

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 21C

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

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

Ordinary 21 - Year C
21st August 2022



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

782 STF – Thuma mina (Send me, Lord) OR

132 STF – O God, our help in ages past

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

247 STF – I danced in the morning when the world was begun OR

152 STF – This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made

Readings: Jeremiah 1:4-10; Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 13:10-17

Hymn:

534 STF – Eternal God, we praise your love OR

702 STF – I will speak out for those who have no voices

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

552 STF – Here am I, Lord, I've come to do your will OR

660 STF – Called by Christ to be disciples

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

655 STF – We cannot measure how you heal or answer every sufferer's prayer OR

653 STF – O Christ, the Healer, we have come to pray for health, to plead for friends

Blessing

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.

Copyright for content is retained by the original author / contributor.

www.theworshipcloud.com

Call to worship

Oh God, our rock of refuge and our strong fortress,
we come to worship you,
confident in your welcome,
your love,
and your saving grace. Amen.¹

Hymn:

782 STF – Thuma mina (Send me, Lord) OR

132 STF – O God, our help in ages past

Opening Prayers

The Lord is our refuge,
Our strong tower,
The rock we can build our lives upon.

With our voices joined together we will praise you.
Every breath we take is noted and known,
Every moment is seen;
You will never put us to shame
but instead give us the safety of your arms to return to
as we live our lives.

As we enter this time of worship,
We pray that our words of adoration,
Our heartfelt confessions,
And our affirmations of faith will be acceptable to you.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

For this activity, it is best if everyone has a piece of paper and a pen / pencil, but if that is not possible, you just need to ask people to imagine this exercise, or to take time to do it later in the day / week.

Later in our service, we will hear a famous passage from the Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah, in which he talks about how God knows each and every one of us, before we were even born, and even before that. God knows and loves us, and invites us to

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Sheila Matthews

be a part of the divine plan for making the world a better, safer, more loving place. All we have to do is respond to the invitation.

An important way we can do that is to see the relationships we have and the connections in our lives. Throughout Jesus' ministry we see him using his friendships, his relationships, his connections to help spread the good news about the Kingdom of God and about God's love for the whole world. And we can do the same.

So, using the paper and pens/pencils you have in front of you – or, using your mind to picture this – draw a circle in the middle of the paper and write your own name in it. Then draw some more circles around that, getting bigger each time. You might like to add two or three or even four circles.

Into these other circles, write down the names of people to whom you have a connection. Perhaps you might put your close friends and family in the inner circle. Your neighbours and work colleagues in the next one. And other connections, like the lady who works in the Post Office or the bar staff at your 'local' in the outer circle. You can write people's names if you know them, or use another way to describe them (e.g. 'colleagues'). We'll give you a few minutes to do that now, but you might also like to keep returning to the exercise, throughout the service and the week ahead, as people occur to you.

[Give people space to do the exercise].

Let us pray.

Loving God, we thank you for our friends, our family, our relationships and our connections.

We pray for each of the people named during the last few minutes – those we have written down, those we have thought of.

Loving God, you know each of them – just as you know each of us – better than we know ourselves. Help us to bring, and to be, good news to people in our lives.

Amen.³

Hymn:

247 STF – I danced in the morning when the world was begun OR

152 STF – This is the day, this is the day that the Lord has made

Readings: Jeremiah 1:4-10; Hebrews 12:18-29; Luke 13:10-17

Hymn:

534 STF – Eternal God, we praise your love OR

702 STF – I will speak out for those who have no voices

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

Reflections on the reading

Today's gospel reading has always been an important and formational one for me. Jesus the healer, the bringer of good news, demonstrating that he won't be held back by the systems and structures of his day, or the religious institution he is operating within.

It seems to me to be a story about priorities, and the dangers of being overly pious. Pious was a title taken by many of the popes in the early part of the Catholic Church's history, but the word has increasingly become associated with the kind of religious behaviour that Wesley might have called 'a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power.' There is some piousness (is that even a word?) in this story, and there is definitely some confusion about priorities, which Jesus identifies and calls out.

The synagogue leader in this story demonstrates the pious, rule-bound attitude in verse 11 when he says his line with what the NIV translates as 'indignance': "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath."

He's read the rulebook. He knows what is and isn't allowed. And he's determined to stick to it. But this is where Jesus questions the priorities of the rule-book, and sets up an alternative to the pious narrative of rule-following: so, you'd happily take your donkey for a drink, but you wouldn't help a suffering woman? What does this say about your priorities? What does this say about your pious rulebook?

Getting a drink for the donkey is, of course, not just an act of kindness towards an animal (which it is – to a certain extent), it is also an investment in your own wealth. Animal ownership was (and in many parts of the world, still is) a marker of wealth so this sabbath behaviour that Jesus is criticising was as much about investing in and protecting your possessions as anything else. And Jesus is pointing out that people are happy to prioritise their own wealth, but not the wellbeing or health of a woman who would have been at the margins of society because of her affliction. The system is broken. The rules aren't working for everyone. It's time to re-think.

Which sounds a lot like how the great innovators and entrepreneurs have thought about rules and regulations for centuries, and are doing again today. Recognising that systems and structures and rules have value, but they need rethinking and rewriting as societies change and as people come to see the rules as an end in themselves, rather than a means of grace. Many of the large institutions that have been built over the last few centuries (and even millennia) are struggling to stay relevant and alive in the twenty-first century, because they are clinging too tightly to systems and structures that need rethinking and rewriting. The established church denominations in the UK probably all fit into this generalisation to one extent or another...

At this point, I'd like to introduce an idea that comes from the business world, but has been used by the missiologist Alan Hirsch to apply to church. This is about the difference between a spider and a starfish. Traditional, hierarchical organisations operate like spiders. They have a head, and several 'legs' (which are probably called 'departments' or 'teams' or 'faculties'). Most spiders can function with one or two or even three dysfunctional or missing legs (departments) but if more and more fail, so will the whole spider. And, of course; if you cut off a spider's head - it's dead.

So, in difficult and trying times, when the spider is put under pressure, the whole thing is vulnerable to attack. And the only way the spider can 'grow' is to consume more of the world around it....

Contrast that with the starfish. Movements, and some modern, more flexible organisations, are like starfish. In a starfish, each cell contains within it the ingredients and instructions to create a whole new starfish from scratch. So in a time of pressure or conflict, when the 'legs' of organisations are affected, damaged and broken, if you break the leg off a starfish, it just fully reproduces a second starfish. The movement grows, the idea spreads. There is no central control point, but that's why you can't kill it.

And, perhaps even more interestingly, the starfish 'grows' by offering its eggs and sperm (depending on whether it is a female or male) out into the sea. When they meet, a new starfish is born. The movement continues to grow, but the starfish may never know its own child, and will have no control over when or how or who they become. Starfish, like movements, are empowering, releasing, letting go central control, and more likely to survive than an institutional spider.

Perhaps you can already see the link back to today's gospel reading? The synagogue leader can't help but think like a spider: control the good news, operate from a centralised model, where the rules define how people behave and the preservation of the institution is the most important thing. Jesus' thinking challenges that, because he shows the rules to be prioritising the wrong things and demonstrates that the pious attitude is not bringing peace or love into this woman's life, which he is able to do with his healing ministry.

What does that mean for us today?

What rules and systems and institutions do we need to hold a little less lightly, or rewrite, or rethink, or even tear down, so that the good news of God can spread a little more freely, without the restrictions of spider-thinking?

What are our priorities?

Where are we a little too pious, and a not quite so gospel-orientated?

You might like to make some time to think about, reflect on, or talk about these questions this week.

The Hebrews reading reminds us that the Kingdom of God cannot be shaken. And in Jeremiah, as we reflected on earlier in our service, we know that all this is in God's hand. We were known and loved by the divine before we were even formed in our Mother's womb. So this is not about us, or our egos. We are not 'creating new forms of church' on our own or to suit us, but are continuing the work Jesus began: bringing the gospel to life in our context and in our time. We are responding to the gospel invitation to share God's love with the people of all nations. Not to build the church, but to see the Kingdom of God come near.

Let us go and be a starfish people, shaped for mission, by the grace of God, in Jesus' name and through the strength of the Spirit.
Amen.⁴

⁴ Reflection written by Tim Baker

Hymn:

552 STF – Here am I, Lord, I've come to do your will OR

660 STF – Called by Christ to be disciples

Prayers of intercession

God of all grace,

Thank you for all the blessings we have received,

Thank you for this day and this opportunity to come before you in worship.

Thank you.

As we come to you in prayer, we know we come amongst a world that is grieving and in pain,

A world longing to know you more,

A world full of stories that seek to give meaning, but which are little more than adverts for the next product or holiday or cause.

In that context, we turn to you, and to the gospel of Jesus Christ,

Who brings hope to us all.

Amongst all the piousness of human institutions,

The limitations of rules, the selfishness of structures, the greedy priorities of the world we have built,

We pray for your grace, your peace, your love to reach the nations.

So today, we pray for those in our 'inner circle': our friends, our family, perhaps people who are part of this congregation here, or with whom we feel intimately connected.

In the stillness, we bring them, the people we love, into the light of prayer.

[Pause].

Where there is brokenness, bring healing Lord God.

Where there is conflict, bring peace.

Where there is pain and grief, bring comfort.

And now, we pray for those who are a little further out from our circle – those we know, those in this community, those who have a connection to our church, those we connect with online.

In the stillness, we bring them, the people we know, into the light of prayer.

[Pause].

Where there is brokenness, bring healing Lord God.

Where there is conflict, bring peace.

Where there is pain and grief, bring comfort.

And finally, we pray for those who we have never met, those around the world who are living in poverty, living with conflict, living in painful places of exile and hurt.

In the stillness, we bring them, the people of your world, into the light of prayer.

[Pause].

Where there is brokenness, bring healing Lord God.
Where there is conflict, bring peace.
Where there is pain and grief, bring comfort.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Blessing the offering

Living God, we have received so much from you, and we are truly grateful. Accept these gifts, tokens of our thanks and of our desire to see the world transformed and your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

655 STF – We cannot measure how you heal or answer every sufferer's prayer OR
653 STF – O Christ, the Healer, we have come to pray for health, to plead for friends

Blessing

The Almighty God give you strength to run the race that is set before you, give you power and hope to persevere to the end; and the blessing of God the Creator, the Christ and the Spirit go with you.

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker