

twelvebaskets



LENT 5C

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

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

Fifth Sunday in Lent - Year C
6th April 2025



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

81 STF – Now thank we all our God OR

2 STF – Come let us sing to the One

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

94 STF – To God be the glory, great things he has done! OR

46 STF – Everlasting God, the years go by but you're unchanging

Readings: Isaiah 43: 16-21, Psalm 126, Philippians 3: 4b-14, John 12: 1-8

Hymn:

456 STF – And are we yet alive, and see each other's face? OR

470 STF – Lord for the years your love has kept and guided

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain? OR

489 STF – All I once held dear, built my life upon

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

287 STF – When I survey the wondrous cross OR

278 STF – O love divine, what have you done!

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.

Copyright for content is retained by the original author / contributor.

www.theworshipcloud.com

Call to worship

Come to the Lord's table,
Come and eat with the people of God,
Come and learn from those who a different and from wisdom ancient and new,
Come and share together, that we might better model a world of harmony, hope, peace
and love,
In Jesus' name

Amen.¹

Hymn:

81 STF – Now thank we all our God OR

2 STF – Come let us sing to the One

Opening Prayers

Let us pray our opening prayers, based on Psalm 126.

Loving God, you have brought us this far,
Restoring us when we have been broken, holding us when we have wept, healing us when
we have been wounded.

Today we give you thanks and praise for your steadfast love.

Today we see the great things you have done,

The great love you have shared,

And we are filled with joy.

As we begin our worship today,

We know many in our world, in our congregation gathered here and in our friendship and
family circles are weeping, and in pain.

As we sing your praises today, we ask that you restore them,

That you restore us.

May your grace, your love, flow like a healing stream this day, O God,

And may we who are weeping find the courage to sing songs of joy.

Heal us, forgive us, accept us, and set us free we pray,

In Jesus' name

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

All Age Talk

Once upon a time my family and friends used to watch antiques roadshow and whilst most of us would gasp at something being called 'priceless' the six year old was left confused asking 'why are they happy surprised when the person says it doesn't have a price?' for the six year old misunderstood what 'priceless' meant, but it started a conversation about price, value and worth...

I'd like to ask a question 'What is something that is precious to you?'

Here's another question 'If you had to leave your house in a hurry and could only take one thing with you, what would you take? (assuming people and animals are safe)

[Invite responses]

Some of our precious things might also be worth a lot in monetary value/that have cost us lots of pennies, where as other precious things might not cost very much money at all, but rather it's the memories and the thought behind them/the sentiment that make them precious.

in our gospel reading today we shall be listening to a story about what Mary holds precious, even more precious than some very expensive perfume.³

Hymn:

94 STF – To God be the glory, great things he has done! OR

46 STF – Everlasting God, the years go by but you're unchanging

Readings: Isaiah 43: 16-21, Psalm 126, Philippians 3: 4b-14, John 12: 1-8

Hymn:

456 STF – And are we yet alive, and see each other's face? OR

470 STF – Lord for the years your love has kept and guided

Reflections on the readings

The title of this reflection, written by Barbara Glasson, a former President of the Methodist Conference, is: Taking sides.

Day three of my canal walk and my pace was slacking. To try to speed up a bit I started to sing (silently) the Boney M. song 'By the rivers of Babylon'. It was quite a good pace setter but the words started to get in my head. 'Let my people go!' As I had time and space to reflect, I began to ponder the ancient story of the Exodus, the enslaved Israelites, the drowned Egyptians and then, rather unexpectedly I got to thinking about Pharaoh.

Now Pharaoh, in the story, is portrayed as a merciless tyrant, not even letting those poor slaves off work for half a day to go and say their prayers. He couldn't even be persuaded by locusts, boils or other pestilence. He was a cruel and heartless oppressor, or was he? Truth is we don't know, we only know the version of events as told by the enslaved people. But if we think of Pharaoh's dilemma it feels slightly more complicated, after all letting all

³ All Age Talk written by Mark Stennett

your workforce wander off into the wilderness without a backward glance was tantamount to economic suicide. Who would make the bricks, who would provide the manual labour, who would feed the people?

There are echoes of the Exodus story in Psalm 126 When the Lord, 'brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed, our mouths were full of laughter, our tongues with songs of joy.' And in the Isaiah reading for today we hear of how the Lord 'snuffed out the chariots and horses' when he parted the sea for the departing Israelites and how that Lord is going to make all things new. The story of the Exodus is a foundational, primal and liberating story for those who tell it, but not for everyone.

Of course, the purpose of the story is not for us to pick it apart. The purpose of the story is to make a point and that is why this story is a foundation for a particular people rather than a balanced news item. But if we don't hear stories with an eye to who is being silenced or left out then we are open to believing only one version of events, which can be a dangerous thing.

So, should we take sides? Let's think about this in relation to what happens in Bethany (John 12:1-8) There's a gathering of people around Jesus who had recently raised Lazarus from the dead. This was causing quite a stir and the authorities could see that there was danger of insurrection. The house in Bethany was clearly a hub for the troublemakers and here is a scene where a woman is pouring very expensive ointment over Jesus. Does this mean he has aspirations to raise the rebellion, to overthrow the establishment? Enter Judas, stage right. (every story needs a villain) Why was such precious ointment being wasted? Surely giving the money to the poor was a much better option? Yes, Judas has a very good point! So, the story teller must discredit him immediately, why would you trust such a man? Hmm.

Should we take sides? (and before we explore that question further we should note that John's gospel is often cited as a place of anti-semitism due to its casting of 'the Jews' as the ones that crucified Jesus, so let's be careful)

Returning for a moment to the canal walk. As I sang 'let my people go' and began to think about Pharaoh, I also began to acknowledge that there was quite a lot of Pharaoh in me. Now, I don't think I've intentionally enslaved people but I do order things from Amazon and I am not sure the delivery driver gets a fair wage, and I have stayed in hotel rooms where I have no idea who makes the bed and I do like a nice meal out when in all honesty the money would be better given to the foodbank. In all these small ways I am taking sides, and mostly the side I take is to my advantage – after all if I stop doing these things isn't the economy going to crash and we'll all be the poorer? Maybe we all need to recognise our inner Pharaoh?

So should we take sides because to be honest we are doing it all the time, left wing or right wing, Israel or Gaza, state school or public school, NHS or private medicine at every twist and turn of the road we align ourselves with a group or cause and convince ourselves that we are on the right side, that the stories we are hearing and those we are telling just prove a point of view.

Now, let us go to the letter to the Philippians – a letter apparently written by Paul, a man who was prone to taking sides, a stalwart persecutor of Christians, a zealous believer and loyal Jew who, after a sudden conversion experience completely turned on his heel and understood things completely differently. Paul definitely took sides but he also changed his mind, began to see other points of view, stood in a different place to view the world and interpret what he saw. And in that, I sense is hope for all of us.

Should we take sides? For people of faith the answer seems to be yes, but whose side should we favour? Here maybe we find constancy between the Hebrew and Christian accounts – we should favour the side of the oppressed, those who need liberation rather

than those who imprison, we should take the side of the truth tellers rather than the liars and we should take the side of the weakest even if it costs us our own strength. And for followers of Jesus this is so that we may know Christ and be found in him.

Questions for discussion in small groups or as a whole congregation:

Do you recognise your inner Pharaoh?

Should Christians take sides?

When have you taken a side but changed your mind?

In what ways does following Jesus make Christ known for us?

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain? OR

489 STF – All I once held dear, built my life upon

Prayers of intercession

When we hear stories of conflict and oppression,
When we do not know who we should support,
May we know Christ and be found in him.

When we face difficult choices,
When we are confused by conflicting interests,
May we know Christ and be found in him.

When we are bombarded by opinions,
When we don't know what to follow or whom to believe,
May we know Christ and be found in him.

When we are tempted to be oppressors,
When we take sides at the expense of the poorest,
May we know Christ and be found in him.

In all things and in all ways,
Even if it means changing our minds,
admitting we are wrong
or seeing our own mistakes,
May we know Christ and be found in him.

Amen.⁵

⁴ Reflection written by Barbara Glasson

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Barbara Glasson

We will now take up the offering.

God who gives, God who shares, God who blesses,
Accept these simple gifts this day,
The gifts of our money, and the gifts we have to offer this week.
Bless them, and bless each of us,
That our work, our generosity, our energy,
Might be used to enhance your Kingdom here on earth.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

287 STF – When I survey the wondrous cross OR

278 STF – O love divine, what have you done!

Blessing

God whose love reaches us, no matter how far we have run away from it,
Help each of us to know that love today,
Coming close,
Guiding our actions,
Calling us into deeper relationship with you.
We love you God, help us to love with your divine love,
This and every day,

Amen.⁷

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker