

# twelvebaskets



## LENT 3B

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

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**Third Sunday in Lent - Year B**  
3rd March 2024



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**49 STF – God beyond all names OR**

**17 STF – With gladness we worship**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**247 STF – I danced in the morning OR**

**110 STF – In the wonder of creation**

Readings: Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

**Hymn:**

**455 STF – All my hope on God is founded OR**

**564 STF – O thou who camest from above**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**702 STF – I will speak out for those who have no voices OR**

**713 STF – Show me how to stand for justice**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**409 STF – Let us build a house where love can dwell OR**

**503 STF – Love divine all loves excelling**

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

This is the gathering time,  
The worshipping time,  
The time set aside this week for us to come to know you more, Lord God.  
Come amongst us, by your Spirit, we pray

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## Hymn:

49 STF – God beyond all names OR

17 STF – With gladness we worship

## Opening Prayers

*During Lent, All We Can are inviting people to ask the question ‘What is Mine to Do?’ Recognising that discerning where our voice and actions are most needed is a key part of justice-seeking. Each week, they are focussing on one word which represents one possible answer to that question. In Week 3 of Lent, that word is Fundraise. Find out more at [allwecan.org.uk/resources](http://allwecan.org.uk/resources)*

Lord of Plenty,

Thank you that you provide us with so many resources that we can use to make your love known. Whether they be money, time, enthusiasm, or knowledge.

Thank you that so many Kingdom-building causes can be sustained by the giving and fundraising of ordinary folk.

Teach me, O Lord

**What is mine to do.**

Thank you that even when we feel short on resources ourselves, we have opportunities to tap into the resources of a whole community when we rally behind a particular goal. Help us to identify causes and opportunities that we might be well placed to raise funds for.

Teach me, O Lord

**What is mine to do.**

We are sorry, Lord, for the times where we become too inward-looking. Where we neglect to use our varied resources for something beyond ourselves.

Teach me, O Lord

**What is mine to do.**

Remind us, God, that we are loved by you just as we are, and that through the power of your Spirit you can do amazing things through us.

Teach me, O Lord

**What is mine to do.**

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

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

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

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

### **All Age Talk**

*Materials needed: paper/post-it notes, pens/pencils*

In the gospel reading from John, we heard the recounting of a moment in Jesus' ministry that particularly stands out. Jesus, throughout the gospels is unflappable, calm in the face of Pharisees trying to trip him up with questions, sleeping through storms, surrounded by crowds wanting to touch him and be healed, but here he demonstrates a very human trait. He gets angry.

Do you ever get angry? Do you ever feel consumed with a rage that needs to be physically released or is your anger more like a simmering pot on the edge of boiling over? What makes you angry?

Take some time to think about what makes you angry. Write them down. Once you've written them down, turn to the people around you and share your anger lists. Do you have any similarities? Did they give you some new ideas of things to get angry about?

*Encourage people to bring their notes up to the front to a table or noticeboard and display them face up so all the examples can be seen.*

Anger is a complicated emotion. We can often try our best to avoid it, squash it down. Perhaps we are quick to anger and we see the damage that it can do. We get angry when things don't go our way, when life is hard, when people disappoint or let us down. We get angry with the world when we see injustice and oppression, corruption and greed. Anyone who is paying attention to the news will probably have felt some anger, particularly in recent years.

In this passage we see Jesus letting his anger out when he sees how the temple, the place of worship, is being misused. This incident appears in Matthew and Mark as well and you may recall the phrasing of Jesus overturning the tables. Jesus doesn't just get angry, he drives out the merchants and sellers who have set up shop in the temple. He makes a whip and physically moves them from the space. This isn't a quiet, simmering rage, it's a burning fire of righteous anger.

Why is this important for us? Well, as disciples of Jesus, we have chosen to follow him, to walk with him throughout our lives so we also may need to allow a holy rage to consume us when we see the people God dwells within being mistreated, abused, and taken advantage of. That does not mean we need to find some rope and make some whips today but it may mean we need to think about the resources we have to combat the many things we've shared today that make us angry. How do we put love into action to offset the horrors we see in the world? What can we do in response to the anger that stirs in our hearts?

Come up and choose an example of someone's anger and turn it over, write on the blank side an action to drive out the cause of that anger.

*[Give people a bit of time to come up and write down their responses.*

*Read out some of the examples of how we can turn our anger into positive responses].*

We have here a collection of love responses to righteous anger. Let us offer them to God in prayer.

Lord,

You used your anger to protect the holiness of God's temple and now dwell within us through the Holy Spirit. Stir up our hearts to feel your holy rage. Give us eyes and ears to be

alert to where we need to draw on your power. We offer you all the ways we have thought of to bring hope and love into the world and pray that you will use us however you see fit.

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

**Hymn:**

247 STF – I danced in the morning OR

110 STF – In the wonder of creation

**Readings:** Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

**Hymn:**

455 STF – All my hope on God is founded OR

564 STF – O thou who camest from above

**Reflections on the readings**

"Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are."

Do you know these wise words from Saint Augustine? We are going to use them today to frame our gospel reading.

It is a challenge to think about anger as anything other than a force for destruction. An emotion to be avoided at all costs.

Today's reflection comes from Luzy Zwolinska and she is asking us to think about anger. What do you think of when you think of anger?

On writing this reflection, I've just finished reading *Impossible Creatures*, a children's fantasy book named as Waterstone's book of the year 2023. As the title suggests, it is full of impossible, magical creatures, from unicorns to dragons and from mermaids to sphynxes. When I think of anger, I think of the kraken in this story – an angry sea monster which angrily smashes to smithereens any boat passing through its waters. *Impossible Creatures* contains a terrifying passage in which the main characters are in a boat attacked by an angry kraken and escape by the skin of their teeth. What anger brings to mind for me is something found in the scary depths of the sea and should be feared, and avoided. What does anger mean to you?

Throughout the Gospels, and perhaps particularly throughout Lent and into Easter, we see Jesus in many, contrasting postures. From riding triumphantly into Jerusalem on donkey, to being put to death on a cross between two criminals; from a teacher coming close to those around him, to someone escaping the crowds to find time for solitary prayer. What is an image of Christ that you find helpful and encouraging?

An image I find comfort in is Jesus washing the feet of his disciples the night before he died; a gentle, servant God who draws close to us. But in today's Bible passage, Jesus is in a posture that couldn't be further from this. He is, as was prophesied in Psalm 69, consumed with zeal - a great fury - at how people are treating his father's house.

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<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by Sheila Matthews

When I think of postures such as grace or servant leadership, or sacrificial love, I think of Jesus. But when I think of rage and zeal and fury, I find it much easier to think of mythical beasts thrashing in the depths of the sea.

I think that's because often we see anger as ubiquitous; a singular, negative emotion that destroys - pulling people and things apart. But if there's anything we can learn from today's Bible reading, it is that there is another type of anger, a beautiful, righteous one which, in contrast with krakens, is constructive. Born from hope. And not to be afraid of.

Jesus, in his zeal about his father's house, is, in fact, angry because things are not as they ought to be. His anger is a force to bring back right and proper worship into his father's house. It is to bring about something holy - and therefore wholly worth getting angry about!

In this posture of constructive anger, there is something beautiful and hopeful. Jesus, son of God, came to earth and saw greed and profiteering in the temple. He didn't walk away and wash his hands; his posture wasn't one of apathy. And he didn't choose a posture of destructive anger, choosing to write-off the human race as beyond repair. No, he saw that bringing about the Kingdom of God on earth was worth getting angry about. He made a whip out of cord, but he didn't use it to attack and maim, instead he used it to drive out the people exchanging money and selling doves, restoring the temple to its purpose as a place of worship. His anger was a force for constructive, positive change.

What a challenge for those of us who usually shy away from anger – are we, too, called to use anger as a force for constructive, positive change? What would that look like for you? For us, as a church?

In a world in which we see so much destruction; where we see war and poverty and climate change, it is a cry of hope to say that we too, think this is worth getting angry about. Not in a way that destructs, but in a constructive way that fights for justice and enables God's Kingdom to flourish.

Back to *Impossible Creatures*, I have been considering why the novel was named book of the year 2023, and I think that a great deal of it is because it provides an utter escape from reality, and 2023 was a year where, for many, reality was difficult to stomach. The book is classic children's fantasy adventure, starring a small girl wearing an oversized coat that means she can fly, and a young boy whose job it is to guard the entrance to the beautiful magical world which the reader can escape to. But it also, without giving away too much of the story, has a central theme of sacrifice for those you love. More than one character says 'yes' to loving others even when it has grave consequences for themselves. It is hard to read it without thinking of it as a deeply Christian text. There is something so compelling and moving about someone laying down their life for their friends. Perhaps this is why it became a best seller.

So hallelujah that, as Christians our hope is in Jesus, who is – for us – God made human, and who laid down his life for all of us.

In the life Jesus led on earth, and in his death and resurrection, we find our hope. And we also find our blueprint for living this hope out; Jesus models many postures for us of how to live a Godly life.

This Lent, may we find ways to live life like Jesus did; by being humble servants, by remaining steadfastly committed to the Kingdom of God and sometimes, perhaps, even though it might feel uncomfortable, by finding righteous, constructive anger within ourselves that leads us to stand up for justice. As Saint Augustine said:

"Hope has two beautiful daughters; their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and Courage to see that they do not remain as they are."

Questions for discussion:

1. Can you think of an example of destructive anger?
2. What about examples of righteous constructive anger? Are they harder to find?
3. What injustice makes you angry? What can you do constructively with this anger?
4. How can you be courageous in bringing about God's Kingdom?<sup>4</sup>

**Hymn:**

702 STF – I will speak out for those who have no voices OR

713 STF – Show me how to stand for justice

**Prayers of intercession**

In today's reflection we looked at some words of Saint Augustine, so we'll also borrow a prayer of his for our prayers of intercession today. His most famous prayer goes like this:

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy. Amen.

Let us pray.

*Breath in me, O Holy Sprit, that my thoughts may all be holy.*

God, we are sorry for the times that we have held other things as more important than you.

For when our thoughts have been mean or selfish or greedy, we ask for your forgiveness.

Thank you, God, that through you we are forgiven, and given the chance to start afresh.

*Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.*

God, we ask that you guide each one of us towards a life full of your works.

Thank you that you have ordained each one of us to fully participate in your beautiful plans for the world.

Please give us the wisdom and courage to act according to your will.

*Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.*

Thank you God that you have created a world in which there is so much to love.

And we ask you to move in each one of us so that our hearts are in line with yours.

We particularly ask that you give us the strength of heart to love the people who we find it hardest to love. Draw our hearts to them, God.

*Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.*

God, where we see injustice, strengthen us to stand up for justice, peace and hope. Where we see a lack of you, may we bring your light and your Good News.

In situations where a good outcome feels impossible, we ask for a miraculous moving of your Hold Spirit.

*Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.*

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Lucy Zwolinska

Make us Holy, God, and remind us that this can only stem from you.

Draw us close and fill us with your love.

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

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

As we move into the season of Spring, as new life begins appearing all around us, we give thanks for the gifts of creation, for the signs of hope and possibility.

Amongst all that is difficult, all that is painful, all that is uncertain, come Lord Jesus, and use these gifts that we offer to you today, use them for your Kingdom here on earth.

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

### **Hymn:**

409 STF – Let us build a house where love can dwell OR

503 STF – Love divine all loves excelling

### **Blessing**

Let us build a house where all can live in peace, where safety reigns, where every person has a chance to fulfill their potential, where love thrives and flourishes.

Let us build this house in our communities, in our own homes, and around the world.

Through Jesus Christ we pray,

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Lucy Zwolinska

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

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