



ORDINARY 19A

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



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

137 STF – New every morning is the love OR

570 STF – As we gather, Father, seal us

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk (requires crepe paper)

Hymn:

367 STF – When I was lost, you came and rescued me OR

624 STF – Calm me Lord, as you calmed the storm

Readings: Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28; Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b; Romans 10:5-15; Matthew 14:22-33

Hymn:

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

626 STF – Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

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

342 STF – All hail the power of Jesu's name

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

696 STF – For the healing of the nations OR

714 STF – The God who sings a new world into being

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

The Spirit of God is here, and all around us.

Help us to see your hand at work in our lives, in our community, and in this act of worship.

We come to you O God, ready to receive.

Come, Lord Jesus,

Amen.¹

Hymn:

137 STF – New every morning is the love OR

570 STF – As we gather, Father, seal us

Opening Prayers

Throughout this month, The Vine's opening prayers come to us from All We Can, as part of joining with them in a commitment to pray, act and respond to the conflict in Palestine/Israel, and include an invitation to support their Middle East Justice Appeal.

Prince of peace,

Lord of light,

Spirit of reconciliation,

We pray to you today,

For ourselves, for our church, for our community, but also for our world.

Bring your grace, to each and every one of us, we pray, that we might know ourselves loved, forgiven and set free by you, O God.

Today, as we pray for those impacted by the conflict in Palestine, in particular, we hold in prayer all those involved in providing humanitarian aid and support, including our own Methodist charity of All We Can.

Amongst the conflict, and the terrible acts of violence, we give thanks for the small stories of hope, including the work of All We Can's humanitarian partner, DSPR, which stands for Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees, and for the amazing work that has seen over 5,200 people receive vital food aid. In the words of Rasha, who is one of those people:

'We thank DSPR for the breakfast of today. May God bless you abundantly; may God grant you health and wellness.'

Help us to receive that blessing today, O God, and to play our part in bringing about peace, justice and equality in our own lives, in our community and in our world.

We pray this and all our prayers through your name, Jesus the Christ.

Amen.²

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by All We Can

To find out more and make a donation on behalf of your church – you could visit allwecan.org.uk/appeals/middleeast

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hand out to the congregation cut strips of coloured crepe paper (rolls of different colours – [try to get one for each colour in the rainbow] can also be bought in craft shops/online). Explain that these are going to be used during the course of this slot in the service.

Many of us have brothers and sisters, sometimes we get on really well but at other times we can argue and disagree – it isn't always easy. Today we're going to be hearing about some brothers who really didn't get on, who were jealous of their youngest brother. This was for many reasons: he was his Dad's favourite and had been given this amazing multicoloured coat. Sometimes being family together can be really wonderful but also really difficult.

(Invite everyone to hold onto the end of their coloured strip of paper and others to pass along the other end so that strips/lines of paper end up criss-crossing the congregation in a colourful tangle!)

Being a family can look a bit like this *(invite everyone to look around)*.

(Now pass the strips of paper carefully back to the first person – this may take time but it doesn't need to be perfectly! Pass each colour to a person in the back row – if possible, do so in rainbow order!)

Of course what we hope is that in our families at home – and in church – we continue to love and care for each other, even when we don't get on well. *(Ask the people at the back to pass their coloured strip forward to create a rainbow effect across the congregation).*

The rainbow of many colours reminds us that we are all different but that God promises to be with us, to never leave us and it's a promise we can rely on.

(Celebrate this by rippling all the coloured paper strips and saying/shouting "Praise you God!")³

Hymn:

367 STF – When I was lost, you came and rescued me OR

624 STF – Calm me Lord, as you calmed the storm

Readings: Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28; Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b; Romans 10:5-15; Matthew 14:22-33

³ All Age Talk written by Gail Adcock

Hymn:

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

626 STF – Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death

Reflections on the readings

Today's reflection is written by Methodist Local Preacher and Primary School Teacher, Emma Dobson. Let's listen to her words.

To feel the need to prove yourself is uncomfortable, to say the least. It's a horrible feeling, and frankly an impossible task.

Our world seems to pit us against one another, forcing us to resist the temptation to compare and contrast. We really should be content with simply being the best we can be: as I say to my students when they get overly competitive, "*The only person you need to beat is yesterday's you*". However, we all know that's easier said than done. I can practically see you rolling your eyes. We just can't resist comparing ourselves to others. We strive to be the best we can be, and our noses are put ever so slightly out of joint when we see someone doing what we're trying to do, and fear they are doing so more successfully.

Our society pushes the narrative that there are only so many seats at the table, and we have to fight for our place. When we find ourselves falling victim to competition and comparison, we tread the line, accepting nothing but perfection from ourselves, striving for a standard we know we will never be able to truly live up to. We expect nothing but the absolute superhuman from ourselves, knowing that one misstep will raise eyebrows and make way for someone else to take our spot.

Today's Matthew text is a fascinating one. If you were a Sunday school kid, it's likely one you're deeply familiar with. It's one of those rich texts that has the power to offer you a different angle every time you read it. This time, I couldn't help but focus on Peter. I couldn't quite get my head around why he gets out of the boat. He makes the decision to walk on the water and to come to Jesus – it's not Jesus' suggestion. Peter decides to do this all of his own accord. It makes me wonder, was Peter somehow trying to prove himself? Did he feel he had messed up too many times? Did he fear that Jesus might eject him from the group? Did he have the idea in his mind that the other disciples were doing a better job than him? Did he feel that he needed some grand gesture – some big move – to make an impact? If he could attempt the very miracle he had just seen Jesus perform, perhaps he could prove he was worthy of his place by his side.

It also makes me wonder about what Jesus says to Peter: "*Oh ye of little faith, why did you doubt?*" This is a line that has always made me uncomfortable; this idea of faith and doubt as opposites rather than dance partners has never quite sat with me. Perhaps Jesus isn't referring to Peter's lack of faith that made him lose his nerve and sink, but rather the lack of faith that sent him out onto the water in the first place. *Why did you doubt me? Why did you doubt that when I called you, I was going to call you for life? Why did you suddenly feel that you weren't good enough and that you had to pull this silly stunt to try and prove yourself to me?* Perhaps Jesus' rebuke referred to Peter's decision to try and prove his worth when, all along, Jesus has been trying to tell him that he does not need to do that. It's not necessary and it is not part of his kingdom. At no point was Peter pitted against his fellow disciples, or threatened with expulsion or replacement; yet, somehow, Peter felt the need to prove he was worthy of his seat at the table.

Our Genesis story is one of sibling rivalry at its absolute worst. Growing up, I was a bit of a nightmare big sister in many ways. My brother and I were both passionate about the performing arts as kids. My brother was – and still is – very talented. He’s an excellent singer and guitarist, a great mimic and a natural comedian. There’s a five-year age gap between us and I think I always felt slightly threatened that he would somehow catch up to me. I think I was concerned that we occupied similar territory and that he might be better than I was.

The text from Genesis makes me feel a little bit better about my relationship with my brother – at least I never tried to sell him to merchants and throw him down a well, even though I could definitely have been a little more loving. Joseph’s brothers felt incredibly threatened, and in many ways they had good reason to be. Jacob, their father, made it very clear that Joseph was the favourite. He got his own special coat to prove it. They undoubtedly felt pushed out and threatened by their baby brother. The brothers felt there were limited places at the table, and they had to take somewhat extreme steps to secure one for themselves. In the end, Joseph welcomed them with open arms and a heart of forgiveness. They might not have realised it at the time, but there was room enough for all of them. Perhaps, in this Old Testament context, in the face of what seemed like a genuine case of favouritism, it’s understandable that the brothers may not have truly understood their worth. We, however, as modern day readers of the text, have much we can learn from their story with the benefit of hindsight – and the New Testament.

These texts remind us of a truth in our faith that, in many ways, is not particularly groundbreaking. This is nothing we haven’t heard before, but it’s important to be reminded of it by combining these two readings that seem at first glance to have so little in common. We can look to our reading from Romans to find the good news:

“Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile; the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

All ideas of having to prove ourselves good enough are a fallacy. God is calling us to step away from those ideas – from those competitive instincts – and accept that we are enough just as we are. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. This means there is a place at the table for all. We should be wary of Peter, who felt the need to pull some grand gesture to prove himself. We should definitely resist being like Joseph’s brothers who, instead of trusting that they would all eventually find their place in the promised land, left their baby brother for dead in order to gain favour with their father. Jesus comes among us again and again to remind us that all have a seat at his table. We are loved, we are enough and we are welcomed with open arms.

May we learn to listen, and to keep notions of competition and shaky self worth at arm’s length, as we strive to simply be the best disciples we can be.

May we learn to see our fellow travellers not as our competition, but as people who are equally treasured by God, and promised a seat at the table alongside us.

May we learn to have faith in God’s all-encompassing love for all humankind. Hard though it may be to believe, there truly is room for all. Amen.⁴

Hymn:

250 STF – Jesus calls us! O’er the tumult OR

342 STF – All hail the power of Jesu’s name

⁴ Reflection written by Emma Dobson

Prayers of intercession

God of all,
In the quiet of this moment, we lay our wounded world at your feet.

It can be almost impossible to hear your voice above the noise, the chaos and the anger all around us. May we learn to listen with open hearts as we seek to be your people of light.

God of justice

We pray that amidst all the *injustice* we see in this world, we will hear your voice. We pray that your justice will echo through our fractured world, empowering the marginalised, freeing the captive, opening doors for the abused, giving voice to the voiceless
Strengthen us, O God, to be your voice of justice in this world.

God of peace

We pray that amidst the *conflict* we see in this world, we will hear your voice. We pray that your peace will echo through our fractured world, silencing the bombs, reuniting families, empowering our leaders to act with compassion, quelling the insatiable greed.

Strengthen us, O God, to be your voice of peace in this world.

God of compassion,

We pray that amidst the indifference we see in this world, we will hear your voice. We pray that your compassion will echo through our fractured world, comforting the sick, bringing peace to the bereaved and the lonely, giving hope to the struggling.

Strengthen us, O God, to be your voice of compassion in this world.

O God, may we never stop listening for your voice,
May we never stop striving for justice, peace and compassion.
May we be your intercessors in all the small ways we can.

In Jesus' name

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

God of all grace, we have come to your table,
Trusting in your mercy and love for us, and not in our own hard work.
May these gifts, given today, be tokens of our wider commitment to responding to your grace with faith, with love, with the ongoing work for justice and peace.
Carry us, by your Spirit we pray,
Amen.⁶

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Emma Dobson

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Hymn:

696 STF – For the healing of the nations OR

714 STF – The God who sings a new world into being

Blessing

Go out into a world crying out for healing,

Go out to seek reconciliation, possibility, peace,

Go out, and may the Spirit of God go before you, lighting your path.

Go in peace, and serve the Lord.

Amen.⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker