

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 9B

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

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Ordinary 9 - Year B
2nd June 2024



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

42 STF – O sing to the Lord OR

25 STF – God is here! As we his people

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

81 STF – Now thank we all our God OR

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise

Readings: Deuteronomy 5:12-15; 2 Corinthians 4:5-12; Mark 2:23-3:6

Hymn:

152 STF – This is the day OR

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

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

559 STF – Lord, you have my heart OR

563 STF – O Jesus, I have promised

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

545 STF – Be thou my vision OR

636 STF – O love that wilt not let me go

Blessing

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Call to worship

A call to worship from 2 Corinthians 4:

'it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

Amen.

Hymn:

42 STF – O sing to the Lord OR

25 STF – God is here! As we his people

Opening Prayers

A prayer of adoration

At the very beginning, Creator God, you called for light to shine amidst the dark, empty void of space.

We offer you our praise and worship today as the Creator of both variety and consistency, of immensity and yet of delicacy, of wilderness and also of fruitfulness, of light and of shadow.

Jesus Christ, you came amongst us as the Light of the world, calling us to follow.

We offer you our praise and worship today as the One who demonstrated how goodness can defeat evil, how love can defeat hatred, how compassion can defeat apathy, how life can defeat death.

Holy Spirit, you are poured into our lives without measure in this season of the Spirit.

We offer you our praise and worship today as the one who has shone in our hearts, bringing clarity out of confusion, gentleness out of bitterness, hope out of despair, energy out of weariness.

Living God, to you be the glory in our lives and in your church as we see more of the face of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Yet we know that as we do turn to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, so we are aware of all that the light shining in our heart reveals.

Now, a prayer of confession:

Holy God, your love streams into our hearts like sunshine on a summer day and in the brightness of that light we see the smears and grubbiness in our lives which distorts and dims that light:

For times of selfishness in this past week, when we have put ourselves first, we say sorry...

For times of apathy, when we have not cared about the needs of others, we say sorry...

For times of pride in our own success, when we have not admitted our need of you, we say sorry...

For times of weakness when we have succumbed to pressures and temptations, we say sorry...

For anything which has left our conscience feeling uneasy and blemished, we say sorry...

As we confess our sins to you, Holy God, we keep a moment of quiet to reflect if there are actions we need to take in the coming days to restore relationships, to heal hurts, to apologise for words and actions we have taken...

'... it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' (2 Corinthians 4:6)

Thank you, Holy and Gracious God, that you are more ready to forgive than we are to confess. As we open ourselves to you, you shine afresh in our hearts, renewing our courage and giving us the grace we step out again in confidence that you are at work within us. Thanks be to God.

Amen.¹

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

What is your favourite day of the week?

[Take answers from the congregation, and get people to tell you why... Perhaps tell a story of your own].

In modern life in the UK, we have lots of different rhythms and routines to our lives – some people work night shifts, some of us are most busy on Tuesdays because that's the day we have the grandchildren after school, some people have quiet weekends and busy weekdays, some have the opposite. Lots of people work more flexible hours, and such a small percentage of the population go to church on Sunday in 2024, that this no longer has a big impact on how our society works.

However, that wouldn't have been the case in Jesus' time. Later in our service we will hear some of Jesus' reflections on the idea of 'Sabbath', but that was – and in many contexts remains – an important part of the Jewish week. An invitation to stop, rest, turn aside from the busy-ness of the rest of life. The Christian scholar Walter Bruggeman has written a challenging and brilliant book called 'Sabbath as Resistance', recognising that choosing to rest, choosing to do nothing when the world wants us to be busier and busier, is a way of standing up for what we believe in.

This idea comes from the creation story – from the poem that comes at the beginning of the Bible – where we read about the creative energy of God, making a world in six days (according to the story), and then resting on the seventh day. If even God can rest, then surely we should too?

¹ Opening prayers written by Jill Baker

In the middle of all our busy lives of school, work, family, social and community commitments – do you have a routine of Sabbath? Taking a whole day of rest every week may not be possible, or it may not be enough. But it is my hope that you can hear the gentle invitation to rest today. To build in rhythms of rest.

Remember, you don't have to earn God's love. Nothing you do can make God love you more or less than God already loves each and every one of you. So, if you need a rest, take one!

Amen.²

Hymn:

81 STF – Now thank we all our God OR

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise

Readings: Deuteronomy 5:12-15; 2 Corinthians 4:5-12; Mark 2:23-3:6

Hymn:

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

Reflections on the readings

In the readings today from Deuteronomy and Mark there is a clear theme of the Sabbath day, so that is our focus for reflection and conversation:

The book of Deuteronomy repeats and reinforces the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, first recorded in Exodus chapter 20. These verses from Deuteronomy begin in almost exactly the same words as Exodus, but then, interestingly, offer a different reason for the Sabbath. In Exodus, the thinking behind a day of Sabbath rest goes back to creation; God rested on the sabbath, therefore human beings should do the same and regard it as a day of rest and consecration.

Perhaps it is that case that by the time of the writing of Deuteronomy, wider concerns about social responsibility and care of the community have crept in, and the writer of this text focuses on the needs of slaves as the reason for the Sabbath. Slaves were included in Exodus amongst those who should rest on the Sabbath, but that is underlined here with the addition of part of verse 14 and verse 15: 'so that your male and female slaves may rest as well as you. 15 Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.'

So as we read this commandment again, this time in the version in Deuteronomy, we are being asked to do so from the wider perspective of how society behaves and shows consideration for each other.

As Christians living in 21st Century British culture, our connection with this ancient practice of Sabbath is a bit confused. The original Sabbath was the seventh day of the week, what

² All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

we would now call Saturday, but often our thinking has equated it more with Sunday, and it is Sunday which we sometimes regard as a day of rest. This has developed in Christian societies because the Resurrection took place on a Sunday ('the first day of the week') so that became, for the early Christians, a day of celebration and worship. It appears that this was formalised under the Roman Emperor, Constantine the Great in March 321, when he passed legislation that Sunday should become a day of rest; gradually this developed into equating this day with the Hebrew 'Sabbath'.

So what? We may ask! Let's have a little look at what Jesus says about the Sabbath, before we ask ourselves a few questions about whether any of this matters.

It is clear that in the time of Jesus, 'Sabbath' was a red-hot issue. The Pharisees and scribes who upheld the law paid close attention to the enforcement of Sabbath laws. Indeed, the laws as laid down in the Hebrew Scriptures had been further augmented and elaborated to provide a buffer zone of safety around the original demands. The laws were enforced rigorously, with harsh penalties for breaking them. It would appear that although Jesus had a high regard for Scripture, stating very clearly on at least one occasion: 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil.' (Matthew 5:17) he seems to sit lightly to the demands of Sabbath law, perhaps because he sees how these laws have become over-exaggerated and are applied with a disproportionate amount of zeal.

So when his disciples pluck heads of grain as they walk through a cornfield – possibly eating the grain as they go, that is not made clear – the Pharisees are ready to pounce on this infraction of their Sabbath law. Jesus plays them at their own game and magnifies the 'sin' by citing an occasion when not just a few grains of corn were illegally consumed, but whole loaves, dedicated to God and only to be consumed by the priests, were given to hungry troops – and by King David of all people! We don't hear how the Pharisees reacted to that, but we do remember the significant words of Jesus, 'The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.' (vv27-28).

Similarly in the next story, when Jesus' opponents are again on the lookout for an infraction of the Sabbath laws, Jesus obliges by healing a man with a withered hand in the synagogue. It is hard to see how an act of healing can be regarded as 'work', other, perhaps, than for a doctor, but it is clearly a breach of additional legislation and Jesus knows they are ready to pounce. He turns the tables again by asking a question which gets to the root of sabbath-observance; 'Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?' and is deeply grieved when they can't see the error of their ways and agree with him, but remain peevishly silent.

What do we think? A few questions to consider and perhaps discuss if time allows. As we do so, let's notice two statements from our readings which are significant:

- in Deuteronomy, the sabbath is described as 'a sabbath to the LORD your God' and remembering the sabbath is, for the Jews, a way of remembering that they too have been slaves and must now regard the needs of those who have become their slaves.
- In Mark, Jesus tells his opponents that 'the sabbath was made for humankind'

Questions for discussion in small groups:

1. What has been your experience of sabbath-observance (on Saturdays or Sundays) in your lifetime?
2. What might it mean to keep a day 'to the LORD your God' – and how does that fit with your own lifestyle?

3. When legislation was changed to allow shops to open on Sundays (e.g. through The Sunday Trading Act 1994) one of the strongest arguments of the 'Keep Sunday Special' campaign was how it would affect workers' rights and freedoms. This links to the approach in Deuteronomy 5, with its concern for those in slavery. How might we interpret this call to care in today's society?

4. Is there anything you feel you need to change in your approach to weekends?³

Hymn:

559 STF – Lord, you have my heart OR

563 STF – O Jesus, I have promised

Prayers of intercession

Gracious and compassionate God, we come to you in prayer, recognising first our own weakness. We know that you have placed your Spirit inside us, yet we feel fragile and inadequate, like clay jars which could so easily be smashed. So, in our prayers, we call upon your extraordinary power.

We pray for all who are afflicted in any way today:

- Holding before you all whose lives are trampled upon by war and conflict...
- Holding before you all who don't have enough food, or access to clean water, or adequate housing...
- Holding before you all who are in pain in their bodies, minds or spirits...

May all for whom we pray not be crushed. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are perplexed:

- Thinking of those we know who are at a loss about which way to go in life...
- Thinking of those we know who are facing difficult decisions at this time...
- Thinking of those who wonder if life is worth living at all...

May all for whom we pray not be driven to despair. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are persecuted:

- Praying for victims of discrimination because of colour or race...
- Praying for all who suffer injustice and hatred because of their sexual identity or orientation...
- Praying for all who are persecuted because of their religious beliefs...

May all for whom we pray know that they are not forsaken. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are struck down:

- We picture stories of violence we have seen in the news this week...

³ Reflection written by Jill Baker

- We hear voices of those who cry out for justice and are ignored...
- We pray for individuals and groups working for reconciliation and peace...

May all for whom we pray not be destroyed. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We offer all our prayers in the name of Jesus who lived and died and rose again, proving the power of goodness, proving the strength of love, proving the victory of life. Amen.⁴

We will now take up the offering.

Gracious God, we give thanks for all you have done for us.

As we are grateful, so too we return our gifts to you and to the building of your kingdom here on earth.

Use us, and use these gifts for the transformation of your world, Lord God. Amen.⁵

Hymn:

545 STF – Be thou my vision OR

636 STF – O love that wilt not let me go

Blessing

As we rise and head out into the world,
We go to meet you, Lord God,
To discover where you are already at work,
And to get involved. Amen.⁶

⁴ Prayers of intercession written by Jill Baker

⁵ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker