

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 18A

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

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Ordinary 18 - Year A
6th August 2023



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

72 STF – Father God, I wonder how I managed to exist OR

443 STF – Come, let us sing of a wonderful love

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

706 STF – Longing for light, we wait in darkness OR

632 STF – I've had questions without answers

Readings: Genesis 32:22-31; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:13-21

Hymn:

461 STF – Come, O thou Traveller unknown OR

416 STF – There's a wideness in God's mercy

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

390 STF – My God! I know, I feel thee mine OR

628 STF – Faithful One, so unchanging

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

636 STF – O love that wilt not let me go OR

255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy

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.

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Call to worship

God of each moment,
God of this time and this place,
I am open to your Spirit this day.
Change, inspire and uplift me, O God, to be attentive to how you are speaking to me today.
In Jesus name, we bring ourselves to worship,
Amen.¹

Hymn:

72 STF – Father God, I wonder how I managed to exist OR
443 STF – Come, let us sing of a wonderful love

Opening Prayers

Lord of compassion,
We direct our attention to you
knowing that you are always attentive towards us.

Thank you for your love which sustains us
and your grace that restores us.

Forgive us for the ways we have fallen short in our love
and grow in us a desire to be more like you.

Amen.

Jesus among us
We thank you for presence
And the work of your Spirit within us
That you promise to be with us
and grant that we are never alone.

Thank you for drawing us to you through your love
and illuminating our hearts and minds with your truth.

Amen.

Father over all,
The whole of creation witnesses to your great works
and rejoices in who you are.

You are worthy of our adoration
and we join our voices to bring you our praise.

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

To you belongs all glory and splendour
and we magnify your holy name.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Imagine we're there now, on the mountainside, miles and miles from the nearest shop. What do you have? Empty your pockets. Does anybody have ANYTHING to eat?

[Ask people to look in their pockets and bags and to call out the useful things they have there... emphasise the uselessness of most of these things if everyone was starving hungry. Make sure you've primed three people, and in their pockets they each have a piece of paper with one of the following words on: we have nothing].

No matter how good we are at sharing, we could not abundantly feed ourselves on the things we happen to have brought with us to hear this service. The disciples say to Jesus "we have nothing" and we are the same.

So what do we have to offer then? We have very little food, we have a bit of money, but that won't do us much good out on this mountainside. Well, it turns out nothing is exactly what we offer. The one thing all those people gathered had was hunger. Is anybody here feeling hungry?

(Ask for a response somehow, like a show of hands).

What about worried, is anybody feeling worried about something, big or small, in their lives? What about distracted, has anybody found they've been a bit distracted this morning, perhaps you've been thinking about your Sunday dinner or your homework? What about grumpy, have we got any grumpy people in the crowd today? Or sad, or lonely, or stressed, or tired?

(Continue to ask questions like this until everyone has their hands in the air).

See, we get caught up in this story thinking about the loaves and fish - how many there were, who provided them, how they came to be multiplied. We try and explain the miracle. We try and make it about us and what we have - but the story is about what we don't have. The facts are this: there was a crowd hungry for Jesus, for love and wisdom and mercy and healing and joy and energy and a hearty meal of bread and fish, and just like us, Jesus feeds them.

Jesus is good at taking whatever we have to offer, even if it's seemingly nothing, and filling us up when we feel empty.

² Opening prayers written by Claire Welch

(Take the three pieces of paper off the people and stick them up at the front, turn over the last word and reveal that it says God on the back so the sentence reads “we have God”).

We offer nothing, and God changes the end of the sentence, God changes the end of the story, so that we no longer have nothing, because we have God.

Amen.³

Hymn:

706 STF – Longing for light, we wait in darkness OR

632 STF – I’ve had questions without answers

Readings: Genesis 32:22-31; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:13-21

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Reflections on the readings

Have you ever had unexpected guests at a meal time? Imagine having five thousand people turn up for Sunday lunch!

If you were suddenly asked to provide for thousands of people would you react like the disciples in this story, or like Jesus?

Would your practical mind work out that this would be an expensive meal and one that you certainly couldn’t afford?

Or would you calmly trust that all you needed was already there?

If we are honest, we would all have a panic in this situation wouldn’t we?! Even if we can cope with surprise visitors – the idea of 5,000 + of them is quite frightening! Think of Bilbo in the first chapter of The Hobbit, worrying about all these dwarves who keep turning up – but that’s only a dozen guests!

Perhaps with a bit more warning, the disciples might have put a financial plan in place; been saving a little bit each month and carefully preparing for this expenditure. But they didn’t have any warning. Jesus knew that this large crowd were hungry and he wanted to meet their needs. It seemed a monumental ask. How could you feed all these people without enough money?

In this story, Jesus shows us how extraordinary things can happen. Jesus uses the ordinary gift of a simple lunch to do something extraordinary. Not only does he provide enough food for all the people gathered there but there is an abundance left over. A miraculous turn of events. Jesus takes an ordinary amount of food and changes it into something remarkable.

³ All Age Talk written by Holly Adams

Sometimes we can think of generosity as a calculation. It is a big act. It requires much from us. It will be costly. But the essence of this story is that all Jesus requires of us is our willingness to bring to him our ordinary offerings.

It is in Jesus Christ that the ordinary will be made extraordinary. This model of generosity is woven throughout the Bible. God takes ordinary people and uses them for extraordinary things. We, as ordinary as we are, are beckoned into relationship with the creator of the world. The one whose hands flung stars into space takes our hands and wants to walk with us.

Let us pause and have a conversation:

- Where in your life have you seen something extraordinary emerge from the ordinary?
- What are your hopes for this community and church: how can we see the extraordinary emerge from the ordinary things in our lives?

[Leave 5-10 minutes for this conversation, and then come back together. You might wish for people to share their thoughts.]

So, when we look at something as every day and ordinary, we can look at it through the lens of Jesus. This is the way All We Can works around the world – alongside and with the local communities they serve in parts of Africa. By listening to the local people and their needs, by using local resources and traditions, by working together and learning to listen, the ordinary can become extraordinary.

We've seen that in Uganda, where bicycles bring about transformation for people needing access to school.

In Ethiopia, the simple potato is helping to change farming, in the hands of the local community.

In Malawi, the same is true with villages doing a community mapping exercise: how this simple exercise of telling a community's story and capturing its dreams for the future makes space for transformation and changing mindsets.

Change begins when we work together, and a simple, ordinary thing is being turned into something extraordinary.

To find out more about how All We Can is involved in this kind of work around the world, and how you can play your part, take a look at some of the stories on their website: allwecan.org.uk

Let us pray.

God of all grace,

Come amongst us and show us how to be a people seeking justice,

A people wanting the world to be a better place and recognizing that our role in that is to listen and learn as much as it is to act.

Show us how the ordinary is becoming extraordinary,

In your name,

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

390 STF – My God! I know, I feel thee mine OR

628 STF – Faithful One, so unchanging

⁴ Reflection written by All We Can

Prayers of intercession

Loving God of all the world,
We hold before you the nations.

Let us pause for a moment and pray for the world.

To the God who reigns over governments,
Bring justice where injustice rules.

Let us pause for a moment and pray for all in leadership.

To the God who carries a weary world without growing weak
Give strength to the struggling and hope to the hopeless.

Let us pause for a moment and pray for all in need today.

To the creative God who dreamt up our world
Grant vision and insight to those with a heart to change things for the better.

To the compassionate God
Heal what is hurting and restore what has been broken.

With grateful hearts we thank our loving God,
whose compassion never ceases,
whose love for us never runs dry,
whose fight against injustice never relents.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

We thank you for your grace to us Lord God, for the many blessings we have received. In this moment, we commit ourselves to you again, to responding to grace with grace, to love with love. Help us to use our gifts to love our neighbours as ourselves,

In Jesus' name.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

636 STF – O love that wilt not let me go OR

255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by All We Can

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Blessing

God of all grace,
Guide us, we pray, as we seek to respond to your love to us.

Help us be a shining example of love in a world crying out in need. May we be Christ's hands and feet, by the power of your Spirit.

Amen.⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker