

twelvebaskets



EPIPHANY 4C

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

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

Fourth Sunday After Epiphany - Year C
2nd February 2025



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

116 STF – Sing for God’s glory that colours the dawn of creation OR

659 STF – As dawn awakes another day

Opening Prayers

The Lord’s Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

51 STF – Great is thy faithfulness OR

98 STF – Your love is amazing, steady and unchanging

Readings: Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-6; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Luke 4:21-30

Hymn:

157 STF – God has spoken – by his prophets OR

404 STF – God’s Spirit is in my heart

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

707 STF – Make me a channel of your peace OR

443 STF – Come, let us sing of a wonderful love

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

402 STF – Go to the world! OR

449 STF – Lord of creation, to you be all praise!

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, and your love comes amongst us, as we gather.
We pray that love will transform our hearts, as we pray and sing.
We pray that love moves us into action.

Lord Jesus, show us how to love,
Amen.¹

Hymn:

116 STF – Sing for God's glory that colours the dawn of creation OR
659 STF – As dawn awakes another day

Opening Prayers

Loving God, as we stand at the beginning of February,
we come to you in the quiet and the still with hope.
We bring ourselves today, for you to plant the seeds of your love within our hearts –
and for you to plant us where we are meant to be.

Cultivator God, as we stand at the beginning of February,
With winter a few paces behind us and spring leading the way ahead,
Look upon us as a gardener surveys the land ready to prepare the ground:
with love, care and a promise of what is to come.

Wilderness God, as we stand at the beginning of February,
With frost and cold nipping at our fingers,
Spotlight the buds emerging in the undergrowth to us so that we might really see them – the
snowdrops, crocuses, wild garlic and hazel – stretching upwards to the sun.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

What are some of the things or people that you love?

[Invite congregation to share things they love, it might be ordinary everyday things, or something more meaningful like a particular person or a special memory they hold].

Love - it might be the most important word we hear in Church.

Perhaps more important than 'God', because we hear in the Bible that God IS love, that love is how we understand the invisible God.

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Hannah Baker

Perhaps love is even more important than the words 'Jesus', or 'Christ', without whom there would be no such thing as church. That is because Jesus' life, the stories we read about in the Gospels, are there to show us how to love. What is the point of them if they don't transform us? They invite us to show love to those around us.

So today, at the start of this month of 'love', when we celebrate Valentine's Day (or try to avoid it!) let's think about that important word, 'love'. One of the problems with the word 'love' is that it gets used for all sorts of things today. We use the same word to describe the emotion that exists between people who have stayed married or stayed best friends for decades...and then also to describe how we feel about pizza!

At the beginning, I invited you to share some of the things you love. But I wonder if it is really the same thing we mean when we say 'I love ice-cream', as a father says to a son he is proud of, or a wife to the husband she adores, 'I love you'?

That is the same problem we have when coming to 'love' in the Bible. You will have heard people say that 'God loves you' and 'Jesus loves you', but perhaps we don't really recognise how amazing this is. Perhaps for some of us, it is difficult because people who say they love us have also really hurt us – whether they meant to or not. Perhaps it's hard because we don't see love as that important.

But what we need to remember is that 'love' in the Bible, 'love' in the way that God loves us and invites us to love each other, is the most powerful tool there is. It is not just an emotion, or a feeling, or a sensation we enjoy – love is about a whole way of life. How are we showing our love?

In a world that often seems full of hatred or indifference, let us be the people of love.

Amen.³

Hymn:

51 STF – Great is thy faithfulness OR

98 STF – Your love is amazing, steady and unchanging

Readings: Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-6; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Luke 4:21-30

Hymn:

157 STF – God has spoken – by his prophets OR

404 STF – God's Spirit is in my heart

Reflections on the readings

Have you ever felt unworthy or unprepared for a challenge? You are not alone. I have felt it, too. Throughout history, people called by God often feel inadequate and try to resist the call. St. Augustine of Hippo initially resisted God's call, famously praying, "*Grant me chastity and self-control, but not yet.*" Yet, after surrendering to God, he became one of the most influential theologians in Christian history. Similarly, Mother Teresa struggled with doubt

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

before embracing her calling to serve the poorest in Calcutta, ultimately leaving a legacy of compassion and faith.

In Jeremiah 1:4-10, we see God calling Jeremiah, who immediately protests, “But Lord, I’m too young! I don’t know how to speak!” His response is relatable. How often do we feel unqualified for the challenges life presents? Whether it’s starting a new role, raising a family, or standing up for our beliefs, doubt can be overwhelming. Yet, God’s reply to Jeremiah is both firm and loving: “Do not be afraid. I am with you.”

Jeremiah’s story reminds us that God equips those He calls. He doesn’t choose the ready-made; He prepares the willing. Though Jeremiah felt inadequate, God reassured him, “I put My words in your mouth.” Similarly, we can trust that God can provide the wisdom, strength, and grace we need to fulfil His purposes.

Perhaps as you read this reflection, you’ve felt the call to follow Jesus, to share your faith at work, to mend a relationship, to serve in your church, or to make a difference in your community. Like Jeremiah, may we respond in obedience.

My hope is that this reflection will encourage us to embrace faith over fear. The journeys of people like Augustine of Hippo, Mother Teresa, and the prophet Jeremiah show that God can work powerfully through us, even when we feel unprepared. Let us step out with courage, trusting that God is always with us..

Discussion Questions:

1. What doubts or fears are holding you back from answering God’s call?
2. How does knowing that God formed you with a purpose affect the way you view your life and decisions?

Building on Jeremiah’s call, Psalm 71:1-6 offers us a strong reassurance: no matter how uncertain life feels or how inadequate we perceive ourselves to be, God remains our firm refuge, strength, and hope. The Psalmist proclaims a deep trust in God’s enduring faithfulness, declaring, “*Upon you, I have leaned from my birth; it was you who took me from my mother’s womb*” (verse. 6). Although life brings its challenges, this psalm reminds us that these trials are always held within the context of God’s steadfast care.

Taking refuge in God doesn’t mean we will be spared from difficulties, but it does mean we can face them with the confidence that He is our rock and fortress. This assurance provides peace amidst life’s storms, a steady presence when everything feels chaotic. Reflecting on my time in the Sierra Leone armed forces during the civil war, I am reminded of the importance of bunkers and trenches, places where we could take refuge and find safety from the enemy. In a far deeper and more profound way, God is our ultimate refuge, offering protection and strength when life’s battles feel overwhelming.

Through all the changing scenes of life, Psalm 71 invites us to pause and reflect on the ways God has been our anchor, a safe haven in times of trouble.

As we meditate on this psalm, may we surrender our fears and doubts to God. Let us trust Him as our refuge, our strength, and our hope, knowing He has walked with us from the beginning and will continue to guide us every step of the way.

Discussion Question:

1. How has God been a source of strength and support for you during challenging times?

As I reflected on the words from the reading from Corinthians today, I found myself reminiscing about a significant moment in my journey, *my wedding day*, standing before the minister and hearing these verses read. Perhaps these verses bring back memories for you as well, some joyful, others bittersweet.

In our reading from 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth and us that love is the greatest gift in a world where success and achievements are often valued above love, kindness, and interpersonal relationships. It is humbling to know that we can have incredible knowledge, great faith, or perform extraordinary acts of service, but without love, it all amounts to nothing.

Paul describes love as more than a feeling. It is a choice and an action. It is patient, kind, humble, and selfless. In today's world, this kind of love feels radical. Imagine how transformed our relationships and communities would be if we embraced kindness, humility, and forgiveness in place of hate, pride, and grudges.

While career goals and appearances fade, love endures. I believe that love is the glue that holds society together. In Colossians 3:14 (NIV), Paul said to the Colossians, *"And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."*

So, what would this kind of love be for us? Perhaps it is for us to show practical love in tangible ways. It could be listening attentively to a friend, being patient with a neighbour, or offering encouragement to someone who's struggling. On a larger scale, it could mean standing up for justice and caring for those in need, even when it's inconvenient. As Christians, we have a charge to keep and a commandment to fulfil. To love God and our neighbours.

Discussion Questions:

1. Which aspects of love listed in this chapter do you find most challenging to practice?
2. How can the concept of agape love transform relationships in your community or workplace?

We all fear rejection. Jeremiah's reluctance to accept God's call likely stemmed from that fear: "I'm too young; they won't listen to me. I'm not a good speaker; they'll reject me."

Similarly, in Luke 4:21-30, we see a story that begins with excitement and ends with rejection. Jesus declares that Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in Him, and the crowd marvels at first. But when He challenges their assumptions and speaks of God's blessings for Gentiles, their amazement turns to anger, and they attempt to drive Him away.

It's easy to criticise the people of Nazareth, but aren't we often the same? How quick are we to reject ideas or people that challenge our views? In our world today, people often surround themselves with information that aligns with their beliefs, and when someone disrupts that comfort, it's tempting to dismiss or ignore them.

Jesus' message reminds us that God's love and grace extend to everyone, not just those we find agreeable or familiar. This truth can be uncomfortable, pushing us to confront our biases and broaden our understanding of who belongs in God's kingdom. His example challenges us to stand for what's right, even when it's difficult. Whether it's speaking out against prejudice, defending someone treated unjustly, or living with integrity in a world full of compromises, Jesus shows us the strength to remain faithful to our calling.

To this day, Christ's message is still good news: God's love transcends all boundaries, and His kingdom is open to all. May we reflect this truth in our lives, becoming channels of hope and healing.

Discussion Questions

- Who might God be calling us to include, even if it feels difficult?
- How should we respond to rejection? Can we, like Jesus, choose grace and courage over anger or bitterness?⁴

⁴ Reflection written by Lansford Penn-Timothy

Hymn:

707 STF –Make me a channel of your peace OR

443 STF – Come, let us sing of a wonderful love

Prayers of intercession

Loving and eternal God,

We come before You in prayer, drawing strength from the promises of Your Word. We bring before You the needs of the Church, the world, ourselves, and others, trusting in Your grace and faithfulness.

Lord, we pray for Your Church, the body of Christ on earth. Strengthen its leaders, clergy, and laity as they answer Your call to serve. May the Church be a place of refuge, hope, and love, reflecting Your truth to a world in need. Empower us to embody the love described in 1 Corinthians 13 so that through patience, kindness, and humility, your light may shine brightly. Unite us in mission, breaking down barriers that divide us, and help us extend Your grace to all.

God of all creation, we lift up the world to You. We pray for nations and leaders that they may seek justice, peace, and the common good. Where there is division, bring reconciliation; where there is suffering, bring relief. We remember the poor, the marginalised, and those impacted by war, climate change, and injustice. May Your Spirit move across the earth, inspiring compassion and healing.

Lord Jesus, you taught us to care for one another in love. We bring before you those who are struggling today: the sick, the lonely, the grieving, and the anxious. Surround them with Your comfort and peace. For those who feel rejected or excluded, may they find acceptance in You and through the kindness of others. We also pray that those who serve others with courage and selflessness may be strengthened and supported in their work.

Heavenly Father, we bring our own fears, doubts, and needs before You. Like Jeremiah, we often feel unworthy of Your call. Reassure us that You are with us, equipping us with wisdom, strength, and grace to fulfil Your purposes. Help us to lean on You as our refuge in times of uncertainty, trusting in Your faithfulness. Transform our hearts so that we may live lives of love and service over worldly success.

Gracious God, as we offer these prayers to You, we remember the truth of Your kingdom: Your love knows no boundaries, and Your grace is for all. Help us live in ways that reflect this truth so that we may be instruments of hope and healing in the world. May we, as Your people, walk in faith, stand for justice, and extend Your love to all we meet.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Thank you Lord, for all these gifts, for all that we are able to give to you today, and in the days and weeks to come. Help us to receive your love, that we might be able to share it better with those around us. Move through us by your divine spirit of love, we pray.

Amen.⁶

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Lansford Penn-Timothy

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Hymn:

402 STF – Go to the world! OR

449 STF – Lord of creation, to you be all praise!

Blessing

People of the light,

Go out in peace – seek the opportunities to love.

Go in joy and be the people who bring hope.

Travel well in the world, and may you be transformed by the Spirit within you.

Amen.⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker