

twelvebaskets



EPIPHANY 3C

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

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Third Sunday After Epiphany - Year C
26th January 2025



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

154 STF – Come, divine Interpreter OR

564 STF – O thou who camest from above

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

559 STF – Lord, you have my heart OR

463 STF – Deep in the shadows of the past

Readings: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a; Luke 4:14-21

Hymn:

264 STF – Make way, make way, for Christ the king in splendour arrives OR

239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

404 STF – God's spirit is in my heart OR

693 STF – Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

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

415 STF – The Church of Christ in every age

Blessing

The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

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Call to worship

God is here, as we, God's people, gather to praise, to pray and to reflect.

Move amongst us, by your Spirit, that we might see your Kingdom come, your will be done.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

154 STF – Come, divine Interpreter OR

564 STF – O thou who camest from above

Opening Prayers

Faithful God, we are thankful for the example of Jesus who showed us how we should live in this world.

Thank you that when we feel overwhelmed by all that life brings to us, you invite us to rest in you. We give thanks to you for your compassion and love to all who feel like sheep without a shepherd, and for whom the brunt of life's disappointments weighs heavy.

Help us too, so that we could offer compassion to others, as well as receive the same when offered. Bring healing and wholeness to all of us so that we can experience life in all its fullness.

Loving God, help each of us to know that we are loved, just as we are, by your grace and through your Spirit, no matter what choices we have made or mistakes we live with.

May we know your presence, here with us, O God,

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

I would like to begin with a question: have you ever tried to do a jigsaw puzzle but find that you are missing a piece? If that is you, how did it make you feel?

In a jigsaw, each piece plays a role and is important. Its noticeable when you have just one piece missing. Each piece is important to complete the picture, just like each of you is important in God's family.

If you can - Hold up your hand and wiggle your fingers.

Now I have another question. What if my fingers decided not to help me eat? Or if my feet decided not to walk? It would be pretty hard! Paul tells us that we are like a body – one body with many parts. Each part is different but important.

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

Can you name some parts of the body? (*Let them shout answers like hands, feet, eyes, ears, etc.*)

In God's church, we are all like parts of a body. We all have different jobs, talents, and ways to help. Even if you're young, you are still an important part of God's family. We all have something to offer and maybe you would like to think what you would like to do at this church? That offer isn't just for the young in age it's for everyone!

In our New Testament reading we find Jesus at the synagogue and reading from a scroll. He says he has come to bring good news to the poor, heal the sick, and set people free. Can you imagine the feelings when people were listening to this?

Jesus shows us what the body of Christ should do – help people, share love, and bring good news.

So I wonder what are you going to do to help others and use the gifts that God has given you? How can you play your part in the larger whole?

Let us pray:

Dear God, thank you for making us all part of your body, the church. Help us to work together, love one another, and share your good news with everyone.

Amen.³

Hymn:

559 STF – Lord, you have my heart OR

463 STF – Deep in the shadows of the past

Readings: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a; Luke 4:14-21

Hymn:

264 STF – Make way, make way, for Christ the king in splendour arrives OR

239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I

Reflections on the readings

Prayer: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

Have you noticed how, over the last couple of weeks our Gospel lessons (in the Revised Common Lectionary) have focused upon episodes from the beginning of Jesus' public ministry?

First we read Luke's account of Jesus being baptised by John and then, last week, from the Gospel of John, we had the story of his first miracle, turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana.

³ All Age Talk written by Matthew Forsyth

Our lectionary is helping us to understand that Jesus was quickly becoming noticed, hence, as we heard today, “a report about him spread through all the surrounding region,” and his teaching in the synagogues was being acclaimed.

That's the context of our reading within the Lectionary but it's not quite how Luke chose to order his account of the start of Jesus' mission. In his Gospel there are the detailed birth narratives (that we read over Christmas), the (unique to Luke) story of the 12-year-old Jesus in the Temple, the account of the baptism (during which Jesus received the anointing of the Holy Spirit and was assured that God was well-pleased with him) and the record of how, in preparation for his ministry, Jesus then went away into the desert (where he withstood trials). That's the context, the build-up that Luke gives to help us to understand how Jesus, anointed by the Spirit and tempered by temptation, embarked upon his public ministry. It is no mistake that Jesus' teaching is catching the attention of his hearers, he has undergone wide-ranging preparation for ministry.

Question for discussion / reflection: How do we prepare and test those whom we welcome as preachers? From whence comes their authority? Are they called by God, well-grounded in the Scriptures?

Returning to the Present:

According to Luke, it is the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry, he's on tour, preaching around the region, and he has arrived in Nazareth, his hometown, the place where he was brought up. Since news of his work had spread, might we expect that the folk in town would be curious to see (and hear) this local boy made-good? He was putting Nazareth on the map, they'd surely be proud that something good could come from sleepy little Nazareth. Were they hoping to bask in reflected glory?

It was the Sabbath Day so Jesus went to the Synagogue, as was his custom. Luke makes clear that Jesus was a faithful, pious, observant Jew; not a high days and holidays attendant of worship, he was a regular worshipper. Invited as an honoured guest, Jesus stood up to read and was given (presumably by an official of the synagogue) a copy of the Isaiah scroll. Incidentally, it's not surprising that Jesus could read, all adult male Jews were required to learn that skill before their bar-mitzvah in order to read from the Torah during the ceremony (the rite that made them members).

Jesus then chose a passage to read out (no lectionary for him!). He read words (verses 18-19 of our Gospel Reading) which elsewhere in our Bible are to be found in Isaiah 61.1-2 and Isaiah 58.6: he conflates the two passages, presumably to make his point.

Question for discussion / reflection: What can we learn from Jesus' use of the Bible? Do we pick and choose the bits we like? If we could choose just 2 or 3 Bible verses, which would they be?

The Future is Now:

Having read from the scroll, Jesus handed it back and sat down to teach. In the Gospel of Luke, these words that he speaks in the synagogue are the first spoken words of his ministry. He says that, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

That's it: his sermon is one sentence long. (Tell that to those who think the sermon should be at least 15 minutes long, or 45 in some cultures!) However, my excuse for carrying on is that we do need to 'unpack' the sentence that is so rich in meaning, so full of portent. Jesus tells them that everything that was promised by the prophet, all their hopes and dreams for the future have been fulfilled in him: the future is now.

We know that Jesus was anointed at his baptism and we know how his story unfolds, it is perhaps easy for us to accept that he is the anointed one, the change-maker, the one of whom Isaiah spoke.

Can you imagine what it would have been like for the people of Nazareth to hear this native Son make this startling revelation? They were inhabitants of a rural backwater of a region of the Roman Empire, they were oppressed. Their religious texts, however, held out the hope of freedom and the promise of a better tomorrow. How on earth could their reality possibly be God's promised future?

Does an oppressed people: those who are marginalised, those who form an underclass, remember a past golden age, a time when life was so much better, or does nostalgia offer only false hope? Oh for a descendant of David to restore the Kingdom.

Does that people recall the past and find therein hope for a future when God, their God will vindicate them? If we can but endure in the present, the future will be different, the future will be better...

Jesus says, the future is now. We can only live today, yesterday is past and the future is uncertain, we have only today: everyday is today. We are to live in the present. This, in the terminology of the biblical scholar C.H. Dodd, is "realised eschatology," not future-hope, but future-present. The Kingdom is here. Jesus presents a picture of what that future-present can be, drawing upon concepts with which his hearers would have been familiar. The promises he invokes are those that relate to the Year of Jubilee, which would have occurred every 50th year (though, according to Jeremiah 34.14, it was more an aspiration than a lived reality).

Jesus offers radical change (i.e. change from the roots up), a messianic deliverance in which the world is turned upside-down. The excluded are welcomed. Indentured servants are set free. The "poor," who are not just those who lack wealth but those without status, all outsiders, are brought good news, they're included. Captives (potentially, those wrongfully detained, rather than convicted criminals) are to be released. It's a gospel for Others, for those not yet brought into the Kingdom. Good news: this future is now.

But, was this good news for the God-fearing, respectable folk in the synagogue in Nazareth?

The future is now.

Is this good news for us? What does this mean for our chapel/church/community? How can we live Christ's future-present now, today? Are we ready to turn the world upside-down in our quest for justice, as we set this world's values on their heads in our championing of the "poor."

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

404 STF – God's spirit is in my heart OR

693 STF – Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair

Prayers of intercession

Creator God, who made this earth and all that is in it, we thank you for the fertility of the soil and the abundance of food that we can gather, grow and harvest.

Sustainer God, make us conscientious stewards and guardians of the planet, nurturing it and maintaining it for both the present and the future.

⁴ Reflection written by Wendy Kilworth-Mason

Help us no longer to take the earth for granted, but to respect it.

Lord hear us, **Lord graciously hear us.**

Father God, who causes us to be nurtured by parents, families, friends and communities. Give to each human child of every tribe, race or nation a secure and loving home where each is protected from harm.

We pray for families displaced by war, danger, natural disaster, famine or economic necessity, that all families might find the means to give to their children a good start in life: food, clothing, shelter, health care and education.

We pray for the charities that work to bring this to pass.

Lord hear us, **Lord graciously hear us.**

Christ our King, we pray for the nations of this world, that they may co-exist in peace and harmony. We ask not just for a temporary ceasefire in the various wars and conflicts worldwide but for the cessation of warfare and burgeoning of true peace.

We pray for the political and economic structures that enable and underpin modern life. We ask for politicians, civil servants and Captains of Industry who will seek to serve the common good.

May there be just reward for labour and respect for all who toil.

We remember also those who are unemployed and those who are unemployable and ask that their dignity and humanity may be respected.

Lord hear us, **Lord graciously hear us.**

Christ the preacher, we pray for ourselves and others in our congregation and community, we remember today those who unwell, whether sick in mind, soul or body and ask that they may be healed.

We pray that the tired may be refreshed, the troubled, comforted and the lonely, befriended.

Help us to realise the vision of the future-present and to work to make your Kingdom known right here and right now.

Lord hear us, **Lord graciously hear us.**

Come Holy Spirit.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

Gracious God, we bring you all that we have and are. As we commend to you these gifts, we also offer you our whole lives – use us to see your will be done, your kingdom come,

In Jesus' name

Amen.⁶

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Wendy Kilworth-Mason

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Hymn:

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

415 STF – The Church of Christ in every age

Blessing

As we leave this time of worship, may we go with the courage to live the Jesus manifesto,
May we go united to and connected with a whole community of people who are seeking to
know the nature of God who is Spirit, seeking peace in a divided world.
Go, by the grace of God. Amen.⁷

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker