

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 28B

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

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Ordinary 28 - Year B
13th October 2024



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

148 STF – Come, let us with our Lord arise OR

250 STF – Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

494 STF – Come, thou fount of every blessing OR

238 STF – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

Readings: Job 23:1-9, 16-17; Psalm 22:1-15; Hebrews 4:12-16; Mark 10:17-31

Hymn:

632 STF – I've had questions without answers OR

566 STF – Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

416 STF – There's a wideness in God's mercy OR

673 STF – Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

341 STF – All for Jesus—all for Jesus OR

545 STF – Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart

Blessing

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Call to worship

Loving, healing, comforting God,
We come to you knowing that we need your grace again,
Your generosity again,
Your love again.

We come to you, just as we are, knowing that we are accepted. Amen.¹

Hymn:

148 STF – Come, let us with our Lord arise OR
250 STF – Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult

Opening Prayers

In this act of worship we come before you, our God, in prayer.

We come before you just as we are with all our frailties, doubts and fears.

You know us and love us, you whisper, “come to me all who are weary”.

So here we are, coming to you.

We know we get so much wrong, say the wrong thing, letting fear stop us from saying anything at all.

It may be painful but let us take a minute to consider how we could have behaved differently. Let us know that we are forgiven and give us the courage to reach out for help and support we need.

Let us give thanks that we are not alone.

Earlier we were invited to think of when we don't get things quite right,
Now, let us take a moment to consider and give thanks for all the wonder in our lives, the wonder of our wonderful world, but especially the wonder of our God and those people in our lives who love us, support us and embolden us.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Later on in our service today, we will hear the set gospel reading for this Sunday – which tells a story about a man who came to meet with Jesus, and who asked him ‘teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Lorna Dobson

What do you think your answer to this question might be? What do you think is important to you, to being accepted into God's Kingdom? What are the most important things each of us needs to do in following Jesus?

Create space for conversation about this – hear people's answers. You might like to offer people time to reflect in twos and threes and then share with the wider congregation.

Jesus has a difficult answer for this particular person – he asks him to go away and sell everything he had and give it to those in need, then to come and follow Jesus. The man does not appear to be able to do that – he 'goes away sad.' Perhaps we might do the same? How would you feel if you had to give up everything you own?

I love the thought that perhaps, weeks, months or even years later, this man found his way back to this spot, having finally got round to selling everything... Of course, Jesus has moved on and the Jesus story moves at a pace, but this man's story might have been of slow, steady growth, of moving towards a time when he is free of his earthly possessions and can focus on God's love for him, and his love for God.

For some of us, following Jesus is sudden and dramatic. For others, it takes our whole lives to make the decisions, make the moves, follow the path of love, of caring for those in need, of moving away from selfishness and self-centredness.

What do you need to do to connect with God? What is getting in your way that you could move out of the way? How can you focus your heart, mind, body and soul on the love that is within you and all around you?

May this week be a time when you can take the next best step with God.

Amen.³

Hymn:

494 STF – Come, thou fount of every blessing OR

238 STF – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us

Readings: Job 23:1-9, 16-17; Psalm 22:1-15; Hebrews 4:12-16; Mark 10:17-31

Hymn:

632 STF – I've had questions without answers OR

566 STF – Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee

Reflections on the readings

Many years ago I was at a Methodist residential meeting at a Christian conference centre. After a busy day's work with a packed full agenda, a few of us reflected on the day's work with glasses of wine in the bar. As we were conveying our views, and probably articulating some frustrations, I overheard a couple comment about us, 'Well, I thought it said they were Methodists, but they can't be, they're drinking.'

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

I remember chuckling, wondering if that's the impression people have of Methodists - or whether Methodism should be synonymous with teetotal. Of course, for some people it's an important part of their commitment to the Methodist movement. I remember a number of senior Methodists telling me that they'd signed the pledge and kept to it all through their lives. On rare occasions, a drinker might even find themselves feeling judged by a teetotaling Methodist - responding with the retort that Wesley didn't abstain and if it was good enough for him, it's good enough for us (not to mention Jesus turning water into wine).

This is where it all gets complex. What does it mean to be righteous? What framework do we hold onto that indicates what it means to be of right manner, or right state. We all have a moral framework - a way of putting our values into practice, a way of guiding what we do, and sometimes a way of judging the behaviour of others. On many things, our frameworks overlap and we agree, but no two people will have exactly the same framework. Even as people of Christian faith, we disagree about how the framework should look - even individual church organisations differ from one another and on many topics within those organisations people hold a variety of views.

It's made even more complex by views changing over time. The creative ability God has gifted us with has enabled us to make new discoveries that shed light on how we see things. Our framework and moral priorities shift as we journey as God's people. We've increasingly recognised in recent years how our living is impacting the environment, and so our approach to the environment begins to become more significant in our moral framework and we change our behaviour to be better people in our stewardship of the earth. We begin to see destruction of the planet as part of sinful behaviour, and so recognise things that help to look after the planet as righteous acts.

Job thought he was righteous, believing he deserved to be continually blessed. In a simple world, it could work like that. You do something right, you get blessed, you do something not so good, you get punished. We definitely see echoes of this belief in scripture. But the book of Job puts the layers of complexity onto it - reminding us that morality and righteousness is no simple thing. Each character in the narrative presenting a different view and trying to explain why bad things happen to people who seem good. Job dives into the midst of a crisis of faith, doubting himself and his actions, wondering what God is up to.

Faith is no easy thing - and explaining faith is a challenge. The eternal question is asked: If there is a good God, why do such terrible things happen - the ammunition of any committed atheist, and the stumbling block of agnostics. People have tried for centuries, millennia even, to explain this so that those who doubt, might be convinced of faith. But ultimately, there is no easy answer. The book of Job demonstrates this - as we energetically read through, hoping for a conclusion to the mess that's being unfolded. But no answer is given. Yet the invitation is still there, the invitation to believe in a good God, and while we may not understand, it's an invitation by a God who is working for the good of us all and our salvation and perfection in love.

Job is wrestling with questions that he wants answers to - assuming that his misfortunes are because God has judged him unfavourably. He wants to offer a defence and explain his case and ask why he is being treated unfairly. He's well within his right to wonder, to question, to challenge. The book of Job provides the space for this wrestling - and wrestling with other perspectives, only to land in a place that reminds us we cannot comprehend the vastness of all that is - that each of us has the tiniest of experience, knowledge and perspective and that God's view is broader, bigger and deeper, leading to a wisdom that we can only glimpse as a minute speck.

Faith cannot be rationally explained - it can only be experienced through an encounter with the living God, which Christians experience through the risen Jesus by the love of the Spirit. Once that encounter happens, we stop trying to live by our own righteousness and

behaviour, we stop trying to be accepted by our own rational moral frameworks of how things should work and how God should behave, and we build a life letting the love of God flow in us and through us. That is difficult to explain to someone who hasn't experienced the love of God in their heart. But we can invite them to open up to God and see where that journey may lead, knowing that God will respond when someone seeks.

In Christ, we find the confidence to be bold in our approach to God. As the great hymn reminds us, "Bold I approach the eternal throne" - echoing words found in Hebrews, "Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16). While the challenge of living a faithful life is difficult, our love from God does not rely on us. In Mark's gospel, Jesus outlines the challenge that faith requires: living not just the commandments, but a life in service of others by giving away what you have. The disciples are astounded by the standard required, the level of righteousness needed, and yet, in the midst of the heavy demands, Jesus remind them, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." (Mark 10:27)

We are called to do our best for the Realm of God, living lives that offer God our best. And even though we don't understand why things are as they are, or how we do things in the right way, it is God who makes things possible so that in love, we all will be saved and perfected for the sake of the Realm of God and its fulfilling that is to come.

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

416 STF – There's a wideness in God's mercy OR

673 STF – Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?

Prayers of intercession

God of mystery and complexity,
We bring you these prayers
in the hope you will take our feeble utterances,
and transform them through your wisdom,
so the world might know your love and goodness.

As Christ intercedes for us,
making what is impossible, possible,
we approach boldly,
not because we believe in our own righteousness,
but because we believe in you.

We pray for the world you have made and love:
For peace, where there is division and hatred...
For justice, where there is wrongdoing and exploitation...
For love, where there is suspicion and distrust...

We pray for the Church that your Spirit unites us in:
For integrity, where there is abuse and manipulation...
For confidence, where there is hesitation and doubt...
For unity, where there is conflict and separation...

⁴ Reflection written by Gary Hopkins

We pray for those we know in our daily lives:
For healing, where there is pain and illness...
For hope, where there is despair and worry...
For wholeness, where there is brokenness and struggle...

We pray for ourselves, loved by you:
For strength, where there is weakness and fragility...
For calm, where there is turmoil and trouble...
For encouragement, where there is longing and resignation...

Take these words and the utterances deep within,
for the transformation of our lives and the world,
so that the world may know life in all its fulness,
through Jesus Christ in the love of the Spirit.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Living, loving God,
Your generosity spills out of us, out into the neighbourhood, communities and world around us.

Help us to be symbols of your love – living embodiments of your grace, flowing to all the world, and may these gifts be used to make that happen,
In Jesus' name,

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

341 STF – All for Jesus—all for Jesus OR

545 STF – Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart

Blessing

I want to live in a world more like your kingdom,
And less like the kingdom of greed we find ourselves in.

No longer the kingdom of comfort,
But forever, the Kingdom of heaven.

Be at work in me, Lord God, by your Spirit,
That this Kingdom may come a little closer today,

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Gary Hopkins

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker