

twelvebaskets



LENT 2C

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

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Second Sunday in Lent - Year C
16th March 2025



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

88 STF – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation! OR

120 STF – We gladly celebrate and praise

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

426 STF – Hark, my soul! It is the Lord OR

357 STF – Jesus – the name high over all

Readings: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35

Hymn:

485 STF – When we are living, we are in the Lord OR

487 STF – You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

486 STF – Who would true valour see, let him come hither OR

276 STF – Lift high the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

440 STF – Amazing grace – how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! OR

633 STF – My soul finds rest in God alone

Blessing

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Call to worship

Here we are Lord, gathered in your name to worship you.

Here we are Lord, gathered on this Lord's Day to encounter you.

Here we are Lord, bringing all our needs, desires and pain – we bring ourselves just as we are.

Come amongst us, by your Spirit, O Lord our God.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

88 STF – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation! OR

120 STF – We gladly celebrate and praise

Opening Prayers

God of all grace, let us be still,

and bring ourselves into this space of worship and stillness.

[Quiet].

God of all hope, we thank you that you are the stronghold in our lives. We thank you that though we may feel surrounded by challenges that threaten to overwhelm us, with you as our light we might continually discover that our confidence and hope can be found in you.

Let us be still and bring all our hopes into your presence.

[Quiet].

Gracious God,

We give you thanks for the opportunity to come to worship you freely, to have a sanctuary set aside for worship, a house of prayer where we come together to enable us to draw close to you, meditating on your word and bringing the cries of our hearts.

We thank you that when we face trouble you promise never to leave us but provide us with the security of your never-ending presence and peace which will hold us in the storms of life.

Loving God, we thank you that you are ready to show us the way, the way to you, the way of loving others, the way of serving you in the communities in which we serve. We say sorry for our impatience but come to wait before you. Reveal yourself and your ways for us, and open our hearts and minds so we are ready to receive from you.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

All Age Talk

Last week's reading was Jesus being in the wilderness standing strong against temptation. This week's reading from Luke's gospel follows a fairly similar theme.

Before we dive into that, though, have you ever been told to stop doing something good? Maybe you stood up for a friend, but others told you to stay out of it. Or maybe you worked hard at something, but someone tried to put you down. Why don't you pause for a moment – what did that moment feel like for you?

[Pause]

In today's Bible reading, Jesus faces a challenge like that. Some people warn him to stop what he's doing, but Jesus shows incredible love and courage.

Jesus was teaching and healing, showing God's love to people. Then some Pharisees came and said, "Go away! Herod wants to kill you."

Now, Herod was a powerful ruler. He had already done some terrible things, so this was a serious warning. But did Jesus run away? No! He stood firm and said, "Go tell that fox, I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal."

Jesus was saying, I won't stop doing what God has called me to do!

Now you could say Jesus was being a bit stubborn. Maybe we can be like that when we hear the word 'no' from someone. However, Jesus' stubbornness and persistence to say no was because he wanted to care for and protect the people of Jerusalem, the city where so many prophets had been rejected.

This story of Jesus reminds us: stand firm in doing what is right. When people try to stop us from doing good, we can be brave like Jesus. The gospel passage also shows that Jesus loves us just like a mother hen protects her chicks, Jesus wants to gather us close and care for us.

There are some words attributed to John Wesley which relate to this story of Jesus and reminds us to do all the good we can.

"Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can."³

Hymn:

426 STF – Hark, my soul! It is the Lord OR

357 STF – Jesus – the name high over all

³ All Age Talk written by Matthew Forsyth

Readings: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35

Hymn:

485 STF – When we are living, we are in the Lord OR

487 STF – You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace

Reflections on the readings

As we travel the journey through Lent, there may be questions we need to ask ourselves, for this is a season of self-examination in the Church calendar.

The readings set for today could suggest the question, ‘Where do we belong?’ It is a question of huge political significance in our world at the moment, but it is also a question with spiritual significance, and, for many of us, personal significance too.

Place is important in our lives – perhaps more to some than to others. Many of us have special places where we like to return, either on holiday, or for a time of retreat and withdrawal. Even within our own homes we may have a particular chair or corner where we feel more relaxed, where we can more easily pray, where we sense the presence of God. The Celtic understanding of ‘thin places’ affirms this sense – islands like Iona or Lindisfarne, cities like Rome or Santiago da Compostela, sites mentioned in the Bible, like Bethlehem or Jerusalem have become places of pilgrimage for this very reason, the places themselves seem to have something special about them.

The place where each of us was born is something which is recorded on our passport. For better or worse it says something about us and may be deemed to have shaped our thinking and our personality in some way. It may or may not feel to be the place where we belong, perhaps depending on how long we lived there. For others, the place which adopts them becomes the place where they have a sense of belonging. Sometimes in life we stumble upon a particular location, sometimes a particular church, and we feel ‘I belong here’. It’s a good feeling.

The question of where we belong, can, however, be a dangerous question – for at its heart lie the seeds of racism and xenophobia, when people begin to make judgements about where other people belong, or are entitled to live. We need to be aware of this slippery slope in our own thinking. Within the British Isles, there are multiple identities and many of us may be proud of our own origins and identity... *[perhaps, if time and the style of worship allow, some conversation could be had here about how people identify themselves – Scottish, Manx, Welsh, Cornish, Yorkshire, Black British...?] We recognise the richness of the different cultures and languages which make up our society, but at the same time we have to be careful that celebration of our own identity doesn’t affect the way we think of those with a different identity.*

On a larger political scale, the ongoing tragedy of the Middle East might be seen to have its roots in this question of ‘Where do we belong?’ or of ‘Who belongs where?’ Today we begin to reflect on this by looking at words from the book of Genesis, set for today’s worship. By chapter 15 of Genesis Abram has already set off in response to God’s call, and now he receives a vision in which God promises that he will have a son and heir, indeed, that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars. Then God turns to the question of land and promises (through a strange and rather dark ritual) that Abram’s descendants will possess the land ‘from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates’.

We might find it helpful to see this as God’s starting point. God’s desire, clearly demonstrated throughout the scriptures, is that all people will come to know and love the

Lord. But a starting point is needed to begin this revelation, and God chooses one man, Abram, and his family as that starting point. Abram becomes a nation which inhabits a piece of land known as Israel or Palestine, and from there the light is to spread to the entire world, the Gentile nations. Sadly, it seems this hasn't been as easy as God might have hoped, and, instead, bitter battles have arisen about certain pieces of land and who has the right to live in them.

Even by the time of Jesus there were problems, with the sense that Israel had somehow missed its mission. So in the Gospel passage for today, from Luke chapter 13, we hear Jesus lamenting over the capital city, Jerusalem, calling it 'the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it'. His words continue with a poignant, heart-rending cry exposing to us the heart of Jesus for that sacred place and his desire to see it nurtured and protected. Their refusal to recognise God in their midst leaves Jesus downhearted and almost resigned; 'See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."' Perhaps in this lament, Jesus is saying that Jerusalem (and Israel in general) has brought upon itself the destruction and division which will follow. It's a hard saying; maybe we have to be willing to confront some of the hard sayings of Scripture during our Lenten journey.

Eventually, as we will mark in a few weeks' time, Jesus is killed and, following his resurrection, the early church begins to spring into life – foremost amongst its leaders is the apostle Paul. In today's reading from the epistle to the Philippians, probably written about 30 years after the death of Jesus, either by Paul or one of his colleagues, we discover a different approach to belonging and citizenship. Paul was himself an ardent Jew who, before his conversion to Christ, belonged to the Jewish elite, and had much to say in many of his epistles about the relationship between the Jewish faith and the developing Christianity. Here, however, he seems to step back from any contemporary disputes over law and behaviour and writes, in verse 20, 'But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.'

This puts the whole issue of where we belong into a different realm – quite literally. 'Our citizenship is in heaven'. What does that mean for us practically today? Does it mean that our values are the values of the kingdom of God, where the last shall be first and the first last? Does it mean that our racial or regional identity is, at best, of secondary importance set alongside our identity as citizens of heaven? Does it mean that our first loyalty is not to any human leader, ruler or system, but to God? It probably means all of that and much more. If our citizenship is in heaven, we are ambassadors of a sort, called to live on earth, but by the values of heaven, demonstrating by our love, by our sacrifice, by our quest for justice and peace, that we dance to a different tune from the society around us.

Jesus lived on earth without compromising the values of heaven. Our calling, especially in this season of Lent, is to follow in his steps. For Jesus it led to death – that probably won't be our experience, but daily we may be called to acts of self-denial, sacrifice and self-emptying. If we embrace our calling, the life of Jesus will be seen in us. At times it may be a difficult road, but the goal is inspiring! We are given the task of building heaven on earth – a bold and wonderful vision. We need not be daunted, for as we are called on the journey, so we are equipped for it – we have each other as companions, we have the Holy Spirit as our energy and enabler, we have heaven in our sights.

Thanks be to God,

Amen.⁴

⁴ Reflection written by Jill Baker

Hymn:

486 STF – Who would true valour see, let him come hither OR

276 STF – Lift high the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim

Prayers of intercession

Homeless Jesus, you came from heaven to earth for our salvation; forgive us when we cling too tightly to our physical lives. Give us, we pray, your vision of heaven here on earth.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

Despised Jesus, you knew what it was to be unjustly accused and reviled; we pray for all who are treated as outsiders, persecuted for their faith, colour or identity.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

Peace-making Jesus, you spoke words of peace to those in conflict and those bearing grudges; we pray for all who are working for peace and reconciliation around the world.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

Gracious Jesus, you demonstrated the courage to embrace strangers; we pray for all who feel they don't belong anywhere, or who have been rejected by family or community.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

Lamenting Jesus, you wept over those who couldn't see your identity and your glory; we pray for all who are blinded by religious intolerance or disbelief and who reject you still.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

Healing Jesus, you stretched out in love to any in need, regardless of their background; we pray for all in need of your touch of healing today... (individuals may be named here)

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

Loving Jesus, you called your followers to live by love; we pray for your church around the world today, that we may be renewed and re-energised in love.

Your kingdom come, your will be done.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Lord, accept these gifts and put them to the use of building your Kingdom, here in this community and around the world.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

440 STF – Amazing grace – how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! OR

633 STF – My soul finds rest in God alone

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Jill Baker

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Blessing

Go out in peace, and see the world made anew.

Go out to meet with a community, a family, a society crying out for some love, looking to encounter the living God.

Go out to discover God's spirit is at work throughout our world, and be transformed by your encounter with that same Spirit.

Go, by the grace of God.

Amen.⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker