

# twelvebaskets



## LENT 1A

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

Produced by **twelvebaskets**. Subscription available from **theworshipcloud.com**

**Lent 1 - Year A**  
26th February 2023



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**107 STF – I sing the almighty power of God OR**

**238 STF – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**317 STF – At the name of Jesus OR**

**531 STF – What a friend we have in Jesus**

Readings: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

**Hymn:**

**254 STF – Seek ye first the kingdom of God OR**

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

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**727 STF – God in his love for us lent us this planet OR**

**729 STF – Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**440 STF – Amazing Grace OR**

**345 STF – And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?**

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**

Come, let us worship, and meet with the living God.

Some of our service has been prepared for us today from our friends at All We Can, the international development charity of the Methodist Church. As we listen, learn and are challenged, may we see that how we respond is part of our worship, part of what it means to follow you, Lord God.

Come amongst us, by your Spirit, Lord God,

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## **Hymn:**

107 STF – I sing the almighty power of God OR

238 STF – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

## **Opening Prayers**

Heavenly Father,

Thank you that nothing can separate us from your love,  
Thank you for the life, freedom and healing we have in Jesus.

We believe that you can do more than we could ever think of or imagine, and we are ready for something new, a new way of thinking and a new way of living that brings love and hope to those most marginalized in the world.

We can only do this in your strength, so we put our trust and hope in you today.

As we join with our brothers and sisters across the world, we confess our sins and shortcomings, we wait for you, heal and forgive us, Lord God.

Loving God, we pray that this day we will experience your presence lifting us up on wings like eagles, to run and not grow weary, to walk and not grow faint.

Please lead us and guide us for your glory and the expansion of your Kingdom today.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

## **We say together the Lord's Prayer**

### **All Age Talk**

What do you need?: 2 people, an obstacle course of things easily available in church.  
(Ease of course is dependent on who your volunteers are – if possible, take the

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<sup>1</sup> Call to worship written by All We Can

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by All We Can

course into the congregation for maximum engagement), Props: A large bottle of water, a bag of flour, a stuffed animal, an umbrella, an extension lead, a pile of books, a long stick or pole, a trolley/cart (something with wheels). Blindfold. Printed script.

### The Old Way

Person 1 and 2 set up the obstacle course together and then stand at the start of it. If you have more volunteers, ask them to ask to the obstacle course!

Person 2 puts on a blindfold.

Person 1 guides person 2 through the obstacle course, with verbal instructions and a helping hand.

Person 2 takes off blindfold.

Questions for the congregation:

- What is good about what person one is doing?
- What is less helpful?
- Who made the decisions?

### The New Way

Person 1 and 2 turn to start the obstacle course from where they've just finished. Do not add a blindfold.

With person 1 in front, both take 1 step together and stop. Person 1 steps out and gives person 2 one of the props.

Ask anyone in the congregation if they have anything that might 'help' person 2 complete the obstacle course.

Repeat the process until both have reached the end of the obstacle course and are holding all of the props.

Questions for the congregation:

- What is good about what person one is doing?
- What is less helpful?
- Who made the decisions?

### A Better Way

Both turn to face the obstacle course. Person 1 takes a step back and remains outside the course.

Person 1: What is in front of you?

Person 2 answers and takes a step.

Person 1: What will help you complete this journey?

Person 2 answers and takes a step.

Person 1: who can best help you complete it?

Person 2 answer and takes a step.

Person 1: Are you safe and content on your journey?

Person 2 answers and takes a step.

Person 1: What do you hope will happen on your journey?

Person 2 answers and takes a step.

Person 1: Can we help in any way at the moment? Would you like any of these things? *[Indicate the props]*

Person 2 answers and continues to walk until they've finished the course.

*[Applause]*

Questions for the congregation:

- What is good about what person one is doing?
- Who made the decisions?
- How did person 2 know how to complete the obstacle course?

Questions for person 2: How did it feel different to the other two ways?

Question for person 1: What feels uncomfortable, sitting back and watching someone navigate the obstacles?

If we "do for" someone, they will always be reliant on our help. If we "do to" someone, we are in danger of adding obstacles and difficulties to their journey or preventing them from learning. However, when we have the attitude of assuming somebody knows the answers and are able to assess the obstacles, then they will continue to learn to navigate the difficulties in front of them building capacity and resilience. This approach works for empowering children, for people living with dementia and for people who have all the obstacles that living in poverty creates. People have potential, our attitude towards them can hinder or empower it.

This change in the way we think is crucial to All We Can's way of operating, and hopefully this exercise has helped you see that. When All We Can works in communities around the world, they are committed to the 'better way' from the illustration. Can we be, when we work with and alongside people, communities and organisations here in the UK, as a church? Can we challenge some of the old ways of thinking.<sup>3</sup>

### **Hymn:**

317 STF – At the name of Jesus OR

531 STF – What a friend we have in Jesus

**Readings:** Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

### **Hymn:**

254 STF – Seek ye first the kingdom of God OR

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

### **Reflections on the readings**

How do you feel about 'temptation'? What are your experiences of being 'tempted'?

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<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by All We Can

Perhaps, this word and this idea brings about negative emotions, difficult memories, our own battles with addiction or addictive behaviours, our struggle with our shadow-side.

Today, in our readings, we heard classic tales of temptation from the Bible. Firstly, that moment in Genesis when Adam and Eve first disobey the clear boundaries God has set them.

Then, in the Gospels, Jesus is in the wilderness, being tempted by Satan – being challenged to make the same mistakes that Adam made and to turn away from God's guidelines. Jesus resists those temptations here, at the beginning of his ministry.

Paul's interpretation of these stories in Romans is the classic one, the 'as in Adam all die, so in Christ all live' message. There is obviously something in this message that is vital for us and many sermons have been preached on that theme, especially on the first Sunday in Lent.

However, in light of the climate crisis affecting us today and making a dramatic impact around the world, especially in some of the poorest communities, perhaps we can take a different view of these readings. Perhaps they show us a relationship with nature and the environment that is broken in Genesis, and then re-established through Jesus.

Just as Adam crosses the line and destroys the harmonious relationship between humanity and creation in Genesis, so then later, Jesus refuses to do so. Just as Adam uses, consumes and destroys a fruit that he had been specifically instructed to leave alone; so Jesus resists the temptations of over-use, over-consumption and destruction. He opts for fasting, rather than consumption.

In Matthew, Jesus's resistance of the three offers made by the tempter shows that he is anti-consumption, anti-ego and in opposition to the worship of false gods.

Perhaps this is the narrative, the story we need to hear, to help us get beyond the temptations that cause climate change? It is the temptation of cheap fuel that adds to the carbon in the atmosphere, it is the temptation of packaging that adds to the single-use plastics in the ocean, it is the temptation of cheap resources that leads to the felling of large swathes of forest.

Can we resist the temptation this Lent?

You might like to use All We Can's Lent resources this year to help you focus and grow. You can order a copy or download the resources online at [allwecan.org.uk/lent](http://allwecan.org.uk/lent)

Let's spend a few minutes talking to each other about these issues. How can we resist the temptations of consumption this Lenten season, and build a more sustainable world?<sup>4</sup>

*[Share together].*

Now, to bring our thoughts together, we will hear a reflection from Judith Dimond.

Gaze on the view from the top of a cathedral or a castle keep. You've climbed hundreds of worn, stone steps, twisting round the narrow internal staircase with only a

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Tim Baker

narrow slit to let in light, and your heart is racing. At last you feel the breeze and see the light ahead as you come out onto the parapet. If you are lucky, there are sturdy railings all around. The view below is a maze of streets and, in the distance, a chessboard of fields; the sheep and cattle are like animals in a children's toy farmyard. Villages and towns are dimly visible on the horizon. You lean over the edge of the parapet, and experience the fear of falling.

Consider the difference between the verbs testing and tempting. Think about the tests you have had in your life. Tests at school to see how much you've learnt; tests in hospital, to find out the cause of illness, or maybe the exciting test to discover if a baby is on the way. Consider the way athletes test themselves, always pushing further and harder, determined to improve. Such testing has a place in all our lives, to keep us from complacency. Tests measure us up against a standard, and give us a goal to strive towards. It is to be expected that God will test us. We learn about that in the Old Testament.

But temptation does not come from God. Temptation always comes from the devil.

The objects of the temptation are always very attractive, and sometimes very insignificant: another hour in bed, another bottle of wine, where's the harm? But if we give way to the little things, how will we cope when faced with a larger challenge?

Succumbing to temptation, even the smallest, in some sense chips away at the integrity of our self. It either harms our ability to respond to God, or harms others.

Consider the links between Jesus' forty days in the desert, before the angels came and attended him, and the forty years of the tribes of Israel, wandering the wilderness before they found the promised land. The people were often tested, and at other times were tempted to disobey the will of their God. And when they gave in to temptation, they faced disaster.

The Old and the New Testaments are always in dialogue with each other, and we should use the Old Testament to illuminate the message of the New, and the New to correct the Old.

Contemplate the devil's third temptation, the worst of them all: 'bow down and worship me.'

Contemplate how often the temptations we struggle with are disguised versions of this enticement, which is to give up on God and turn towards the world. For our faith is hard and sometimes there seems little reward. We see others lead easier lives, and begin to wonder if there is much point in trusting in God rather than the ways of the world.

Contemplate the decisions you've made recently and the choices you need to make soon. Whom will they prove you to be worshipping?

*[Pause]*

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, when I am tested may I grow through the experience  
And strengthen my resolve to follow you.  
When I am tempted, help me to resist

The enticements that lead away from you  
And would keep me forever wandering in the wilderness.<sup>5</sup>

**Hymn:**

727 STF – God in his love for us lent us this planet OR

729 STF – Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently

**Prayers of intercession**

For our prayers of intercession, we will take three periods of quiet, in which we will bring our own prayers to God.

Firstly, I invite you to call to mind somebody close to home who needs our prayers this day – perhaps someone in your own family, a close friend, or a member of this church community. In a moment of quiet, just hold that person’s name, or face, or situation, before a loving God.

*[Pause]*

Loving God, show us the way to care for those we know,  
And let our hearts be tuned to love.

Secondly, I invite you to call to mind a person or situation further afield, which needs us to pray today. It might be something you have read about in the news, or a story that has found its way to you, but which you feel you need to pray for. Hold those people, that situation, before a loving God.

*[Pause]*

Loving God, show us the way to care for our world, and all those who call it home,  
And let our hearts be tuned to love.

Finally, I invite you to spend a moment praying for the church – perhaps this Church here in this community, perhaps the wider Methodist circuit or the church in the world. Let’s hold God’s people before a loving God.

*[Pause]*

Loving God, show us the way to be a people who bring about the change we want to see in the world,  
And let our hearts be tuned to love.

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

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

*If you feel it is appropriate, you may wish to donate your offering, or part of it, to All We Can.*

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<sup>5</sup> Reflection written by Tim Baker, with an extract from Gazing on the Gospels by Judith Diamond.

<sup>6</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker



Lord of abundance,

Thank you that you pour out your Spirit so freely that her sparks are everywhere, just waiting to be harnessed.

We pray that our offering to you may be equally generous, loving, and open to collaboration.

In the name of Christ,

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

**Hymn:**

440 STF – Amazing Grace OR

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?

**Blessing**

As we go from this place, may the God who releases and trusts us to be the builders of his Kingdom, inspire us to trust and release others – fanning into flame the potential which is around us.

Amen.<sup>8</sup>

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

<sup>8</sup> Additional prayers by All We Can