

# twelvebaskets



## ORDINARY 11A

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

Produced by **twelvebaskets**. Subscription available from **[theworshipcloud.com](http://theworshipcloud.com)**

**Third Sunday After Pentecost - Year A**  
18th June 2023



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

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

**148 STF – Come, let us with our Lord arise**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**156 STF – From the breaking of the dawn OR**

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

Readings: Genesis 18:1-15; Romans 5:1-8; Matthew 10:1-23

**Hymn:**

**407 STF – Hear the call of the kingdom OR**

**401 STF – Come, sinners, to the gospel feast**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

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

**553 STF – I am a new creation**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**462 STF – Come with me, come wander, come welcome the world OR**

**699 STF – God of justice, Saviour to all**

Blessing

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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](http://www.theworshipcloud.com).

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## Call to worship

We come to the table, grateful for your welcome.  
We gather in your presence, sharing together in fellowship.  
We are here to receive, bless us by your Spirit, O God.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## Hymn:

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

148 STF – Come, let us with our Lord arise

## Opening Prayers

Living, loving God, you have brought us here,  
And here we are to worship.  
For a moment, we have turned aside from the busyness and business of the day, to  
come and meet with you.  
As we sing, as we worship, as we pray and listen, talk and reflect, give and learn,  
Come amongst us – by your grace,  
Inspire us – by your Spirit,  
Challenge us – with your love.

As we worship, show us how to go from here to play our part in forming a better, safer,  
kinder, more Christ-like world.

Creator and Sustainer, you have brought us here,  
And here we are to worship.  
We know though, O Lord, that we have often fallen short of your glory,  
We have been distracted by the things of this world and drawn away from your calling  
on our lives.  
Come to us now, O God, by your grace, and forgive us for all our shortcomings.  
*[Pause]*.

Even as we repent and say sorry, we know you have already forgiven us, and for that  
we are truly grateful.

Thank you Lord, for this time to worship you and gather in your name,  
Thank you that by your Spirit we are connected with all those worshipping, all around  
the world, on this Lord's day.

We have come, come Lord Jesus.

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

## We say together the Lord's Prayer

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<sup>1</sup> Call to worship written by Tim Baker

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

## All Age Talk

Show me Lord, what is mine to do.

Have you ever had a sense of 'calling'? A sense that there is something you are supposed to do with the one life you have been given? What are the things that make you angry, motivated or give you a desire for things to be different?

Later on in our service, we hear in our readings about how Jesus sent out his disciples to go and make a difference in the world, to:

"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give."

What are the gifts that you have 'freely received'? What are you good at or what do you particularly enjoy?

Are there ways you can use these gifts to help make the world a better place, to spread God's love?

Each of us is called to be a part of God's family, a worldwide-movement of people seeking justice, peace, hope and love. We all have different parts to play – that is why we have all been made different and are good at different things. Perhaps you are not as fast a runner as some of your friends, or perhaps you are less confident at speaking in front of your class or a large group. But what are you good at? We all have skills that need to be put to use if we are going to make better world.

Today, and this week, we invite you think about, to pray about and to reflect on what your part in that world might be...

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

### Hymn:

156 STF – From the breaking of the dawn OR

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

**Readings:** Genesis 18:1-15; Romans 5:1-8; Matthew 10:1-23

### Hymn:

407 STF – Hear the call of the kingdom OR

401 STF – Come, sinners, to the gospel feast

## Reflections on the readings

As I read through these passages, two words kept flashing up in my mind: "Hope" and "Expectation". Hope is a glorious thing. We need it. Without hope, life doesn't feel worth living. It's uplifting, it's motivating, and it's energising.

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<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

Most of the time.

Unfortunately, it doesn't always work that way. Hope can also be paralysing. Getting your hopes up, then having them dashed can be soul-destroying. The energy of hope gives way to the desperation of longing, and is then replaced by the crushing pain of disappointment. Not only an absence of something to be hopeful for, but the feeling of something you could almost touch being cruelly snatched from your grasp. Hope is beautiful, but it can also be dangerous.

This got me thinking about how we pray. Through prayer, we enter into dialogue with God. We offer prayers of adoration and praise, giving what little we can as a worthy offering before our Creator and Sustainer. We bring our confession; in a moment of vulnerability, we lay out the things we are ashamed of, and ask forgiveness. We are met with the transforming reality of grace as we confess and walk away feeling renewed. We pray for our world and the people in it, asking God to intercede. Prayer can be life-changing, life-affirming and transformative. It strengthens our relationship with the Trinity, and gives us the courage to face our world with boldness and radical love. However, none of us can honestly say we fully understand how it works.

How often do we sit down to pray and read off a laundry list of the things we want to see in the world? We pray for someone who is sick to heal, not to die. Not only that, we pray specifically for the surgery they are having to go well and for them to avoid any complications or delays. For a missing person to be found safe and well. Often we're extremely specific. We want this outcome. We hope for this outcome. We need this outcome. We sometimes become desperate for this outcome. Is this always wise?

I remember the case of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman, back in 2002; two 10-year-old girls abducted and later found murdered by school caretaker Ian Huntley. I was almost 10 myself at the time they went missing. In that phase of my life, I had a rolling list of nightly prayers. I would write them down and add new topics whenever they came to light. One of the things on my list was for the girls to be found safe and well. It became a ritual. Every evening, I would pray for that. I remember watching the news, and feeling that people were losing hope. The girls' chances of being found alive were growing slimmer, and each new turn in the case pointed more keenly to their having been killed. Yet, I held onto hope for dear life - I was praying for this. They simply had to be found alive. That's how it worked, right? If I just prayed hard enough, every single night, they would reappear and go home to their families.

Imagine my disappointment and confusion when the devastating news broke.

Hope becomes the fuel that keeps the prayers alive. You want it with all you are. You become desperate for your parent not to die; for your sister's blood test results to come back negative; to pass your driving test; to get that job you've applied for. We pray, and we pray, and we pray. The hope takes over, and begins to consume us.

The reading from Genesis comes to mind here. I can't help but feel uncomfortable when I read it. It speaks of a couple, unable to have children for almost their whole lives, who find themselves expecting, against the odds. I can't speak from experience, but I can't help but wonder if this has the potential to stir up paralysing hope in some people. There are people all over the world who want nothing more than to be pregnant and become a parent, but who cannot for one reason or another. Is this not the kind of passage that can reawaken the kind of hope that turns to despair and desperation? If it happened to Sarah, why can't it happen to me?

The problem is that our prayers are not always answered...or so it seems. More accurately, we don't always get the outcome we are looking for. The world simply doesn't work that way. Free will interferes and messes with our plans. Humans decide

to kill other humans. People lose control of cars. Illness ravages bodies with no rhyme or reason. Employers have to decide between candidates somehow, and have countless different factors to go on. Certain bodies are able to perform some functions, and not others.

We are left feeling hope-less. We are left wondering, where is God? Why didn't God listen to me? Why weren't my prayers answered? Why did my friend's grandmother survive the chemotherapy, but mine didn't? Why can't I have a child of my own?

Do we close ourselves off to helpful insights and answers while looking intently for the one solution we have been praying for and are expecting to find?

Are we simply setting ourselves up for disappointment?

Do we give God impossibly narrow parameters to work within?

Do we underestimate the power we have to bring relief to a situation in need?

Where does this leave us? How do we keep thriving on hope, without letting it turn into disappointment? How do we keep moving through these difficult, tense times?

For me, our readings for this week give us some powerful insights into embracing hope, managing expectations, and turning to Jesus. In our Gospel reading, Jesus sends the disciples out, telling them not to be disheartened by negativity along the way. Maybe they're hoping to go about changing lives left right and centre. The reality is that they're going to have some doors shut in their face, and that's not the end of the world. The relationship they have with Jesus is stronger than the reactions of the people they minister to. Jesus doesn't want them to be crushed by the disappointment of people not being ready to hear the word. God is bigger than all of that.

Lutheran Pastor and author Nadia Bolz-Weber had this to say on the subject:

"This community will disappoint them. It's a matter of when, not if. We will let them down or I'll say something stupid and hurt their feelings. I then invite them on this side of their inevitable disappointment to decide if they'll stick around after it happens. If they choose to leave when we don't meet their expectations, they won't get to see how the grace of God can come in and fill the holes left by our community's failure, and that's just too beautiful and too real to miss."

The passage from Romans doubles down on this: our hope comes from God, and we are loved by a God who is bigger than all of our expectations, misconceptions and heartaches. God's love guides us through the expected and unexpected, and accompanies us on the journey which is guaranteed to change us along the way.

May we delight in the renewing power of hope, which sustains and motivates us.

When we pray, may we remember that God's ways are far beyond our understanding, and the answers we think we are seeking may not be the ones we get.

May we remember that, sometimes...Life Happens. (I could have used much fruitier language here - feel free to substitute one word for another if it works for you!) Life throws us surprises, some of them nasty, and it can be a dangerous game to imagine that God is responsible for them all. May we remember that God is with us in the midst of those nasty surprises. God sits alongside us, holding us as we reel from the pain that life deals out. We find God in the centre, weeping with us. Prayer may not be able to change the outcome of a situation, but it can strengthen that relationship - this is its life-changing power.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Emma Dobson

**Hymn:**

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

553 STF – I am a new creation

**Prayers of intercession**

God of our past, present and future,

In you, we find peace. We find sanctuary. We can rest in your presence, and take our minds beyond the stress, frustration, disappointment, excitement, anxiety and busyness of everyday life.

In you, we have the opportunity to cast our gaze out into our world without feeling defeated, helpless or lost. We can share everything on our hearts in freedom and without fear, and we know you hear us. In your presence, we find the kind of sustaining hope that renews our resolve to be your disciples in the world.

We come to you with our prayers for a world in need of your light and your hope. We bring everything on our minds, knowing there is no need to have our thoughts perfectly aligned or organised.

We pray for people living in the midst of conflict, in their country, workplace or home

*[Silence]*

We pray for people who feel alone in this world, having been estranged from family, bereaved, or forced to flee a home that no longer feels safe

*[Silence]*

We pray for those people known to us struggling with physical or mental illness, loneliness, a lack of direction, anxiety or pain of any kind

*[Silence]*

Into your hands, O Lord, we place all of these situations on our hearts. We pray that you open our minds and help us listen for your response, whatever it may look like. We ask for your guidance to be your hands, feet and voice in this world, bringing the joy of your hope closer to those who are struggling to see it.

In Jesus' name

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

**We will now take up the offering.**

Gracious God, we give you praise for your goodness to us. Take these gifts, and use them in the ongoing transformation of the world, in the name of all that is good, and right, and just and loving.

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Emma Dobson

<sup>6</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker

**Hymn:**

462 STF – Come with me, come wander, come welcome the world OR

699 STF – God of justice, Saviour to all

**Blessing**

Go and enter into the flow of love that is at work in the universe.

Go and discover that God is out there, moving, transforming, touching lives and all creation.

Go and encounter the Spirit of God.

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker