

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 20C

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

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Ordinary 20 - Year C
14th August 2022



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

186 STF – Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord! OR

250 STF – Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

15 STF – The splendour of the King OR

364 STF – O for a thousand tongues to sing

Readings: Isaiah 5:1-7; Hebrews 11:29-12:2; Luke 12:49-56

Hymn:

297 STF – Christ is alive! Let Christians sing OR

564 STF – O thou who camest from above

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

660 STF – Called by Christ to be disciples OR

746 STF – For all the saints who showed your love

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

338 STF – There is a Redeemer OR

486 STF – Who would true valour see

Blessing

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Call to worship

God is here, in this space.
We are gathered, seeking to worship, to grow and to learn.
God of all love,
Come amongst us, show us how to follow you.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

186 STF – Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord! OR
250 STF – Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult

Opening Prayers

Leader: God of the miraculous and mundane,
You have marked out a race for us.
We may be weary today,
We may grow tired,
But you have set your hope within us
And you sustain us.

Response: **Restore us, O God, make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.**

Leader: We fix our eyes on Jesus,
The pioneer and perfecter of faith.
We look to his example of faithfulness,
Friendship and endurance,
And ask that our hearts will be renewed and encouraged.

Response: **Restore us, O God, make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.**

Leader: In a world with divisions,
Disagreements and pain,
We pray that you will bring healing,
Wholeness,
And wisdom as we seek to build your kingdom on earth.

Response: **Restore us, O God, make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.**

Leader: May we be reminded that a cloud of witnesses surround us,
An eternal family awaits us,
And our saviour walks with us.

Amen.²

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Sheila Matthews

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Today we are thinking a little bit about the stories we tell, and our place within them. We will be reflecting a bit on our heritage as a Christian Church and what that means – who are the people who have gone before us in order to shape our stories and give us our place in history? How does the way we talk about our faith affect how others respond? How can we use the Jesus stories to help shape and mould our lives today?

All these are important questions for us, today and every day. I wonder how you think about your story – are you a reflective sort of person who thinks about the story of your life and how it might be mapped out? One fun way of reflecting on how you see yourself, which I won't ask you to do now, but which is a fun thing to chat about over coffee or on your way home after our service is to ask – which actor or actress would I like to play me in the story of my own life? Choose carefully!

Our stories are powerful tools to enable us to change and develop, whether they are a few chapters long or whether we already have enough words to fill several volumes. How do you use yours? Can you use your stories better to encourage and enable those around you?

Rob Bell, the American pastor and thinker, talks about the importance of being able to “tell your story through the lens of grace”. What he means is that we can look back on our lives so far and notice the ways that God has been at work, both in the moments of great joy and also of great pain. He also means that we are able to reflect on how bad things might have happened to us and we have had terribly difficult and shameful moments – but we are still here. We might even be going through a tough time right now – but perhaps we are able to catch a glimpse of grace, the elusive but ever-present nature of God that is always on offer, no matter how we ‘feel’.

Telling our stories through the lens of grace enables us to own the painful parts of our lives, and it enables our stories to become something of an encouragement to others. It means the story you tell around the dinner table, over the coffee, in the Post Office queue, it means that story can become an encounter with the God of grace for someone else. Can we learn that precious, gentle skill again today?

So, as we tell our stories, as we reflect on each day, as you tell someone you know very well or someone you have never met a bit about your life, are you able to show them the grace of God?³

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

Hymn:

15 STF – The splendour of the King OR

364 STF – O for a thousand tongues to sing

Readings: Isaiah 5:1-7; Hebrews 11:29-12:2; Luke 12:49-56

Hymn:

297 STF – Christ is alive! Let Christians sing OR

564 STF – O thou who camest from above

Reflections on the reading

Who do you think you are?

That's not intended to be a provocative question, but for those of you who are familiar with the BBC programme, you'll understand the reference. In remembering the past, we somehow find a sense of who we are.

In a fairly recent episode, Matt Lucas discovered how members of his family were arrested, imprisoned and murdered during World War II for no other reason than being Jewish. The episode entwined Lucas' family journey with that of the horrendous shame of the Holocaust. It's a powerful telling of history and if you haven't seen the episode, it's highly recommended.

The writer of Hebrews is no stranger to understanding the importance of individual history entangled with the history of a nation. Our Hebrews reading recalls several figures: some mentioned by name, others just a reference, some better known to us, others less known. The common thread – that all these people had faith. They're called upon to inspire us, to give us confidence, to remind us that God works through people throughout the ages – and to give us confidence that 'we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us' (Hebrews 12:1).

The writer of Hebrews wants us to acknowledge those who have gone before, the great faith they've had and for us to see where they drew their power from.

Yet, this 'great cloud of witnesses' doesn't just include those from ancient times recorded in the Bible, it includes people throughout history who have responded to God's love and devoted their lives in service – and this includes people who have shaped our faith.

Who might you include in that 'great cloud of witnesses'? What about people who you knew? People who shaped your faith? Inspired you? Made God's love known to you?

If you were to write a short paragraph for a passage like Hebrews, what details about their faith would you include? I wonder what are the kind of things that we remember people for?

There's that famous quote, the one that says people will forget what you say or do, but will never forget how you made them feel. We remember people because we glimpsed something special of the love of God in them. Perhaps when they took time out of their busy day to truly listen to us, perhaps when we were in need and they responded with just what we needed, perhaps when they made our worries seem like they weren't just ours to carry and they stood up for something that mattered. The *Song of the Vineyard* in our Isaiah reading recalls how God gave the Israelites a home – a beautiful garden – and planted them as a vine, ready to grow fruit and be a blessing to the world. For Israel's purpose was to be a blessing to the world – they were blessed and chosen to bless others so that this cycle of blessing would continue.

But the song explains that the fruit was not good: the Israelites did not seek justice and bless others as God had blessed them. They were so focused on self-preservation that they neglected their call to be a blessing and share God's inclusive love and justice with the world.

We know the story of Israel – eventually they were forced into exile and lost their land. The Biblical narrators attempt to tell us why. They conclude that their decline is because they neglected to follow God's instruction – they stopped being God's people, set apart to bless the world.

Yet, removing the land wasn't the end for Israel. God remains with them in exile and much of their deepened faith comes from within exile – God is committed and is not going to give up, even if things have to change.

Sometimes we can get our priorities wrong. We focus on what we think is important and forget the justice that God calls us to. How many of us are so busy maintaining buildings, or worship the way we've always had it, or different church activities, that we forget we're called to something greater?

How many of us are so caught up in maintaining the way things have been that we forget how we're making people feel when they come looking for a glimpse of God's love? Are we being remembered for the way we witness God's love, or are we busy people looking after our own?

Our Gospel reading is hard to swallow – it's fire and division – not sweetness and comfort. But God burns with the fire of justice. We are called to walk away from things that deny life for others – even if they've been precious to us, or to saints that have gone before us. Discerning God's will may mean disagreeing with others. We have this moment in time to share God's love with others – to tell of the faith that has been passed to us as we continue to run the race ahead of us. All the examples in the Hebrews reading are different – they each witness the story of faith in their own way. We have to ask what is our way to witness the faith? Will we respond to God's love and bear good fruit – or will we grow rotten grapes?

There have been too many times when the Church has been silent on matters of injustice or has been too slow to respond or has been part of causing the injustice. In our calling to be faithful disciples, let us not forget what it means to follow Christ and have a place in the 'great cloud of witnesses'.

In his episode, Matt Lucas journeyed through a horrendous history of individual stories, of despicable torture and abuse, of murder and evil that denied the justice of God for so many Jewish people. He discovered the journey that had shaped his grandmother and why she never wished to speak of her past. But he also discovered how she went on to share God's love with others through the work she did in helping those seeking new lives and new beginnings – now that was responding to God's love for the sake of the world.

We remember the 'great cloud of witnesses' as our hope in running the race. We remember the faith they've passed to us. So let us join that 'great cloud' and respond to God's love by seeking justice.⁴

Hymn:

660 STF – Called by Christ to be disciples OR

746 STF – For all the saints who showed your love

Prayers of intercession

God of burning justice,
be the fire that burns in our hearts,
so that we may respond to your love by acting justly.

We give thanks for all those who have witnessed your love and faith.

Silence

Like them, may we respond to your love
and be a blessing to others.

We pray for those who suffer in the midst of war, hatred and division.

Silence

May we respond to your love
and be a blessing to others.

We pray for those who are isolated, neglected or ill.

Silence

May we respond to your love
and be a blessing to others.

We pray for those who are treated unjustly, discriminated against or abused.

Silence

May we respond to your love
and be a blessing to others.

We pray for Jewish people, our siblings in faith.

Silence

⁴ Reflection written by Gary Hopkins

May we respond to your love
and be a blessing to others.

We pray for the Church, that it may be a place of justice and inclusive love.

Silence

May we respond to your love
and be a blessing to others.

We pray for our own needs and the needs of people we know.

Silence

May we respond to your love
and be a blessing to others.

God of burning justice,
be the fire that burns in our hearts,
so that we may respond to your love by acting justly.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing the offering

Take these gifts, Lord God, and use them to build your Kingdom Lord, that we might make justice and peace a reality, in Jesus' name.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

338 STF – There is a Redeemer OR
486 STF – Who would true valour see

Blessing

We worship you, O God,
For you are good.
We sing your praises, O God,
For you are everything to us.
We leave this place to follow you and seek more of your ways.

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Gary Hopkins

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker