books and given several 'Ted Talks' that have helped to shape the way we think about marketing and sociology today. Probably Sinek's most important contribution to thought, however, is what he calls 'the world's simplest idea' – the Golden Circle that is an encouragement to us all to 'find our why'.

Sinek recognises that almost every organisation and person knows *what* they do, and some people are able to articulate *how* they do it, but very few people are able

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

to clearly describe *why* they do what they do. If you imagine these three words: what, how, why in a series of increasingly small circles, then you can see how most people look at the world 'outside-in' – starting with the what and occasionally moving to the why. But a few people, like the computer company Apple, for example, are able to do the opposite – to begin at the middle of the circle, to 'start with the why', and that changes everything about how their customers, staff and the whole world interacts with them. Because Apple might articulate their 'why' as something like: 'in everything we do, we seek to disrupt the status quo', we just happen to do that by making sleek, attractive computers... It's why we trust them, it's why they continue to sell computers, but also tablets, phones, TVs, watches, etc...

Sinek's refrain in all this is: people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it. It's worth hearing that again: people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it.

Perhaps you can already see how this might impact us in our own lives, and particularly our agenda as church. Obviously for us it is not about 'buying' or profit, but the same principles apply. When we articulate who we are as Christians, or what the church is for, do we get stuck at the 'what' of church services, flower rotas, roof repairs and building maintenance? Or are we able to articulate our why? Why do we worship God?

We love, because God first loved us, right? And at the heart of our faith is this wonderful idea of grace. It's such a church-y word isn't it 'grace', but perhaps it helps us find our why, to articulate why we are here. We are here, because we have received so much and we are beginning to accept that, to wrestle with that, to own our own undeserved, but total, acceptance... There are many ways to articulate our 'why' as church, but here is one of them: we are here because everything we have is gift from God, and we gather to worship and give thanks for that fact, and to notice again all that God is doing and calling us to do in our lives.

In our gospel reading today, the disciples crave an increase in their faith, and Jesus reminds them that they have faith enough – even faith the size of a mustard-seed is life-changing, world-transforming. They have received all they need. Everything is gift.

Have you seen the Terrence Malik film, *Tree of Life*? It begins with an evocative couple of minutes that set up the difference between human nature and the way of grace. Grace, the voice over reminds us, 'doesn't try to please itself, accepts being slighted, forgotten, disliked. Accepts insults and injuries.' By contrast, 'human nature only wants to please itself, get others to please it too. Likes to lord it over them, to have its own way. It finds reasons to be unhappy when all the world is shining around it, when love is smiling through all things.'

Grace sounds inviting, right? This way of living where we can accept that everything is gift. That we have not earned anything. That even where we imagine ourselves to have earned our place, our salary, our rewards, we can acknowledge that we have been using gifts, privilege, the resources and things that are beyond our selves. And we can come to see that our bodies, our minds, our imagination, our hopes and dreams and even our faith, they are gift too!

Grace abounds, and it's the great counter-narrative to the American Dream, to capitalism's insistence on meritocracy, on the Protestant work-ethic, on seeing life's

goal as to pull yourself up by the bootstraps, with a bit of elbow grease and a lot of hard work. Grace isn't an invitation into laziness, it's much more radical than that. It's an invitation into letting go control, letting go of the obsession we have with being the best, with ambition, with working too hard, with burnout, with exhausting the resources of the planet in the name of profit and hard work.

When we are talking about grace, it would be remiss not to hear a few words from the theologian Paul Tillich who in *Shaking the Foundations* writes articulately and beautifully about the nature of grace. It's worth quoting this at a little bit of length because it is one of the most incredible passages in Tillich's whole body of work:

Grace strikes us when we are in great pain and restlessness. It strikes us when we walk through the dark valley of a meaningless and empty life. It strikes us when we feel that our separation is deeper than usual... It strikes us when our disgust for our own being, our indifference, our weakness, our hostility, and our lack of direction and composure have become intolerable to us. It strikes us when, year after year, the longed-for perfection of life does not appear... Sometimes at that moment a wave of light breaks into our darkness, and it is as though a voice were saying: "You are accepted. You are accepted, accepted by that which is greater than you, and the name of which you do not know. Do not ask for the name now; perhaps you will find it later. Do not try to do anything now; perhaps later you will do much. Do not seek for anything; do not perform anything; do not intend anything. Simply accept the fact that you are accepted!" If that happens to us, we experience grace. After such an experience we may not be better than before, and we may not believe more than before. But everything is transformed.

It's so good, right!? In our darkest moments, grace is the reminder that we are accepted, accepted by that which is greater than us. Praise God for that!

And, in the spirit of Tillich, this isn't one of those church services where there are lots and lots of things to 'do' afterwards. There is not a long list of suggestions for how you can change the world that comes with this reflection, just an invitation to yourself to think: do I know that I am accepted? Do I live from that truth each day? What do I need to do to hear that voice of acceptance right now, this day?

And, when I'm talking about my faith, how do I articulate that? How can I communicate that my 'why' is – at least in part – about grace? How can I tell my story through the lens of grace?

There has been some research into the roles of parents in bringing up healthy children that has suggested that one of the most important factors (beyond the basics of being able to provide nutritious food, safety, education, etc.), is the parent's ability to tell children about their own failures, how they have responded to them and how the mistakes they have made have helped them to grow and learn in life. The ability to present the narrative of our lives as broken, full of doubt, and yet also rich in wonder and hope. To put it another way – one of the most important roles the parent has in the child's development is to be able to *tell their story through the lens of grace*.

Are you able to do that? What would that look like for you? Can you describe your pain, and how God has been at work amongst it? Can you demonstrate all that you

have received – not by the work of your own hand but because the universe is alive with possibility and with a gift, and we call that aliveness God?

So that's it, folks. That's all there is to it: 'simply accept that you are accepted.'

That's not as simple as Tillich makes it sound, but it is the invitation today, and every day. For some of us, it will take a lifetime to recognise the level to which we are accepted, accepted as we are and by a God who truly loves us. Sometimes it's crystal clear, sometimes it's impossible to imagine.

But, for me, it's the beating heart of Jesus' ministry - he comes, so that we might learn to accept our human bodies (which we are often so cruel about, aren't we?) He comes, so that we might appreciate this earth that we live in, with its seasons, its days, its ecosystems and its beauty. Jesus' incarnational ministry is a reminder to us that creation is a gift, and we should be careful with it.

Jesus comes to show us that God is with us, alongside us. God suffers with us, not observing our pain from a distance, but standing alongside, arms spread wide on the cross. And then, at the heart of the Jesus story, when the darkness and pain is most real, in the midst of the greatest suffering, the light of grace, the light of resurrection breaks through as a reminder that the gift of life comes to us from God and is available to us all.

Paul get's that in his letter to Timothy, which we read earlier. Let's hear again two verses from that passage:

He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

This mysterious, unknowable part of a mysterious unknowable God, this grace is not intangible to us, because it is revealed to us in Christ. We can come to know more of what living from a place of grace looks like because Jesus the Christ embodies grace throughout his ministry. We can learn to see that everything is gift and, as Tillich would say: "we may not be better than before, and we may not believe more than before. But everything is transformed..."<sup>4</sup>

### **Hymn:**

696 STF – For the healing of the nations OR

682 STF – God of grace and God of glory

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Tim Baker

## **Prayers of intercession**

For our intercessions, we will hold three short periods of quiet, in which each of us is invited to bring our own prayers to God.

Firstly, we pray for those close to home, calling to mind the name or the face of somebody in our own family, amongst our church congregation or a close friend. In the quiet, we hold them and their situation up to God.

*[Silence]*

Living God, you know our hearts and our hurts. We commit them to you now, and invite you to come close to those we have prayed for, bringing them your healing, your comfort, your hope.

Secondly, we pray for situations further afield – taking a moment to pray for something we have heard in the news that troubles us, or for someone we have never met but whose story has affected us. In the quiet, we hold these people and situations up to God.

*[Silence]*

Living God, you know the pains of your world. It can feel like a dark world when we switch on the news, or read our newspapers. In the darkness, bring your light. In the conflict, bring your peace. In the brokenness, bring your healing.

*[Silence]*

Finally, we spend a moment praying for the church: perhaps this church congregation, the wider Christian church, or all people of faith. In the quiet, we pray for all who are gathering in worship today.

*[Silence]*

Living God, help us – your people – to be your hands and feet in the world. May we find ways to be an answer to prayer, to bring transformation in our own lives, communities and our world.

We pray these, and all our prayers, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

## **Offering / collection**

Creator God, who made the world out of love and created each of us in your own image, use us now and use these gifts, so that we might create a society where all are blessed, a world where justice and peace reign.

In Jesus' name,  
Amen.

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker



**Hymn:**

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

470 STF – Lord for the years

**Blessing**

Let us go out from here, blessed by our time of worship.

Let us rise up and seek justice and love for all.

Let us be a people of hope and faith,

In Jesus' name,

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

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