

# twelvebaskets



## ORDINARY 20B

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

Produced by **twelvebaskets**. Subscription available from **[theworshipcloud.com](http://theworshipcloud.com)**

**Ordinary 20 - Year B**  
18th August 2024



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise OR**

**74 STF – For the music of creation**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**78 STF – Give thanks with a grateful heart OR**

**82 STF – O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder**

Readings: 1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14; Psalm 111; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58

**Hymn:**

**579 STF – Come, Holy Ghost, your influence shed OR**

**370 STF – Breathe on me, Breath of God**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**577 STF – Bread of life, hope of the world OR**

**587 STF – I am the bread, the bread of life**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**545 STF – Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart OR**

**504 STF – May the mind of Christ my Saviour**

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**

As together we come to worship God,  
Let us praise the Lord

### **Great are the works of the Lord.**

He is steadfast and faithful, gracious and merciful,  
He provides our food

### **Great are the works of the Lord.**

He has saved us, made a covenant with us  
And taught us that to fear Him is the beginning of wisdom

### **Great are the works of the Lord.**

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## **Hymn:**

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise OR

74 STF – For the music of creation

## **Opening Prayers**

Father God,  
How we want to worship you.

How we long to feel that you are present with us in our waking and our dreaming.

We say that we want you to be the centre of our lives,  
But all too often we are distracted by day-to-day life.

Sometimes we revel in good food, designer labels, comfortable homes  
And the enjoyment of our creature comforts,  
We act as if seeking life's 'little luxuries' are an important goal in life.

At other times we worry about things over which we have no control  
Or those that are not of ultimate concern.

God of David and of Solomon,  
Speak to us ,  
Enable us to discern your will,  
Forgive us and reorder our values,  
Help us to live as wise people.  
Henceforth, let us walk before you in faithfulness and in righteousness.

We ask this in the name of the One who came to show us the Way,  
And who died that we might live, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Call to worship written by Wendy Kilworth-Mason

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Wendy Kilworth-Mason

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

### **All Age Talk**

*(Preparation: Whiteboard, Flipchart Paper, and/or sticky notes. For the ability to write up clearly words as they are said from the congregation.)*

For the next few moments, can I have a volunteer who can clearly write up here words as they are called out?

*(Acquire Volunteer)*

This is going to sound like the start of a bad joke; What do you call a group of Christians?

*(Have the congregation shout out responses, and have the names put up on the board. After getting a dozen or so)*

All of these are great ways to describe a group of Christians. Now, the thing that links all of these labels is, at the core, Jesus. To be a Christian is to be a follower of Christ Jesus. Different groups of Christians since the earliest days of the church have done this a little differently and continue to do so even today; but the core is that we all profess to follow Jesus.

That's a big thing, because even now we like to divide ourselves up into smaller groups as a way of both supporting and protecting ourselves. We divide ourselves based on the sports we play, the schools we go to, the streets we live on, if we're a fan of DC or Marvel comics, if we like Star Wars or Star Trek, if we are fans of Coronation Street or EastEnders, and even down to if we are Apple or Android users. And yet! Jesus unites us all, no matter who we are, into one group.

There is no gate keeping or barriers to anyone who says they are a Christian. Because to be a Christian is to simply follow Jesus. Is that how we live this out here, in this church? Is it what your friends think of you?

Let us pray.

God, who has been there since the beginning, be with us now. Help us to be the warm and welcoming embrace to those around us, that we may show the love of Jesus to all, and work together with those around us to become more like Jesus day by day.

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

### **Hymn:**

78 STF – Give thanks with a grateful heart OR

82 STF – O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder

**Readings:** 1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14; Psalm 111; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58

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<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by Tim Annan-Hood

## Hymn:

579 STF – Come, Holy Ghost, your influence shed OR

370 STF – Breathe on me, Breath of God

## Reflections on the readings

*1. Have you ever experienced the death of a monarch and the accession of his/her successor? Have you lived through a significant change of government? What was being discussed at the time, in the media, at your table and in the places where you met with friends? What were your hopes and dreams?*

Have you been following the story of David, perhaps in public worship or private devotions owing to the Revised Common Lectionary readings assigned for the last several weeks? Today's Old Testament lesson brings the story of David to its close and states that Solomon has succeeded to the throne of his father.

In the UK we have long had the tradition of primogeniture, giving the eldest son of the monarch right to succeed (though a recent law change would make it possible for the first born of either gender to ascend the throne) but in Israel there was no such (automatic) right. Indeed, Solomon was not David's eldest son but rather the preferred son, born to Bathsheba. Despite David favouring him (in honour of a promise made to Bathsheba) it was not evident that he would succeed.

Hidden behind the bland words of 1 Kings 2.12, "his kingdom was firmly established," is the story, as told in the remainder of Chapter 2, of how Solomon ruthlessly obliterated any possible rivals to his throne and settled some scores with certain of David's past political opponents (as his dying father had recommended). Solomon may have been very young, possibly still a teenager, but he could be pitiless and vindictive. In a context where a King both reigned and ruled and where, at need, he might be expected to command his armies, Solomon had proved himself a strong King, a worthy successor to David. The words of the Deuteronomic Historian (the editor/redactor of 1 Kings) confirm that Solomon had stamped his authority upon his Kingdom. The people, therefore, need not fear a period of instability following the end of the 40-year reign of David.

Throughout his reign, Solomon consolidated his position by making marriage alliances, marrying the daughters of foreign princes. At the beginning of 1 Kings 3 we are told of his marriage to a daughter of Pharaoh, ensuring that Israel would not be threatened by Egypt. Peace was assured.

*2. Is ruthlessness a quality we admire? What are the qualities we look for in our (political) leaders?*

Following the statement about the ascent to the throne of the new monarch, most of the remainder of the passage that we have read today is about an encounter between Solomon and God.

Having recounted Solomon's murderous activities, the Deuteronomic Historian then says that Solomon loved the Lord and followed the example of David by offering regular worship. However, does he sound a warning about the future in disclosing that Solomon went to worship at the high places: Canaanite shrines on the mountain tops? Solomon's favoured site was at Gibeon, about 6 miles from Jerusalem, where he offered 1,000 burnt offerings. Why did Solomon worship there? The author points out that he had yet to build God's temple in Jerusalem, so where was an appropriate place to worship? Was he reclaiming, for Yahweh, what had previously been a pagan altar or was he already displaying the

syncretistic attitudes that the Historian goes on to decry? We might be forgiven for wondering whether, at the outset, Solomon was genuinely committed to Yahweh-God.

Nevertheless, it is at Gibeon that Yahweh-God appears to Solomon in a dream. We can think about the significance of revelations in dreams in the Bible: e.g. In the Old Testament Jacob, Joseph and Daniel have dreams, as do the New Testament characters Joseph and the Magi. This dream is of a private meeting between Solomon and Yahweh-God (and it is the last time, according to the Old Testament, that God reveals Himself directly to a King).

God opens the conversation by saying to Solomon, "Ask what I should give you." (1 Kings 3.5). Seemingly, Solomon could have asked for absolutely anything! However, Solomon responds to God with humility, recalling how God was with David and acknowledging that it is God who has made him, Solomon, king in place of his father, despite his relative youth. Solomon humbles himself before God. Then Solomon asks for "an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil, for who can govern this great people of yours?" (1 Kings 3.9).

Solomon has asked well, he hasn't asked for wealth, health or anything else specifically for himself. In this instance, is it his true character that is revealed? Here is a young King who desires to be a good ruler of his (God-given) people. Solomon's request is pleasing to God. He (Yahweh-God) feeds back to Solomon, that he has requested "understanding to discern what is right" (1 Kings 3.11)--that could be read as being slightly different in tone than Solomon's words.

Yahweh-God gives Solomon a wise and discerning mind and also promises him both riches and honour. No one will be as wise as Solomon nor will any other King compare with him for riches and honour, provided that he walks in God's ways as did David.

Then Solomon woke from his dream. He returned to Jerusalem and worshipped before the Ark of the Covenant.

Having established himself as King, he was assured of God's blessing, provided that he did God's will. The next story in 1 Kings is of Solomon famously exercising that wisdom in a judgement between two women, each of whom claim to be mother to a child.

*3. Do those who rule/reign over us consider themselves to be under the authority of God? What should be the place of religious belief and commitment in a post-modern State? Do we want a King like Solomon?*

How does this story speak to us?

The Deuteronomic Historian believes that the Kingdom will only prosper if a God-fearing King, who obeys the Commandments and keeps the Covenant, rules and reigns. In our culture, do we concentrate too much upon trying to identify the party whose policies will most benefit us rather than asking our politicians about their underlying values? Should we keep religion out of politics, or should we reclaim an understanding of our being a 'Christian nation?'

As we look at the character of Solomon, we have observed that he could be ruthless in the elimination of political opponents and potential rivals to his throne, yet he could humble himself before God. Like his father, David, he had certain abilities, character traits and propensities that could make him a worthy King but he was also a flawed human being. Nevertheless, God used him.

Our political leaders are often flawed, as are we. If we dare to dream, could God use them and us in the discernment of what is right?

Let's hope that we can be a nation and a people under God. Amen.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Wendy Kilworth-Mason

## **Hymn:**

577 STF – Bread of life, hope of the world OR

587 STF – I am the bread, the bread of life

## **Prayers of intercession**

Creator God, as we enjoy the warmth of the summer season, we thank you for the beauty, the bounty and the wonders of the earth. Help us all to be good stewards who care for the environment, for our own sake, for that of others and of generations to come.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who rule and reign over us and the nations of the world. Grant them wisdom and right discernment. Be close to all who govern ensuring the decisions that they make, day by day, are made for the benefit all of the people. Let there be justice and accountability in decision-making.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

As we respond, prayerfully, to what we have heard in the news recently.

We pray for the people who have been forced to flee for their lives, often to places that may offer little by way of sanctuary. We remember the victims of wars and natural disasters as we pray for stricken nations. Wherever there is war, pestilence, famine, flood or fire, help us to work to bring peace, healing, help and hope.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Father, God we pray for our families, friends and neighbours, holding in our thoughts and prayers all who are ill in body or mind. We acknowledge that medical concerns and complaints continue to affect the lives of so many. We pray for those who minister to them in their infirmity, be they health care professionals, carers or family.

May your peace and love surround them bringing with it comfort and strength.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Healing God we pray for this our church, giving thanks that we are able to gather together in worship. We remember those lost to us, whom we miss, and give thanks for lives lived faithfully. Be in and with our church, as we seek your wisdom as we grapple with the ever present need for change and the reality of a future that may be going to be somewhat different from our past.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Faithful God receive these our intercessions on behalf of the church and the world.

Hear our prayers, we pray.

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

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

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Wendy Kilworth-Mason

God of grace,  
For all we have received, make us thankful,  
For all who are gathered here, may we be grace-filled,  
For all that is to come, may we be inspired by your love for us,  
Amen.<sup>6</sup>

**Hymn:**

545 STF – Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart OR  
504 STF – May the mind of Christ my Saviour

**Blessing**

Go out and be the people Christ has called you to be,  
Go and be the very best, very fullest version of yourself.  
May your potential be fulfilled, in Jesus' name,  
Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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

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