

# twelvebaskets



## EASTER 5C

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

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

**Fifth Sunday of Easter - Year C**  
18th May 2025



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**13 STF – Sing of a God in majestic divinity OR**

**678 STF – Come, all who look to Christ today**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**99 STF – All creatures of our God and King OR**

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

Readings: Acts 11:1-18; Psalm 148; Revelation 21:1-6; John 13:31-35

**Hymn:**

**738 STF – There is a new heaven; there is a new earth OR**

**346 STF – Christ is the world's light, Christ and none other**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**596 STF – Now let us from this table rise OR**

**86 STF – Praise the Lord! You heavens, adore him**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**687 STF – One human family God has made OR**

**258 STF – You are the Vine, we are the branches**

Blessing

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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](http://www.theworshipcloud.com).

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## Call to worship

The light of your love is shining Lord,  
Shining on us gathered here today.  
Help us to hear your quiet invitation into a Kingdom of justice, joy and peace.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## Hymn:

13 STF – Sing of a God in majestic divinity OR  
678 STF – Come, all who look to Christ today

## Opening Prayers

Like a beacon to a ship,  
Like a smile from a friend,  
Like a feast for the famished,  
Like path in a forest  
So you are to us.

How can we glorify you, when you are already glorious?  
How can we love you when you are all of love?  
How can we praise you, when everything about you and around you is praise?  
How can we beautify you, when you are the creator of all beauty?

Like the weight of a cross,  
Like a nail in a hand,  
Like a sword in a side,  
Like the taste of sour wine  
So we are to you.

How can you love us when we deny you?  
How can you forgive us when we forget you?  
How can you live in us when we destroy others?  
How can you see the beauty of us, when we cannot see it in ourselves?

Like a hen with her chickens  
Like a father in a doorway  
Like a mother at her son's side  
Like a shepherd to a lost sheep  
So you remain with us, God of love.

How can we glorify you, when you are already glorious?  
How can we love you when you are all of love?  
How can we praise you, when everything about you and around you is praise?  
How can we beautify you, when you are the creator of all beauty?

Help us, stay with us, pray in us, change us  
Rise up to new life in us, until we know, we pray.

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Call to worship written by Tim Baker

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Barbara Glasson

## **We say together the Lord's Prayer**

### **All Age Talk**

Hello everyone! Today, we're going to explore some beautiful visions from the Bible, found in John 13 and Revelation 21 – both of which we will hear later in our service. These passages share a glimpse into what happens when God's love is truly at work in the world and in our hearts.

Imagine you're on a great voyage across the seas, discovering a world where everything is fresh and new. There are no tears, no pain, and everything looks bright and wonderful. This is similar to the vision given to us in Revelation, where God shows us a new heaven and a new earth. Now, think about how we, right here in our community, can start creating such a world by how we treat each other.

This vision from Revelation is God's promise to us, showing what the end of God's story looks like. But how do we get there? How do we live today so that we contribute to this beautiful "new" that God is creating?

Let's connect this with what Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John. Before Jesus leaves his disciples, He gives them a new commandment, saying, "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

I'd like everyone to turn to their neighbour and say, "You are loved!" It might feel a bit silly, but it's a small example of how we can live out Jesus' commandment. By simply showing love in small ways, we start to create a world that looks like the new creation God promises.

In Revelation, God promises to make everything new, which includes our hearts and our communities. When we love one another as Jesus loves us, we are participating in God's work of making all things new. We're helping to create a world where there is no sorrow or pain. So, as we go out this week, let's remember Jesus' new commandment. Let's look for ways to show love to each other, not just in big gestures but in everyday kindness and patience. That's how we bring the vision of a new heaven and a new earth into our here and now.

Let's pray together: Heavenly Father, thank you for your vision of a new world filled with joy and free from pain. Help us to live out the commandment of Jesus to love one another, so that we can bring your promise into our lives today. Give us the strength to show your love in all that we do. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

### **Hymn:**

99 STF – All creatures of our God and King OR

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

**Readings:** Acts 11:1-18; Psalm 148; Revelation 21:1-6; John 13:31-35

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<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

**Hymn:**

738 STF – There is a new heaven; there is a new earth OR

346 STF – Christ is the world's light, Christ and none other

**Reflections on the readings**

Acts is a book of new pioneer projects – new places for new people, fresh expressions, whatever you want to call them! It is the story of the birth and infancy of the Church. It contains many teething problems, but it also tells of growth, new discoveries, new understandings and new ways of building the relationship as God's people – a relationship with one another and, above all, with God.

Today's gospel story, is just one part of that growth, but it is a huge part, marking a dramatic step – one new fresh expression among many, but one which was to change the whole church. One man (Peter) has a vision. Another (Cornelius) has a conversion experience. And together, they come to a startling realisation – that God's grace, God's love, God's gift of the Holy Spirit are not to be hugged close and do not belong to one nation or one religion, but can be poured out on anyone. From the distance of 2000 years, that might seem obvious, but not at the time. At the time, it was so shocking, so radical, that Peter is summoned by his fellow Church leaders, to explain himself.

From that 2000-year distance, we often read this as though Peter alone realises the truth and has to persuade a reactionary, unspiritual Church Council of what should be blindingly obvious. But let's look again at the story...

One man has a conversion, and another (helped by a vision) realises that the conversion is genuine. He responds to the evidence in front of him, and his new insight, by baptising Cornelius, just as he would a Jewish believer. But the other church leaders weren't there. They haven't seen what Peter has seen; they haven't shared in his vision; they haven't experienced the outpouring of the Spirit on a Gentile household. They are people willing to accept new understandings of God's activity, or they wouldn't be Jesus-followers, but they naturally have questions...

So, the Church listens to Peter's story. They ask their questions. They test his new understanding against what they know and have heard of God's nature. And, in the end, they find that they can reach only one conclusion – that God's grace is wider than even they had realised! They give their blessing to what he has done, and they celebrate this new awareness, with rejoicing and gratitude!

From the distance of 2000 years, all this seems obvious. We cheer for Peter and shake our heads at the initial unbelief of the rest. And yet... I wonder how readily we follow the same pattern. Faced with a new way of worshipping, a newcomer to church who brings a different set of assumptions, a different way of Christian living adopted by a new generation or community, do we respond as the Jerusalem leaders did? Do we listen, question, test and celebrate? Or do we too often tut, disapprove, retreat into the tried and tested? Our history isn't unblemished in this regard; wherever Europeans have taken Christianity, we/they have taught that 'our' ways are proper and 'your' ways are to be abandoned. In our worship, we use language, gestures and rituals that can leave the newcomer bemused and alienated. We assume knowledge of prayers, behaviours and Bible stories, with the result that we mark out the 'insider' from the 'outsider'.

Cornelius wasn't introducing a few new worship songs, or a youth club who might scuff the paintwork – or even just a new way of expressing the Gospel. He represented an entirely new worldview! His baptism changed not just his life, and that of his family, but the

whole identity and life of this embryonic community of Jesus-followers. It wasn't even that he was allowed in on condition that he adjust to the expectations of the previously exclusively Jewish community; he wasn't asked to get circumcised, or to convert to Judaism. Instead, his baptism was allowed to change not his identity, but the church's expectations.

We're still in the Easter season, so we should be expecting stories of renewal, new life, new beginnings – new creation. But sometimes, perhaps, we read them solely as things that *have* happened, not as things which *are* happening, and will continue to happen. Revelation 21 tells of another Fresh Expression – Fresh Expression of Creation. It promises us, not just that Jesus' resurrection *has* brought about new life, but also that God *will* make all things new. The call is to expect renewal, rebirth, re-creation – because that's what God does! God makes all things new. God restores life and brings comfort. The passage from Revelation points to a hope-filled future, that begins and ends with God, the Alpha and the Omega.

When we look back at the stories of the past – of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, of the birth of the Church, of the lives of the early Christians – we are not looking back just to remember and commemorate something which is past. We're looking back in order to understand more of the nature of God. And the nature of God is unchanging. God was then, and is now, a God who makes things new.

That's the beauty of the Gospel – the only thing that remains the same is God, because God keeps making all things new. That is the outpouring of God's transforming love; it's the action of God's forgiving grace; it's the whole story of Easter. God makes all things new. The God who surprised the Church in those early days is the same God who surprises us now, with astonishing revelations of the depth and breadth of God's love – if we're willing to be surprised! While we are busy looking to the past and hanging on to our favourite traditions, God is shaping tomorrow, offering us new birth, new beginnings, new growth, new hope... But we need to buckle up for the ride, because it's rarely smooth, and rarely easy. It's an adventure, not a gentle stroll.

But we're not alone. We look back in order to understand our present, and what we find is that Jesus offers us the resources for the adventure – we're nearly at Pentecost, when we will celebrate that outpouring of the Spirit that came upon the twelve, upon several thousand, upon Cornelius, upon so many more... and comes upon us. And we find that Jesus offers advice, given to his first followers and still valuable for those who follow him now. Amongst many precious nuggets of advice, one of the most valuable is surely the one from our Gospel reading today – so important that it comes three times in just those few verses: "Love one another." It is love which will hold us together through the turbulent times. It is love which will open our hearts to welcome those whom we might have thought of as 'outsiders'. It is love which will allow us to be changed, each time God surprises us. It is love which will open our eyes to new ways of understanding life, God, worship and grace. And it is love which will equip us for the radical transformation that God offers us.

- Peter wasn't just going with the flow, when he baptised Cornelius; he was changing the Church.
- The leaders in Jerusalem weren't just accepting the obvious; they were changing the Church.
- Jesus wasn't telling us just to be nice to one another, but to love, because love will change the Church.

And when we join in that adventure, allowing ourselves – our worship, our understanding, our faith – to be changed by God, through others, then we become a Church that not only is willing to change, but which will participate in God's plan to change the world!

Buckle up indeed, because the adventure may be hard, it may be frightening, it may challenge us and disturb us. But it will also transform us! And it will make us into surprised and surprising followers of Jesus, through whom God will transform the world.

“And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’”

Amen!<sup>4</sup>

### **Hymn:**

596 STF – Now let us from this table rise OR

86 STF – Praise the Lord! You heavens, adore him

### **Prayers of intercession**

God who makes all things new, we pray for new life.

For your creation, that you made and declared to be good,  
that it may be restored and renewed,  
and that we may care for it as you intended,  
Creator, Re-creator God, we pray.

*Silence*

God of new life,

**Restore and renew us.**

For your peoples across the world,  
that conflicts may end and relationships be restored,  
and that a true, just and lasting peace may be sought,  
Creator, Re-creator God, we pray.

*Silence*

God of new life,

**Restore and renew us.**

For your church, here in this place and around the world,  
that divisions may be healed, strangers welcomed,  
and that we may have boldness and courage to follow wherever you lead,  
Creator, Re-creator God, we pray.

*Silence*

God of new life,

**Restore and renew us.**

For those suffering, in body, mind or spirit,  
that those who fear the future may find hope,  
those who long for the future may find joy in the present,  
and those who recall the past with pain may find healing,  
Creator, Re-creator God, we pray.

*Silence*

God of new life,

**Restore and renew us.**

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Catrin Harland-Davies

<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Catrin Harland-Davies

## **We will now take up the offering.**

God of all grace,

You have richly blessed us and we give thanks for your generosity and abundance this day.

As we seek to reflect your generosity back out into the world around us, we ask you to bless these gifts and use them for your glory,

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

## **Hymn:**

687 STF – One human family God has made OR

258 STF – You are the Vine, we are the branches

## **Blessing**

God of all grace,

We have received from you.

Now we head out into the world, knowing that all we have is gift.

May we use those gifts in your name.

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker

<sup>7</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker