

twelvebaskets



EPIPHANY 6C

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

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Sixth Sunday After Epiphany - Year C
16th February 2025



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

83 STF – Praise, my soul, the King of heaven OR

88 STF – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

544 STF – As the deer pants for the water OR

478 STF – Thank you, O God, for the time that is now

Readings: Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20; Luke 6:17-26

Hymn:

504 STF – May the mind of Christ my Saviour OR

313 STF – Thine be the glory

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

639 STF – Through the love of God our Saviour OR

351 STF – In Christ alone my hope is found

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

462 STF – Come with me, come wander OR

239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I

Blessing

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Call to worship

This is the Lord's day and we gather to encounter you, our risen Lord.

This is a holy day and we come to learn more of you, our loving Lord.

This moment, in this act of worship, we commit ourselves to you again, come amongst us by your Spirit, we pray.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

83 STF – Praise, my soul, the King of heaven OR

88 STF – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!

Opening Prayers

Light of the world –

Like a fire blazing in a stone hearth,

remind us today of the dazzling strength and power of your love.

Like a camping stove providing warmth and food for weary travellers,
remind us today of the rest and sustenance provided for us by your spirit.

Like a torch beam lighting the path,
remind us today of your ongoing guidance towards what is good and true when we are unsure of the way.

Like a lone candle flickering on a table,
remind us that only one little flame of hope is needed to expel the darkness.

And like the stars in the sky,
remind us that it is sometimes only in total darkness that we are able to see the magnitude of your presence.

Light of the world be with us today - meeting us totally as we are - as we come together to worship.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Jesus gave various different versions of the 'Beatitudes', his famous 'blessed are the...' sayings. Later in our service we will hear the version from Luke's Gospel, which includes:

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Hannah Baker

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.
Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.
Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven.”

How do these famous sayings speak to you today? Is there one in particular that helps you, or speaks to the situation you find yourself in at the moment?

Sometimes, the Beatitudes are a helpful reminder to check just how fortunate we are – to realise that many of the struggles named are not our struggles. Sometimes, they are a reminder that you are blessed, right now, today, in the midst of the most difficult and challenging part of your life.

God is always on the side of those who are oppressed, or left out, or poor, or alone, or grieving. If that’s you today, hopefully you can take some comfort from it. If it is someone you know, then perhaps they can motivate you to find a way to include them, to bless them, to pray for them today.

What are we doing when we bless someone or something? Is that something you can do today? This week? In the weeks to come?³

Hymn:

544 STF – As the deer pants for the water OR

478 STF – Thank you, O God, for the time that is now

Readings: Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20; Luke 6:17-26

Hymn:

504 STF – May the mind of Christ my Saviour OR

313 STF – Thine be the glory

Reflections on the readings

Today’s focus for our reflection is based on Psalm 1 and Luke’s less familiar words from “The Sermon on the plain.” The more familiar passage of the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew’s Gospel with its 8 Beatitudes, is what people generally go to when they think of a list of blessings. But our set passage today considers the gritty, and in many ways more demanding aspects of God’s blessings. They are probably taken from the same source but adapted by the Gospel writers to enhance the overall aspect of Jesus’ ministry which they are focussing on. But first let us look at the first Psalm that opens the Book of Psalms, Psalm 1 and see what it might have to say to us today.

One of the beauties of the Psalms is their ability to speak to our human condition even though they were written 3 millennia ago. Our context is different, and our understanding of God has evolved as we have explored and discovered our world. Scientifically we

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

understand so much more and yet, here in this text are words that still resonate - how amazing is that! This opening Psalm is one of the wisdom psalms and is packed full of said commodity. We are told in the opening verses that happiness comes from meditating on God and not through any advice from others who may have gone wantonly astray. But this begs the question in my mind, what is happiness? Our life compared to the psalmist's is remarkably different, how can we make that comparison? After all we live in an age of immediacy, with the click of a mouse you have information at your fingertips. Today instead of philosophers or religious leaders we have influencers. Today figures in authority are to be ridiculed and news events flood our homes, sometimes it seems to be before things have even happened! Happiness, today it would seem, is built upon materialistic values and instant gratification.

Somehow the Psalmist breaks through all that with an illustration that cuts through everything. He takes a humble tree and suddenly we begin to understand something of the nature of our faith journey. Now I am not an arborist, but I do like trees. I am fascinated by the way that the trees communicate with each other through the mycelium. The German forester, Peter Wohlleben, dubbed this network the "woodwide web," as it is through the mycelium that trees "communicate." Mushrooms are the fruit of the mycorrhizal network fungus, and connect trees through tiny threads called mycelium. Who knew trees could talk other than to whisper in the breeze!

My favourite time of year for trees is winter. Many trees become starkly exposed, leafless and seemingly dead. They stand sentry-like on a hillside. Is there no more a beautiful sight than a setting winters sun with the silhouette of a tree? Out of a seemingly barren tree comes a sublime expression of God's creativity.

But back to our Psalm. The writer compares those who meditate on the Lord to be like trees whose roots go deep, who can be replenished by the stream that flows along side them. These people, the psalmist goes on to say, bear fruit when the time is right, in the right season. Happiness therefore, for the psalmist, is about being in the presence of God for that is what brings blessing. Following on from that thought the deeper the roots are the more stable the tree and so it is with our rootedness to God, the deeper we go with God we will find a security and stability and contentment.

So how does a tree with deep roots connect to our passage from Luke's gospel? Well, both passages are about what brings us closer to God. Jesus's searing sermon, as illustrated by Luke, does not hold back. If you think that having riches, being popular, being able to provide for yourself, having laughter and merriment and being seen in the right places will bring you closer to God and warrant many blessings, then think again says Jesus. All the things that the world sees as success, all the accolades one can accrue add up to zilch in the eyes of God. They are meaningless. If you think discipleship merely means attending church regularly or reciting the Lord's Prayer frequently, or doing daily devotions and reading your Bible will enable you to gather God's blessings to you, then think again. Blessings from God are up another level Jesus says. God does not demand of us anything; God demands of us the whole shebang...our all... absolutely everything. To follow Jesus is to be stripped bare of all that we thought we were, all that we thought significant and come just as we are. Now I don't know about you but that feels like a tall order. Listen again to what is being said - this is about priorities. God is not to be an afterthought, an add on. For God, it is said, does not take kindly to half-heartedness, you are either for God or you are not. To follow God is costly and many have lost their life in doing so. I wonder if, in our present age, as the church, we have watered down our passion for God and in so doing become disenfranchised by society and, dare I say it, God has disenfranchised us?

If the Psalmist is correct, if Luke's understanding of Jesus's Sermon on the plain is right, then we in our present age, need once again to offer our all to God. We need to re-inhabit

our discipleship, not as a convenience that makes us feel good about ourselves, but as a prerequisite for what makes us wholly complete, and the world a better place. After all God demands not just a bit of us but our all, at all times and in all places.

As you move forward into the days ahead may you know God's blessings taking root and may your love for God go deeper and deeper until your thirst is slaked by the love of God.

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

How do you know you are being blessed by God?

The Psalmist uses the illustration of a tree to represent being blessed by God, is there another image **you** might relate to?

Do you believe that the church has watered down its understanding of God?

If so in what way?

How might you deepen your awareness of God in your life?⁴

Hymn:

639 STF – Through the love of God our Saviour OR

351 STF – In Christ alone my hope is found

Prayers of intercession

As we walk through this prayer together there will be space and silence to hold before God those parts of the world that are heavy on your heart and those areas of your life you need to offer to the one who knows before we utter a word.

Please use the silence as best works between you and God.

Let us pray...

Today in this place,
Yesterday in this place,
Tomorrow in this place,
You are, Oh God.

Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow
You are our guide, our companion,
Our lover and our all.

As we come to our prayers for others and ourselves,
Open our hearts to hear again
Your call upon our lives.

Open our eyes to see
Where you, would have us be
So your love may flood through,
Drenching those in need
With terrifying abundance
That turns their lives and ours upside down.

We pray for the world, torn apart by conflicts.
We pray for areas where inhumane action is demeaning life.
We pray for a world that needs to be refreshed once again by love.

⁴ Reflection written by Ruth Crompton

Silence....

We pray for our leaders both in government and in our churches
We pray for those who have difficult decisions to make nationally and locally
We pray for our Church leaders as they negotiate an ever increasingly secular landscape.
We pray for all who lead, may their principles be deep rooted in your love

Silence....

We pray for our local communities
Our neighbours - those seen and those unseen
For those who keep our localities secure and safe
We pray for our place in our local area
May our communities be places that exude your love

Silence,,,,

We pray for our local habitats
For our parks and recreational areas
For our wildlife, the trees and the fauna
For the decreasing wildlife
We pray nature may offer places of sanctuary as we care for it with love

Silence....

We pray for those in need of prayer today
Those who feel farthest away from God
Those who feel very close to God
Those who are fearful for the future
Those who need to know they are being prayed for
We pray for a sense of love to overwhelm

Silence....

God of today, yesterday and tomorrow,
God of our everyday and every moment,
Parent of us all, Son of our humanity and Spirit of life
Hear our prayers today and everyday,
Deepen our trust in you so we may truly honour you:
Our loving God.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Holy and gracious God, we praise you this day for all you have done in our lives, for the rich blessings you have bestowed on us.

We offer you these gifts as our appreciation of your generosity to us, may they be used to build your kingdom here on earth.

Amen.⁶

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Ruth Crompton

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Hymn:

462 STF – Come with me, come wander OR

239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I

Blessing

Come with me, says the Lord, inviting us out from our places of comfort, laziness and prejudice.

Come with me, take a risk, share love, create peace, generate hope.

Come with me, my Spirit is already there, ahead of you.

Come, for I am with you always, says the Lord.

Amen.⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker