

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 33C

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

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Ordinary 33 - Year C
13th November 2022



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

162 STF – The prophets' voice comes down the years OR

343 STF – All my days I will sing this song of gladness

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

775 STF – Ewe, thina (We walk his way) OR

134 STF – Christ whose glory fills the skies

Readings: Isaiah 65:17-25; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Luke 21:5-19

Hymn:

526 STF – Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy OR

185 STF – Sing we the King who is coming to reign

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

738 STF – There is a new heaven; there is a new earth OR

633 STF – My soul finds rest in God alone

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

350 STF – I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship OR

611 STF – Brother, sister, let me serve you

Blessing

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[Before the service, the All Age Talk will require some sticky notes and pens to be placed around the seating area, and a large heart to be drawn on flipchart paper]

Call to worship

This is the Lord's Day, and on this day of remembrance, we come to you in worship, in gratitude, and in prayers for peace.

As we remember wars past, grieve for wars current, and pray for future peace, show us how to follow you as we pray, listen, sing, share and reflect today.

Come amongst us, by your Spirit, Lord

Amen.¹

Hymn:

162 STF – The prophets' voice comes down the years OR

343 STF – All my days I will sing this song of gladness

Opening Prayers

Compassionate and steadfast Lord of all,
As we come together today to worship you,
To remember what has been,
and commemorate the lives lost in the pursuit of peace,
we bring all that we have and are into your presence.

We come to say sorry, knowing that you forgive and accept us, just as we are.
We come to praise and give thanks.

We ask that our songs of praise may be like honey to your ears,
that our words of confession and forgiveness will be a balm to us all,
and, that we will grow closer to you and one another,
as we remember, we listen, we learn, and we pray.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

[Before the service, it will require some sticky notes and pens to be placed around the seating area, and a large heart to be drawn on flipchart paper]

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Sheila Matthews

Today is that Sunday where we all take a moment to remember those that have died in conflicts. It's held on this Sunday because it is the closest Sunday to Armistice Day, or the day that the fighting stopped in World War One. Across the UK there will be memorials where we have a chance to remember those that have fallen. We'll be having a two-minute silence at 11am to represent the silence of the guns that stopped firing.

Remembrance Sunday is also a time to remember that while we are gathered here today, there are still conflicts around the world. Conflicts even like the one in the Ukraine, had not started this time last year. We hope and pray for peace across the world, but let us give thanks, like we do today, for those that go to fight for peace.

We pray that one day there will be no more war. That there will be a time, as it says in Micah 4, that "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."

As today is a day to remember, for our prayer today, please take the Post-It notes out from in front of you. As our prayer today, I would like you all to write down a name of something you want to place on God's heart. Be it a conflict, someone who has died, someone who is fighting their own battle, or something else.

[Invite those who have written their sticky note to bring it forward to place it on God's heart. After the last one has been stuck, read the following prayer].

God of love and peace,

We bring to you all these people, places, and situations that need to feel your love. We remember those who have died in conflicts, those who lived through them, and those who still experience conflicts today.

May peace come to these conflicts.

In your name,

Amen.³

Hymn:

775 STF – Ewe, thina (We walk his way) OR

134 STF – Christ whose glory fills the skies

Readings: Isaiah 65:17-25; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Luke 21:5-19

Hymn:

526 STF – Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy OR

185 STF – Sing we the King who is coming to reign

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Annan-Hood

Reflections on the readings

Isaiah 65 is a promise. “See I will create a new heavens and a new earth!” - the broken world we live in is not the end; darkness will not have the final word.

One way to read God’s promises throughout the Bible is that they are something we have no part in, something beyond us, that if we passively hang around we might get to see these promises completed, if we’re lucky. Or otherwise it might be something we are rewarded with when we die for a life faithfully lived - nothing to do with this life or this world.

Today, however, reading Isaiah 65 in the context of 2 Thessalonians and Luke 21, I’d like to suggest that we are called, as Christ-followers, to be active participants in bringing about God’s promise for a new heavens and a new earth in the here and now. We are called to get stuck in bringing them about.

Luke 21 is another kind of prophesy; Jesus speaking of the trials and tribulations to come for his followers. Some theologians think that these times that Jesus speak of are end times; the birthing pains for the new heavens and the new earth. Others believe that these times came not long after Jesus’s death, perhaps even in the disciples’ own life times - they did, after all, experience their fair share of persecution. When do you think these times of war, betrayal, earthquakes, famines and pestilences refers to? Some of you might even think it is the ongoing state of the world we live in; a world crying out to be made new.

For me, I look around at the world and I see signs of great hope. Hope that a new heaven and a new earth is being born into existence now. Walking through the countryside as the shadows grow long and the swallows swoop and dive, I think I see a glimpse of God’s creation that is full of joy and celebration. Meeting a friend’s brand-new baby recently, I was caught with a lump in my throat at the reminder that God is constantly making new things.

But I also look around and see that the world is caught up in the crises that Jesus predicts in Luke 2. This winter we know that the cost of living crisis is exacerbating poverty and increasing inequality. 2022 has been a year in which we’ve been reminded that war in Europe is not a thing of the past, and that mindless violence at the hands of cruel dictators is still a reality of this world and for too many people’s lives.

It feels, to me at least, that both the prophecy of Isaiah 65 and Luke 21 are struggling against one another today.

What do we do with this? With daily struggle we see between joy and hope and rejoicing, and pain and suffering and strife?

I wonder if a very natural instinct for many of us is to find ourselves in paralysis; if it feels that there is nothing we can do, let’s do nothing.

I think Paul, in Thessalonians, is writing to a people who have run out of ideas. Perhaps my natural instinct isn’t to frame this like Paul did: “We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies” although I’m sure that approach works for some! My instinct is to remember that God’s grace extends

into our paralysis, and finds us there to bestow forgiveness and comfort. And with God's grace, I hope, comes a newness of spirit and a reminder not to give up. As I see it - and of course you may see it differently - the earth is groaning with the attempt to give birth to the newness that Isaiah speaks of, whilst suffering continues. God's grace allows us, even when we're overcome by the suffering, not to give up and to lean into new life, new hope, new creation.

What does this look like? Not giving up?

Perhaps some of you feel you're already working hard - too hard(?) to maintain a church life for you and your community.

Perhaps some of you feel a bit lost as to what working hard might look like.

Are you asking: what is it I'm called to? What does doing good look like in my life?

I think for those answers, we might look to the details of Isaiah 65, because Isaiah offers us a blueprint for what we might be working for as followers of Christ. If you'll indulge me, I'll read a portion of this again:

Never again will there be in it
 an infant who lives but a few days,
 or an old man who does not live out his years;
the one who dies at a hundred
 will be thought a mere child;
the one who fails to reach a hundred
 will be considered accursed.
They will build houses and dwell in them;
 they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
No longer will they build houses and others live in them,
 or plant and others eat.
For as the days of a tree,
 so will be the days of my people;
my chosen ones will long enjoy
 the work of their hands.
They will not labour in vain,
 nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune;
for they will be a people blessed by the Lord,
 they and their descendants with them.
Before they call I will answer;
 while they are still speaking I will hear.
The wolf and the lamb will feed together,
 and the lion will eat straw like the ox,
 and dust will be the serpent's food.
They will neither harm nor destroy
 on all my holy mountain,"
says the Lord.

In this passage we have:

- Everyone living long and healthy lives
- Folk living in stable homes that they own themselves
- People living off the land - planting and harvesting

- People being productive - working hard and seeing the fruits of their labour
- Natural enemies living peacefully alongside one another.

Perhaps doing the good work of the kingdom of God involves bringing this about. So, whilst I think this isn't an exhaustive list, perhaps doing work that encourages the world to look like this is what it means for us not to give up, not to tire of doing what is good, and to keep living Christ-like lives. So,

If you're a health care professional, or a home builder or maker or dweller, God bless you.

If you're a farmer or a baker or a butcher or a cook then God bless you.

If you're a peace-maker or a care-taker or a justice-seeker, God bless you.

If you can glimpse the kingdom breaking through, God bless you - may you spot it, share it, and nurture it into being.

Stand firm, hold fast, and never tire of doing what is good. And perhaps, if you're still lost as to what you might do to help bring about God's promises, might I suggest that we begin by speaking the good news? The good news that God is creating a new heaven and new earth and that while sometimes you have to look closely to see it, it's there; darkness doesn't have the last word.

And if even that feels too much, then remember this: God is God. He's creating a new heaven and a new earth. Even if sometimes it feels like the darkness is winning, God continues to whisper hope into being.

Amen.

Some questions for reflection *[could be done in groups at this point, or left with people to take home and discuss with each other or with friends / neighbours]*:

- What signs of hope are you seeing?
- And what signs of end times?
- What do you think you might be called to do to bring God's promises about?⁴

Hymn:

738 STF – There is a new heaven; there is a new earth OR

633 STF – My soul finds rest in God alone

Prayers of intercession

Today we will use the simple call and response:

For all you have done,

We remember.

⁴ Reflection written by Lucy Zwolinska

Loving Saviour,

We pray for our world knowing that the peace you bring is not reaching every part of this beautiful planet. We pray for the conflicts happening around the world which do not seem to be ending.

We ask Lord that there will be a shift in the course of these wars, that where fighting continues there will be diplomacy and ceasefires. We pray that the memories and lessons from the World Wars would be at the forefront of the world leaders' minds and that your Spirit will be at work to bring reconciliation, negotiation and hope.

For all you have done,

We remember.

Almighty One,

We pray for our country and its leaders. In a time of uncertainty when many people are struggling financially and emotionally, we pray that our leaders will have clear vision and understanding about how to look after us.

We pray that there will be unity and stability, and politics that places the needs of the people at the heart of their decisions. Please give our leaders, locally and nationally, willing ears to listen to what the communities care about and need. Guide our government and give them the skills they need to be good leaders.

For all you have done,

We remember.

God of all,

We pray for our local community and its people. We thank you for each person who uniquely contributes to making our church, our area, what it is. We pray that you will use us to be beacons of hope and light, bringing your good news wherever you take us.

We pray that our community leaders will work well together, and they will not be burdened by their responsibilities but filled with wisdom and enthusiasm for the tasks they face. We pray for all members of our community, the young and old, the happy and the hurting, the lonely and lost, the celebrating and commiserating. We thank you that no matter what our circumstances, you remain the same.

For all you have done,

We remember.

Light of the world,

We pray for ourselves, taking this moment of silence to bring before you the things that lay heavy on our hearts and minds. [silence] We ask, Lord, that you would bring your light into the places that feel dark to us. Give us hope and encouragement to know that you see and hear all that we experience. We pray for those in our families and communities who are sick and in need of healing.

For all you have done,

We remember.

Prince of Peace,

We thank you for this annual reminder, when we stop and reflect on the wars that changed the world forever. We remember the people who have served in the armed forces and lost their lives in the pursuit of peace.

We honour their memories and pray that we will never forget the cost of war and its ripples of grief. We pray that we will strive to seek peace at home and beyond, and work to build a world that reflects your nature.

For all you have done,

We remember.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

God of each moment, we thank you for this time and space,

And the gifts here in our hands.

Help us to put them to use wisely and creatively,

That goodness and grace and joy and love and peace may increase.

We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen.

Hymn:

350 STF – I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship OR

611 STF – Brother, sister, let me serve you

Blessing

On this day of remembrance, may you go out into the world and remember, be present to those around you, may you appreciate the big story that you are a part of,

And may the prince of peace rule in your heart.

Amen.⁶

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Sheila Matthew

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker