

twelvebaskets



LENT 6B

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

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Sixth Sunday in Lent - Year B
24th March 2024



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

264 STF – Make way, make way, for Christ the King OR

44 STF – Come on and celebrate

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Mark 14:1-15:47

All Age Talk

Hymn:

263 STF – Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest! OR

265 STF – Ride on, ride on in majesty!

Readings: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11

Hymn:

277 STF – My song is love unknown OR

285 STF – Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

318 STF – Christ, our King before creation OR

339 STF – When you prayed beneath the trees

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

287 STF – When I survey the wondrous cross OR

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain

Blessing

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Many more resources and inspiration for this week's lectionary, leading worship and other church use are available on www.theworshipcloud.com.

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Call to worship

Show me how to worship you, Lord God.
Find me in the midst of this day, and help me to be open to you.

As we worship together, make yourself known to us, in our midst, by your Spirit, Lord God.
Come and transform this time, that we might encounter you by your Grace,

Amen.¹

Hymn:

264 STF – Make way, make way, for Christ the King OR
44 STF – Come on and celebrate

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 6 of Lent, that word is Nothing. Find out more at allwecan.org.uk/resources

Lord of all,

Thank you that you invite us to rest. Thank you for weaving Sabbath into the very fabric of creation, and for making us lie down in green pastures. Thank you that we do not have to do everything.

Teach me, O Lord

What is mine to do

Save us, Lord, from thinking that everything relies on us and our efforts. Help us to trust in your Spirit’s guidance, not only our own experience or analysis. Spur us to action where it is needed, and lead us to rest when it is not.

Teach me, O Lord

What is mine to do

We are sorry for the times when we have done too much. Where we have made ourselves burnt out or where we have been doing things that would be better left to others. Help us have the courage to know when to step back, as well as when to step up.

Teach me, O Lord

What is mine to do

Thank you, God, that you hold all of creation in your hand. That while you choose to involve us in the building of your Kingdom, the ultimate work of reconciliation is already achieved for us by your Son. May we rest in what has already been achieved for us and the world.

Teach me, O Lord

What is mine to do

Amen.²

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by All We Can

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Materials needed: Bibles or the passage printed out

[Use the 'talk' time to explore the passage using Lectio Divina. Lectio Divina is an ancient way of praying through passages in the Bible and asking to hear from God. The process follows a simple pattern of reading, meditate, pray, contemplate. This can be done in small groups if that is suitable for your context or as a whole congregation. All ages can engage with the activity as one person can be the reader and another a scribe if you want to respond in writing and not just speaking].

Reading: Mark 14:1-15:47

Read the passage and encourage people to simply listen to it without putting pressure on to think about it too much. Allow some silence afterwards to allow the passage to sink in.

Read the passage again and ask people to pay attention to the word or phrase that springs out to them. Give thinking/pondering time after the reading. People can write down their word/phrase or share orally. It is a first glimpse into how people are engaging with the passage. Is it the anointing that has grabbed people? The supper? The disciples? Allow space for everyone who would like to share their initial response to do so. If they have written them down then you could ask people to display them on a noticeboard or wall.

Read the passage again. This time, encourage people to ask God what it is that they need to hear from this passage. What is being emphasised or drawn out? Encourage them to be creative in this prayer. It could be a word or picture. If it is suitable for your context, allow space for people to share what they felt was being said or encouraged.

Finally, read the passage one more time and create a space for responding in prayer. People could write their prayers down to share or if suitable pray together in small groups or as a whole.

Lord,

Your word continues to bring new revelation and wisdom. Keep us mindful of your Holy Spirit and open our hearts, minds, ears, and eyes to learn something new of you.

Amen.³

Hymn:

263 STF – Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest! OR

265 STF – Ride on, ride on in majesty!

Readings: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11;

Hymn:

277 STF – My song is love unknown OR

285 STF – Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

³ All Age Talk written by Sheila Matthews

Reflections on the readings

I wonder what you think is the biggest issue in society at the moment? Would you say migration that needs to be tackled by sending people to Rwanda? Or maybe you'd say gender culture wars and that we should clamp down on people who don't conform to behaviour for the gender they're identified as at birth? Maybe you'd say government corruption? Perhaps you might say the economic situation? Or maybe you believe it's related to the environment and our impact on it? Or maybe it's the many wars and conflicts being fought in different places - with the question, do you support a particular side?

In some senses, I'm not interested in the what. I'm more interested in how you might come to that conclusion or why you would hold it. What's made you think that that's the most important thing or the biggest danger to a healthy society? Hold that thought.

Today's reading focusses on the Passion: Jesus's journey to the cross and the meaning that this has for us as people who choose to follow him. It's today we focus on his death as a pivotal point in our Christian faith. Why is it pivotal? Because death, the one certainty for us all, is not the final word.

We cannot focus on the cross, without zooming out to see the bigger narrative of Jesus's life: the life we see as speaking something profound about God and God's relationship to us.

There's no doubt that Jesus's life and purpose is focussed on liberation and justice for those deemed least. We find this affirmation in the Magnificat, the song Mary sings on discovering she is pregnant, as she states, "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly." (Luke 1:52) We also find it in Jesus's words about why he has come as he quotes scripture: "He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Luke 4:18-19)

Then, as the stories unfold, we see Jesus time and time again healing and loving those at the margins of society and rebuking those who misuse the power they have. It's really no surprise that Jesus distrusted the powerful occupiers. The region including Jerusalem and Galilee were occupied territories, occupied by the Romans who used tactics to exploit the ordinary, through land grabs and taxation and condemning them to cycles of poverty. God was born into empire, but not on the side of empire. And this is important as we reflect upon what Jesus's death means.

This year we're in Mark's gospel. Much of Mark's telling of the Jesus story is the journey of Jesus's passion. In the first half of the gospel, we witness Jesus capturing the hearts and minds of people, as they get caught up in his vision of the realm of God arriving on earth. Then as Jesus heads to Jerusalem, the centre of power, we watch people fall away and abandon him, even the disciples, until the crowd turns on him and he's dragged to the outskirts symbolising his opposition to empire.

It seems people were able to follow his vision and support him until they were brought into the centre of empire - they even welcomed him as king with palms. Then for some reason they couldn't let go of their empire-influenced understandings of how the world should be. Jesus wasn't the violent emperor, he was the peaceful prince, and he was there to show that this way is God's way. But their empire-entrenched worldly views just could not comprehend the God way of justice and liberation and so empire killed God's way.

But that's not the end of the story. Earlier, we zoomed out to capture the beginning of Jesus's life. Let's do the same and recall what happens afterwards: the resurrection. If we zoom in and only focus on the death of Jesus, there is nothing unique: we all die. It's God's raising of Jesus that declares the empire has not won; the message of Jesus and the purpose of Jesus has only just begun in the arrival of God's realm. As Jesus promised,

for those who turn from empire to God's realm, the Spirit of God is given to them as we continue to be God's realm on earth. While his disciples may have struggled to let go of empire initially, they did find their way as he visited them after his death, as they saw with fresh insight, as he poured out his Spirit.

Now let's return to our thoughts about what the pressing issues of today are. Take some time to ponder what's influencing your views. Is it empire? Its need for wealth-creation, power for the privileged few, neglect and exploitation of those who are least, violence, corruption, control? Or is it God's way? Love, peace, justice, care, liberation, sharing, compassion?

Our views are easily manipulated and in more ways than ever today. We've accepted newspaper bias for many years now, but we also need to be aware of how technology algorithms can affect how we see reality. Just as in Jesus's day, where the empire spouted its propaganda, and the empire's cronies got round the crowds, we have to be aware of those who speak only for self-interest and spread lies and mistruths to prop up the systems that favour them.

As disciples, as Spirit-filled people of the God way, we need to continually turn towards God for deeper insight and to ensure we're not swept along by the ideologies of empire, but that we truly recognise how we must live our lives in the way Jesus modelled as people of God's realm.

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

318 STF – Christ, our King before creation OR

339 STF – When you prayed beneath the trees

Prayers of intercession

Spend some time in stillness, simply reflecting on the imagining Jesus in the midst of your town or community, and then again in the corridors of power in our society.

What speaks to you? Reflect with God about what you are noticing.

[Give people space to notice].

Think about what seem to be the biggest issues about society at the moment? What is bothering you?

Spend some time in prayerful contemplation asking whether you are being influenced by empire or God's way?

[Give people space to reflect].

Now, turn to the person sitting next to you, and in little groups of two and three, share those prayers together. You might like to pray for each other's prayer points and concerns.

Pray about these topics as prayers of intercession and what God's love and justice might demand.

[Give people space to reflect].

Close with this prayer:

⁴ Reflection written by Gary Hopkins

Lord, you hear our prayers – and you know the situations and concerns we have named, here in our own communities and lives, and in the wider world. We offer all our prayers – spoken and unspoken – to you.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Thank you Lord, for this day, for this moment, for this opportunity.

Come, by your Spirit, O God, and bless these gifts – the gifts we have given, but also the gifts that you have blessed each one of us with.

May our resources, our lives, our plans, our hopes and our dreams, be in your hands, Lord God.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

287 STF – When I survey the wondrous cross OR

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain

Blessing

Today, you will have the opportunity to share something of God's love – may you seize it.

Today, you will find a glimpse of the glory of heaven, on earth – may you notice it.

Today, you will be presented with the possibility of challenging injustice around you or in the world – may you have the courage to take it.

Today, the Spirit of God will go with you – may you welcome Her.

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Gary Hopkins

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker