

twelvebaskets



CHRISTMAS 1C

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

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First Sunday After Christmas - Year C
29th December 2024



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

493 STF – Come, Lord, to our souls come down OR

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

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

190 STF – Angels, from the realms of glory OR

207 STF – Jesus is the heart of Christmas

Readings: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

Hymn:

226 STF – Birth brings a promise OR

504 STF – May the mind of Christ my Saviour live in me from day to day

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

781 STF – Take, oh take me as I am OR

501 STF – Help us, O Lord, to learn the truths your word imparts

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

208 STF – Let earth and heaven combine OR

202 STF – Hark! The herald-angels sing

Blessing

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Call to worship

He has been, born in the night!

He is here, amongst us.

He has come to change and transform us.

God is here, as we God's people gather.

God is here, the miracle of Christmas.

A very happy Christmas to you,
In Jesus' name. Amen.¹

Hymn:

493 STF – Come, Lord, to our souls come down OR

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

Opening Prayers

Let us be silent for a moment.

[Pause]

Lord God,
You are at work in the busyness and stillness of life.

You are present in each moment of our days,
You do not forget us.

We are here to worship you,
Come and meet us.

We are here to listen to you,
Speak to us.

We are here just as we are,
Accept us.

We ask that your spirit will be at work as we seek fellowship.

Lord God, we are your people and desire to draw close to you.

Gather us in and lead us in your ways.
Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Sheila Matthews

All Age Talk

Materials needed: Items of clothing of varying sizes particularly coats / cardigans / sweaters.

In a couple of days' time, we will be welcoming in a new year. New Year's Eve can mean getting dressed up in your finest clothes and celebrating with friends, or it can mean being in your pyjamas and getting an early night. Everyone marks the occasion in their own way.

But if you imagine all those people heading into city centres, parties, fireworks on the Thames, Hogmanay in Edinburgh, or those nestling down for a quiet night, they will all have thought about their outfit. What will I wear is an age old problem depending on the occasion. Smart-casual, black tie, professional attire, come as you are; we can often be confused about the 'correct' clothes to be choosing.

In Colossians, we get some help with considering how we clothe ourselves. Throw out your tuxedo as the best dressed are clothed in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Paul's advice here essentially says that what you wear matters less than your character. Your values that come from being a Christ follower.

[Ask for a volunteer or prime someone to be ready to help].

Wearing the wrong clothes makes us uncomfortable. Turning up at a fancy black tie dinner in our gardening clothes could make us feel far from relaxed.

[Give your volunteer a jacket/item to put on that is too small].

And the same is to be said when we are wearing the wrong values. When we put on pride, selfishness, stubbornness, and conceit, it doesn't make us look at our best. The markers that Paul outlines are values and behaviours that bring us closer together. Who is the kindest person you know? What makes them so kind? Kindness is so underrated in our society yet it makes other people feel so good when they experience it. When someone offers their seat on the bus, when someone helps carry a pram up the stairs in the station, when you receive a note to say they were thinking of you. All the traits that Paul suggests benefit society.

[Try and put on a different smaller item].

Compassion motivates us into action. Whether practically helping a neighbour who is grieving, or financially giving to a charity that makes a difference in the lives of people in difficult circumstances, compassion moves us to want to help. Can you move easily in what your wearing? How does it feel? Your movement is restricted so you know it can be the right fit.

[Get your volunteer to put on an item that fits].

The clothing God gives us leads to connection and allows us to be more comfortable in our own skin. When we let love bind us together, when we allow God's peace to fill our hearts, we will notice that we are more inclined towards these markers of Christ. We can be humble because our status is not found in our job titles or in accolades, we can be patient because we know all things will be worked out in God's time not our own. We can be gentle in our world which can sometimes put greater value on a different way of being strong. When we clothe ourselves in God's values then we suddenly have more movement and freedom.

The final verse from this passage in Colossians, 'And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him', helps us think about what we can do as we leave this place. As we head home, as we go back to work, as we go shopping, as we do our homework or chores. Whatever we do, whatever clothes we put on today, whatever actions we will undertake, let thankfulness to God be at the forefront of our minds. Let thankfulness be on the tip of our tongues. When we wake up to start a new day, let us give thanks and reach for the clothes of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, and be bringers of love and light into one another's lives.

Amen.³

Hymn:

190 STF – Angels, from the realms of glory OR

207 STF – Jesus is the heart of Christmas

Readings: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

Hymn:

226 STF – Birth brings a promise OR

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Reflections on the readings

One of my most vivid memories from childhood Christmases is of traveling the 100-mile journey to my grandparents' home on Christmas morning. We were full of excitement; rushing to get there because we were bringing the Christmas feast - we needed to arrive early and get the food, which we were bringing, in the oven!

It was only after making about half of the journey - 50 miles or so - that we realised that in our haste to get there and get cooking, we had forgotten to pack any of the food... Safe to say that we ate a little later that Christmas day.

I think we all have stories like this - did your Christmas plans run smoothly this year? Did you forget anything or did anything go wrong?

As we reflect on how Christmas was, perhaps today's Gospel reading feels a little out of season. It's set at the end of Passover which falls in Spring. However, I invite you to step into our perhaps unseasonable Bible reading because it, too, is set in the days after a major holy day: Passover:

"41 Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. 42 When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. 43 After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it."

This is a rare insight into Jesus' childhood, long before his ministry would start. Here he is a 12-year-old boy, deciding not to join his parents as they walk back to their home in

³ All Age Talk written by Sheila Matthews

Nazareth. When we sing the lines from *Once in Royal David's City: And through all His wondrous childhood/ He would honour and obey* we forget this later section of Luke 2!

How are you feeling in the wake of Christmas? Are you still full of the joys of the season? After all, there are 12 Days of Christmas and, of course, New Year is still to come. Or perhaps you've arrived at church today feeling full, tired and a little less patient with those around you or yourself.

However we're feeling today, we might have some sympathy for how Mary and Joseph felt in the few days after Passover. Not only were they likely exhausted from celebrating Passover, but they were also traveling back from Jerusalem, the long journey to Nazareth. Traveling on foot between Nazareth and Jerusalem would have taken between 3 and 5 days on foot, traveling in convoy with friends and family - and remember, this was the return journey - their blisters might not have healed from the way there, yet.

It is in the midst of this; perhaps feeling a little harried by the season, that Jesus goes missing. Luke tells us that Mary and Joseph assumed that Jesus was with family or friends; likely they were walking the distance all together, children playing together, men and women talking. Imagine visiting family for Christmas and having to spend the best part of a week walking there! It might not be such a surprise that Jesus managed to remain in Jerusalem unnoticed.

In a time of celebration and busy-ness, it is all too easy to let important things go unnoticed.

As we celebrate Christmas together, it is very easy to lose sight of the important things; Christmas can all too quickly become a time in which we begin to worship buying, receiving and consuming rather than the gifts of God's kingdom that lead to fullness of life.

Today we might ask ourselves whether we too, might have lost sight of Jesus in this post-Christmas week.

If we were to read Luke's Gospel to the end, we'd be reminded of the grace of God that always forgives, always loves, always redeems even in - especially in - the human propensity to get it wrong, again and again. So even if we have lost sight of Jesus, God is still waiting for us, patiently looking at our anxious faces, asking "Why were you searching for me?" Because by God's spirit, we don't have to go searching, we can just remember to invite God in; Jesus was Immanuel, God is with us. And God is still with us today.

When Mary and Joseph can't find Jesus amongst their party, they go back to Jerusalem to find him. I think there's something for us in that; they look for Jesus in the place they last saw him.

When did you last feel God's presence?

Was it here, sitting in your Father's house? Was it in private prayer, or corporate worship? Was it spending time with loved ones, or seeing a beautiful sunrise? Perhaps it was in an unexpected moment in which you were ambushed by a sense of God's presence.

If encountering God feels a bit tricky at the moment, especially in this post-Christmas-period, perhaps we should follow Mary's example, and seek to encounter Jesus where we last found him.

If you haven't encountered God before, then today I invite you to follow Jesus's example, and spend time here, in God's house, inviting God in. In the bible passage we hear that Jesus was in the temple: "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions."... this is a good posture to embody, too; one of listening and curiosity, spending time amongst others who are seeking God, too.

Whatever your journey of faith, this time of year is about Jesus, son of God, who is just waiting to be found and encountered by each one of us.

A few questions for discussion:

1. Did your Christmas plans run smoothly this year (so far)? Did you forget anything or did anything go wrong?
2. Do you think it is easy to lose sight of Jesus this time of year? How can we avoid this?
3. When did you last encounter Jesus/ feel God's presence?

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

781 STF – Take, oh take me as I am OR

501 STF – Help us, O Lord, to learn the truths your word imparts

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray.

God of Grace, who is present in the midst of the chaos within ourselves, our communities and our world, remind us today that you are present to us always.

Open our eyes to the moving of your spirit, that we might join you in the bringing about of your kingdom.

Teach us to have grace for one another and ourselves, when we inevitably get it wrong. Grant us patience and forgiveness.

God, we remember those who find this time of year difficult. For those who are caring for others, or experiencing ill health themselves, be with them.

Against the backdrop of being told to be merry and bright, we pray for those who just want this festive season to be over, that you might be revealed to them as a bringer of light.

For the places in our world that seem so devoid of your light and love; where there is war, where there is injustice, where people are marginalised and persecuted, we pray for peacekeepers, prophets, and justice seekers, and for the moving of your spirit.

Fill us up so that we might be peacekeepers, prophets and justice seekers too.

We hold all of this up to you, along with everything else that is on our hearts today, spoken and unspoken.

In your holy name,

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

⁴ Reflection written by Lucy Zwolinska

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Lucy Zwolinska

Today is a day for thank yous.

Thank you letters and phone calls,
FaceTimes and video messages.

Amidst the wrapping paper, the tags and the gift receipts, we thank you for your gifts to us
Lord God, and pledge these gifts as tokens of our whole lives as we recommit them to you.
In Jesus' holy name we pray.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

208 STF – Let earth and heaven combine OR

202 STF – Hark! The herald-angels sing

Blessing

We are the people of the incarnation,
We tell the story of the God who comes,
Who lives and walks and loves and sleeps and eats.

Go out into the world, and tell them of the hope of the Christ, the hope of the God who
comes and keeps on coming.

God is with us. God is with you.

Go in peace, and serve the Lord. Amen.⁷

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker