

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 29C

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

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

Ordinary 29 - Year C
16th October 2022



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

18 STF – Be still and know that I am God OR

544 STF – As the deer pants for the water

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

183 STF – Praise to the God who clears the way OR

51 STF – Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father

Readings: Jeremiah 31:27-34; Psalm 119:97-104; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5; Luke 18:1-8

Hymn:

660 STF – Called by Christ to be disciples OR

701 STF – Heaven shall not wait

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

665 STF – Make us your prophets Lord OR

662 STF – Have you hear God's voice; has your heart been stirred?

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

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

503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling

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

Here we are, Lord God, come and move among us by your Spirit
Inspire and uplift us
Transform us by your grace
That we may learn more of you and grow as your followers,
Amen.¹

Hymn:

18 STF – Be still and know that I am God OR
544 STF – As the deer pants for the water

Opening Prayers

Holy Spirit of God, who tethers us together as one human family and reminds us that we are threaded to the whole of creation, to everything that has breath, we pause to remember and give thanks for the knowledge that you are always in our midst. We celebrate the gifts of goodness that have made themselves known to us in ways too many to count.

We grieve the losses we have endured and draw hope and comfort from remembering that you will never leave us alone, that there is no place we can go that you do not go first, and that wherever you are there is always life in all of its abundance.

Receive us, we pray, in our joys and our sorrows, and remind us again that nothing can ever separate us from your love.

Amen.

Let us be still for a moment, and bring our pains, our shortcomings and our failings to God – taking a short pause to simply accept that we are accepted.

[Pause]

Whatever you might have done, whoever you are, however you view yourself – know that God's grace is present and real for you. You are loved and accepted, as you are and wherever you are.

In Christ, all things hold together.

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

In our world, there is much that is not right. There is poverty, affecting billions of people. There are diseases that ruin people's lives, natural disasters that wreak havoc in communities, many who suffer at the hands of dictators, leaders or bullies.

Is there something in our world that you would like to see change? Take a moment now to share one or two ideas with the person sitting next to you in twos or threes...

[Allow people a minute or two to have these conversations, then call them back together]

Perhaps that was an easy question for you – perhaps you have a cause that you have a particular passion for, or perhaps not. Many of us feel overwhelmed by all that needs to be changed and transformed in our world, and are not sure where to start.

Often, as disciples of Jesus, as we try to be better Christians, or simply better humans, we are told to do more and more, to take on more and more work. But that isn't always the best result. Many of the world's problems have been caused by people trying to make the world a better place, but doing it with the wrong motivations, the wrong ideas or at the wrong time. It is also important that we look after ourselves – that we get to a place where we understand the issues we are engaged with, that we understand ourselves, our skills, our knowledge and what we can offer.

There will be something, or perhaps many things, that you are called to do – there will be many opportunities to make the world a better place. But, in that, let us not forget about prayer, about reflection, about reading, about learning something new.

Each time we grow, we create new resources to tackle the issues in our families, communities and lives.

Lord God, come amongst us by your Spirit and inspire us to make a difference, in Jesus' name.³

Hymn:

183 STF – Praise to the God who clears the way OR

51 STF – Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father

Readings: Jeremiah 31:27-34; Psalm 119:97-104; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5; Luke 18:1-8

Hymn:

660 STF – Called by Christ to be disciples OR

701 STF – Heaven shall not wait

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

Reflections on the reading

The world is an exceedingly busy, noisy space. Part of taking time to care for ourselves, so that we can also care for others, requires that we step out of the cycle of this ever-spinning world and stop.

Stop what we are doing— to recognise that we are not machines, but instead, fully human creatures, fashioned in the image of God. Creatures who require rest to be healthy and whole.

Stop— so that we take the time to notice the sights and sounds that surround us so that we can fully respond.

Stop—so that we can listen, and hear, not only with our ears, but with our hearts.

So today, I am asking you to stop for just a few moments. If you dare, and if you are comfortable to do so, I ask that you close your eyes for just a few moments and listen. So let us close our eyes for a few minutes and endeavour to listen to the sounds of our shared life together. This incredible life that is threaded together by the Spirit of God that dwells in our midst. This life that can be filled with wonder and hope, even when our hearts are made heavy by the wounded-ness of the world.

Let's begin with some gentle words that invite us to a quiet place:

[In a quiet tone and at a gentle pace]

With your eyes closed, try to relax and feel the support of the chair, or pew, beneath you. This stability is always there.

[Pause]

Feel the support of the floor beneath your feet, or seat.

[Pause]

This support is always available.

[Pause]

Take a deep breath, and then exhale. Notice your breath as it moves in and out.

That is the breath of the Spirit, the same breath that was breathed into that creature of dust named Adam, the breath that gives life to the Whole of Creation. This breath will sustain you all the days of your life.

[Pause]

Let your hands rest at your sides or in your lap. These are the hands that have worked hard to serve you, and others. Remember that you are always resting in the hands of God.

[Pause]

Now as you are settled, begin to hear what sounds are being released into our world. And for just a few moments, we will sit in the silence of this space and listen with our ears, and our hearts.

[Offer 2-3 minutes of quiet before calling people back to attention].

When you are ready, if you would kindly return to the room, please.

One way you might have experienced that particular silence is through the sounds you heard, which might have flagged up emotions we weren't even aware of before.

For example: the sound of a car horn may indicate someone being anxious about arriving late and worried about the judgment that will be pronounced upon them when they do arrive. Or perhaps that sound indicates that one driver perceives

themselves as superior to another. A siren could signal that someone is unwell and in need of medical care or that a crime has occurred and there is a victim who is suffering. Irregular or laboured breathing may indicate someone will find movement difficult, leaving them breathless with the accompanying anxiety. A wild wind might point to precarious weather and the associated consequences. Shuffling in a chair may mean that someone finds this little exercise too close to the bone, making them feel quite vulnerable. Maybe the sounds we heard are memory sounds and I will leave you to consider the needs you heard within them. Thank you.

[Invite the congregation to share with their neighbours about what they heard. Try to locate some unique observations and allow some feedback.]

Isn't it just amazing? Stopping and listening should be such a small, easy to accomplish, task. Still, most of us find it quite difficult. It is counter cultural to stop in world that values us by what we produce every moment of the day. It can be a bit scary for us because when we stop, and step out of the human centrifugal force that spins the world, that repetitive get up-go to work-go to bed-get up, go to work, go to bed cycle, we almost always come face to face with our own feelings and sometimes that can make us feel quite vulnerable and exposed.

But the truth is that there are many things that get in the way of our ability to hear, and notice, what is happening in our world, and maybe quite near to us.

Today's story tells us that a widow has gone to see a judge who admits that respect for others is lacking in his worldview. We don't know how he got that way. Maybe he is drunk with power. Maybe his perspective is a result of years of privilege. Perhaps he lives by a motto that says do unto others before they do unto you. Maybe his behaviour has been developed over time, a pattern of thinking that tells him that this woman is somehow very different from who he is as a human creature. We can agree that for some unknown reason, he is not the man of justice that this woman needs him to be. His understanding of justice appears to be subjective, as if justice is what he wants it to be.

The Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann, describes justice this way...he says that justice is trying to figure out what belongs to whom and then giving it back to them. Perhaps that is the kind of justice that the widow is seeking. Maybe she longs to be heard, and seen, so that someone notices, and responds, to the reality that her life, her human existence, is not what it should be.

The story doesn't tell us much about her. It appears that she is a widow so we can assume that she has no man to speak for her, or for her family. She is most likely without financial resources and very "at risk" in a community that can take advantage of someone in a desperate situation. She may be, for all practical purposes, invisible. That is often what happens to those who have little resources, and thus, no voice in the marketplace.

This isn't the first encounter between the judge and the widow. Apparently she has come to him multiple times, no small accomplishment for a woman living on the edge with little social power. It makes us wonder if she is just that kind of person who never gives up. You know, the one who keeps knocking on the door no matter what, and returns day after day because that is her personality. Or could it be that she is

desperate, that life, as it is, is not sustainable? Maybe her cries for help are the only tool she has available before life will cease to be. It is possible, and maybe even probable, that the very breath within her depends upon this judge doing the right thing.

These circumstances make us wonder about how this judge, who has been placed in such a position of power, is able to ignore her. There are no cries of the widow's anguish recorded in the story and that might be because the judge did not really hear her cries. This is not to say that his ears did not have the audible capability of receiving such a frequency of desperation. There was no audible disconnection. The judge does not hear the widow's plea because his disdain for her, and others like her, has caused a disconnection from his heart.

Even though his ears picked up the cries for help, his heart was so hardened by his disregard for her plight, his mind was so numbed by his own selfishness and fear that someone else might receive something of value, that he had lost what makes him most human—the capacity for compassion—the ability to see the humanity of another. And the danger is, of course, that when we can't really hear someone's story, when we don't really see the humanity of another, denial becomes easy. The whole of the book of Luke is the bigger story of the care and concern that Jesus sees for social justice. Luke's gospel is filled with the stories of those who are invisible, unheard and disregarded by their communities, but noticed, loved and cared for, by Jesus.

We might just take a few moments to consider when was the last time we checked our own hearing to see if we are in need of aid so that we do not participate in the conspiracy of denial that allows us to consider anyone as less than human—with the same basic needs to sustain life as our own. Who do we see when we encounter someone who may appear very different from us?

So much of our brokenness is scripted by our inability to believe that God has provided enough. But God has declared that we live in abundance. The difficulty comes in recognising that this abundance is not evenly distributed in our human community.

Part of being a community of faith is living with this reality and then practicing seeing the image of God in every person so that we never run the risk of forgetting that the very breath of God is breathing within each that we meet. Jeremiah reminds us that God's way of love is written upon our hearts. It is a part of the very fabric of our being.

In our world of change and uncertainty, we are constantly encountering people, and situations, that have been previously unknown to us, or maybe just unheard. Perhaps when we feel ourselves in a place of discomfort, when our initial reactions are those of judgement and fear, we might reflect upon those feelings and practice a new way of hearing with our hearts.

“She worships God with names that are different from my names for God, but I see within her, an image of God.

Her illness frightens me, but I see an image of God within her. She expresses her sexual orientation in a way that is different from mine, but I see

within her an image of God.

Her age is frightening to me, but I see within her an image of God. Her hunger scares me, but I see within her an image of God. Her passion for a better life feels like a threat to me, but I see within her an image of God.

She has hopes and dreams for a life that is better than what she has, and it may upset my apple cart, but I still see within her, an image of God.”

The question we are left asking ourselves is, “In this world of uncertainty, will we journey together in faith?” The antidote to uncertainty and fear is always found in the hope of God’s promise of life in all of its abundance. May we see within each other, and within those we meet, stranger and friend, an image of God that was placed there, by God’s design.

May it be so for you, and also for me. Thanks be to God.⁴

Hymn:

665 STF – Make us your prophets Lord OR

662 STF – Have you hear God's voice; has your heart been stirred?

Prayers of intercession

Living, breathing, Spirit of God,

We pause for a few moments now to reflect upon the ways that we have been called to service, and the ways that we have responded.

[Hold a moment of stillness].

We hold in our hearts the dreams we once had and the promises that we have made,

We celebrate the ministries that have been embraced even as we grieve the things we have left undone.

And so we say, thank you, O God, and help us to see with our hearts, the needs of those in our midst, and those far from our shores. We pray for the brokenness we see and all that remains unseen by us, but noted by you.

We look around our wounded world and recognise that in many ways we have contributed to the brokenness.

There is air that is too angry to breath and water our children can't drink – we are tired of fooling ourselves.

And so we say, help us, O God, to see, within the whole of your creation, the stamp of your image.

You have taught us that we are one with the earth, with the sky, one with everything in life. And still we sometimes dismiss what we know.

We look the other way when the things we see are too painful. If only we could live with conviction of the heart.

And so we say, help us, O God, to see you in the faces of those we meet, in the creation that we enjoy.

⁴ Reflection written by DeeDee Haines

Remind us that we are vessels of your love and light in the world.
On this day where we celebrate that your world is One,
our hearts are open to your Spirit in our midst.
We want to re-commit our hearts,
remembering the power of what it means to forgive, and to be forgiven.

And so we say,
help us, O God, to be fully human with a passion for compassion,
remembering that your Love is written upon our hearts.

Amen.⁵

Offering / Collection

Here we are Lord God, present to you.
Use these gifts, and those of us who are gathered here today, to change and
transform your world, in Jesus' name,

Amen.

Hymn:

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

503 STF – Love divine, all loves excelling

Blessing

We go from this place refreshed and renewed,
We go with a fresh encounter with the Living God in our hearts,
We go to seek a better world where justice and peace reign,

Amen.⁶

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker