

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 20C

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

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Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year C
17th August 2025



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

530 STF – To be in your presence OR

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

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

473 STF – 'Moses, I know you're the man', the Lord said OR

518 STF – Father, hear the prayer we offer

Readings: Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:1-2, 8-19; Hebrews 11:29-12:2; Luke 12:49-56

Hymn:

486 STF – Who would true valour see OR

467 STF – I need thee every hour

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

338 STF – There is a Redeemer OR

564 STF – O thou who camest from above

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

720 STF – We turn to you, O God of every nation OR

412 STF – See how great a flame aspires

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.

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Call to worship

Here we have come,
The people of the risen king.
Here we have come,
To worship, pray and praise.
Here we have come,
May we notice your presence amongst us, by your Spirit, O God

Amen.¹

Hymn:

530 STF – To be in your presence OR
250 STF – Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult

Opening Prayers

Gracious and Holy God,
We live in a world driven by fickle pleasures.

Letting ourselves be led astray.
In these times we long to hear the voice of the shepherd calling us back to you.
Not in a voice of wrath but of concern and care as a parent calls their child home.

Too often we bear the grapes of injustice, pride and fear.
Unlike the vineyard plants withered with your will.

Lord, be the gardener of our souls.

Forgive us with your compassionate heart for the gardens we have left untended and
breathe life into what is withered allowing for new life to grow.

Please give us the strength to stand firm.
To persevere in faith amid trials that may face us.

We pray all these things in the name of Jesus Christ our redeemer and our vine.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

How does it feel when someone lets us down? Have we ever been let down by someone
we really trust and love?

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Alice Arbon-Maher

But what happens when someone lets us down over and over again? Do we find it harder and harder to forgive?

Imagine you're standing with your back to a wall, and someone keeps throwing tennis balls at you, after a while no matter how good your skill is, you won't be able to catch them all.

When we read scripture we learn that God loves us, God wants what is best for us, but with love comes disappointment when we let God down.

Letting God down is an inevitability that is part of life, as much as we might try to strive to do better. Sometimes we do things that we didn't mean to or want to do, such as shouting at our parents, fighting with our siblings, maybe taking something that doesn't belong to us. All these things disappoint God, but the good news is that this disappointment is a reflection of God's love for us.

God can see the plans that God has for us, God wants us to grow and prosper. Sometimes it's hard to read a passage where we hear about God's disappointment in us.

Sometimes the only way we are able to look at these passages is from a human point of view.

When a loved one lets us down what do we do?

Ultimately and hopefully we forgive them, perhaps we want them to say sorry before we forgive them, perhaps we might want to see them change their ways before we forgive them.

But how many times can we forgive them? Think back to having your back against the wall and someone throwing tennis balls, as humans there is a finite amount of times we can forgive. But here's the good news, God has an infinite amount of times that God can forgive us, as long as we are willing to work on changing ourselves for the better.

It is helpful to remember that God's disappointment isn't like human anger or frustration, God has unconditional love for us, any disappointment is rooted in love.

Amen.³

Hymn:

473 STF – 'Moses, I know you're the man', the Lord said OR

518 STF – Father, hear the prayer we offer

Readings: Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:1-2, 8-19; Hebrews 11:29-12:2; Luke 12:49-56

Hymn:

486 STF – Who would true valour see OR

467 STF – I need thee every hour

³ All Age Talk written by Pippa Lupton

Reflections on the readings

A question which was asked each Sunday from the lectern at my home church morning was, 'How is this the Word of God for us today?' A similar question, which has followed me throughout my ministry and career so far, is 'What is ours to do?'

How is this the Word of God for us today? What is ours to do? For me, the answers to those questions are rooted in scripture and in context – in what was going on in the world around those speaking and writing the Bible and in what is going on in the world around us today.

These readings are set in difficult times. Luke witnesses Jesus speaking in a time of occupation and of culture wars – deep disagreements, debates and violence rooted in differences of beliefs, of cultures, and of lived experiences. How was the Gospel that Luke recorded the Word of God for people living in a context of occupation? What was theirs to do?

The letter to the Hebrews is a letter to people facing religious persecution. In the previous chapter we read that the people had experienced public insults and attacks, imprisonment, and the theft of their positions. How was this letter the Word of God for people living in a context of oppression? What was theirs to do?

The Psalmist pleads for salvation in the context of scorn and humiliation. How was this song the Word of God for people living in a context of shame? What was theirs to do?

The prophet Isaiah speaks in the context of social injustice, drafting a vision of life renewed. How was this letter the Word of God for people living in a time of injustice? What was theirs to do?

I am writing – in June 2025 – in difficult times. We are in the midst of a cost of living crisis, the news headlines speak of war and conflicts, cuts to benefits are on the horizon, and the dividing lines of culture war seem to be permanently etched into every discussion of public policy. How are these readings the Word of God for me today? What is mine to do?

I wonder what sort of context you are reading or listening to these words in. Perhaps you have been enjoying the summer sun, relaxing with family or friends. Perhaps the repeated heatwaves mean that struggling crops are affecting your livelihood. Perhaps the cost of living crisis has stretched you further than you ever believed possible. Perhaps you are relatively content with the gifts you have been given. Perhaps you are struggling with oppression and shame. Perhaps you are a justice seeker. Perhaps you are just plain tired. How are these readings the Word of God for you today? What is yours to do?

When we reflect on scripture in the Joint Public Issues Team, where I work, we often turn to our Public Issues Calendar to remind us of the context that we are reflecting from within and to seek to shape narratives of hope in difficult times. The 12th of August was International Youth Day, and the 22nd is the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief. And so, in that context, how are these readings the Word of God for us today? What is ours to do?

Jesus's comments about division are often quoted in defence of causing offence – sometimes with disastrous consequences. I wonder whether, instead, Jesus is pointing to the reality that strong beliefs can cause division. That peace is not inevitable but, rather, something that is going to take hard work. Jesus points to the inevitability of division, asking, 'Why do you not know how to interpret the present time?'

How is this the Word of God for us today? I wonder if Christ is calling us to recognise the divisions amongst us, and the ways in which they constrain us. What is ours to do? I wonder if it is ours to cry out for 'peace, but not the easy peace' (as in Alan Gaunt's hymn at Singing the Faith 719) – peace that is not rooted in complacency but, rather, that recognises the complexity of our divisions and understands the nuance needed to

gradually crawl towards peace. Ignoring past hurts and present inequalities does not lead to peace. Rather, peace is often built on difficult, honest dialogue.

The words of the letter to the Hebrews are challenging in their stark contrast with the slowness of our journeys beyond division. The letter points back to the 'cloud of witnesses' described in the Hebrew scriptures and points toward the world after this one. It asks us to 'run with perseverance the race that is set before us'.

How is this the Word of God for us today? I wonder if the writer is calling us to gaze forwards to God's new world of justice and peace; to see heaven not only as a place that comes after death but also as a context that we can help shape here and now. What is ours to do? I wonder if it is ours to let go of 'the way we have always done things' and step, roll or crawl into the future with honesty and intention. To act for justice and to speak out of our faith, 'no matter what trouble or persecution may arise,' as the URC's ordination promises put it.

Both the psalmist and the prophet Isaiah point towards a narrative of hope. The psalmist reminds us that it is God's might, not our own, that can save us. That doesn't recuse us – members of the body of Christ, God's hands and feet on earth – from being a part of that movement towards justice and peace, but it does remind us that we are not alone. We are called to do this together. The prophet Isaiah tells us that, when justice and peace has been established, all will be as it should, even amongst the ruins of past injustices. He paints an idyllic vision of lambs, calves and kids feeding in spaces where nature has been restored.

So, with that frame of hope, let's return to those questions. How is this God's Word for us today? God's Word for us today is that together we can journey towards a spacious place. Together we can recognise our divisions and travel the nuanced roads towards real, challenging peace. Together we can persevere – we can speak out for justice, no matter what. Together we can speak the future into being – a future in which all people, all non-human creatures and all of nature rejoices in freedom and reconciliation.

And, what is ours to do? Perhaps it is ours to recognise where we are restricted by division, expose underlying tensions, and open up the painful dialogues that gradually move towards peace. Perhaps it is also ours to speak out against injustice. But we are not called to do it alone. Reach out. Listen. Share. It is together, by taking tiny steps, that we can change the world.

Reflection Questions:

- [The UN's 'Be Seen Be Heard' survey found](#) that two-thirds of young people believe in a better future, with 15-17 year olds being the most optimistic. How can we embody the optimism of youth in light of Isaiah's vision for a better future?
- Jesus highlights the reality of divisions rooted in faith. How might we celebrate our unity and our diversity?
- The Methodist Church is committed to being a 'Justice Seeking Church'. What is ours to do in the journey towards justice for all people and for the world?

Stay in touch with the Joint Public Issues Team:

To hear more about campaigns for justice and peace, sign up to the JPIT newsletter [here](#). To read about the topics explored on our [Public Issues Calendar](#), [click here](#). To be part of our network of churches building good relationships with politicians, join the [Constituency Action Network](#). To meet with others who are longing for justice, come to the [JPIT conference](#).⁴

⁴ Reflection written by Alex Clare-Young

Hymn:

338 STF – There is a Redeemer OR

564 STF – O thou who camest from above

Prayers of intercession

God, thank you for bringing us into Christ's body,
In which we are companions together on the journey towards justice.

Help us to know what is ours to do.

We pray for peace but not the easy peace.

May we live out peace, but not the easy peace.

God, thank you for the diversity of opinions and ideas,
Woven through with your inspiration.

Help us to know what is ours to say.

We pray for peace but not the easy peace.

May we live out peace, but not the easy peace.

God, thank you for the many voices who speak out for justice,
Some heard more clearly than others,
Help us to know what is ours to understand.

We pray for peace but not the easy peace.

May we live out peace, but not the easy peace.

God, we live in a world of little peace,
And yearn for justice, for your kingdom to come,
Help us to know what is ours to do.

We pray for peace but not the easy peace.

May we live out peace, but not the easy peace.

We pray for all those who are unheard, silenced, or afraid, including those people and
situations on our hearts and minds today...

We pray for justice in the name of the Prince of Peace,

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

God of this time and this space,
We commit to you the gifts that have been gathered in your name this day,
And the gifts gathered in this room,
May we play our part in providing safety and love in this and the surrounding communities.
God of every time, and every space,
May we join in with the wider work of your mission and Spirit, all around the world

Amen.⁶

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Alex Clare-Young

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Hymn:

720 STF – We turn to you, O God of every nation OR

412 STF – See how great a flame aspires

Blessing

May the day ahead be a space of grace for you and those you meet,

May the week ahead be a time when you learn more of what God is doing in your life and in the world around you,

May the months ahead be a time of revival, hope and peace in this and every community,

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker