

# twelvebaskets



## ORDINARY 18C

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

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## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**34 STF – O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness OR**

**544 STF – As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**501 STF – Help us, O Lord, to learn the truths your word imparts OR**

**720 STF – We turn to you, O God of every nation**

Readings: Hosea 11:1-11; Psalm 107:1-9, 43; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21

**Hymn:**

**489 STF – All I once held dear, built my life upon OR**

**256 STF – When I needed a neighbour, were you there?**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**685 STF – In Christ there is no east or west OR**

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

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**615 STF – Let love be real, in giving and receiving OR**

**459 STF – Captain of Israel's host**

Blessing

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## **Call to worship**

God has brought us together, and we have gathered,  
The hour is appointed,  
The time is here,  
It is a sacred moment, in a lifetime of sacred moments,  
Let us turn aside and focus our attention on God this day.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## **Hymn:**

34 STF – O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness OR

544 STF – As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longs after you

## **Opening Prayers**

Gracious Saviour,  
Thank you for your unfailing love that pursues us whenever we may wander,  
For your pure heart that loves and nurtures us through every season and chapter of our lives.

Even though we may wander from you, you remain there, steadfast.

Patiently waiting as we find our way back to you.

You are there in our darkest of valleys, our harshest of storms and the calmness at the end of it all.

We confess we may have turned away from you and towards more selfish acts.

Help us, gracious God, to turn away from self-centredness.

That we shall not be quick to anger, blame and act,  
but will walk with patience and to live with a heart like yours that burns with mercy and compassion not with wrath.

We pray that we can set our hearts on things above and the needs of others, not on earthly desires.

Lead us back to you so that we may live our lives with pure intentions and may we know the true riches of this life we have been blessed with.

O Lord, our God,  
You are our light bringing us out of the darkness,  
Our refuge in this life,  
Christ our redeemer.

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 Alice Arbon-Maher

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

### **All Age Talk**

Parable of the rich fool.

"This is how it is with those who pile up riches for themselves but are not rich in God's sight"

Can you imagine your favourite food? Your favourite one thing to eat, whether it be chocolates, apples, mints, sweets...whatever it is, when you eat this it brings you so much joy and happiness.

One day you're stood in the garden and you drop one on the floor without realising, when you come out the next day, there's a little sprout there, so you water it, and over time a beautiful crop grows and the crop produces the food that you dropped there.

Well you're delighted because this means you don't have to pay for this food ever again, and you have a full supply in your back garden! So you plant a few more, and over time more of this food grow. But now you're harvesting more than you can eat, so you start storing it in a barn for the future, just in case the plant ever stops producing it.

What happens to the food that you've stored? Well over time it goes bad, and rotten, and is no use to anyone.

What does God tell us to do here? He tells us that we have found something that produced well and it produced a food that would bring some joy to people when they ate it, but the person chose to keep it hidden and keep it for themselves, and in doing so the food became rotten over time because there was too much for one person to consume. God tells us that we should share these things that bring joy, that there is plenty of produce for everyone, but storing things up to selfishly use for ourselves is not what God intended. The riches we store up on earth will not go with us to Heaven.

Of course, this story is based on the parable of the rich fool, and we know that parables are used as light stories that portray a message from God. This parable – which we will hear more about later in our service – serves as a warning against greed and a reminder that our joy should come from God, and we know that there is plenty of God to go round.

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

### **Hymn:**

501 STF – Help us, O Lord, to learn the truths your word imparts OR

720 STF – We turn to you, O God of every nation

**Readings:** Hosea 11:1-11; Psalm 107:1-9, 43; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21

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<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by Pippa Lupton

## Hymn:

489 STF – All I once held dear, built my life upon OR

256 STF – When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

## Reflections on the readings

This is the time of year when many people are able to have a holiday, a break from work perhaps, or a change of scene. That can lead to the opportunity to reflect on life and what is important. Of course, you don't need to go away to do that – half an hour in the garden or on a park bench might also provide that space to think – if we can find the time to do that this week, the bible passages for today can provide the questions to think about!

Overall, they seem to be asking whether or not we appreciate what we have, or whether we are always grasping for more. Perhaps they are pointing to a kind of attentiveness – have we always noticed the good things which have been present in our lives, or are we more likely to notice when things go wrong, or when we feel we have been treated badly?

The extract from Hosea's prophecy is almost unbearably tender and touching. We hear the voice of God describe in detail the love and care which God has poured on the people of Israel over many generations whilst at the same time lamenting the way in which they haven't noticed or acknowledged that love and care.

- God has called them – and they have gone in the opposite direction (v2)
- God has treated them like tiny children, teaching them to walk, carrying them, bending down to feed them, yet they have refused to return to God (vv3-4) and so violence has reigned.

It is enough to make God give up on the people, but no, instead God cries, 'How can I give you up? How can I hand you over?' declaring, 'my compassion grows warm and tender'. God turns away from the remedy of anger, destruction or wrath, but might just let out a bit of a roar... then, God hopes, the people may tremble and return.

What do we do with such love?

- Do we, can we, accept how much God loves us?
- Do we, can we, recognise just how much our turning away grieves the heart of God?
- Do we, can we, respond with the love God longs for?

The psalm has a similar tone as the psalmist offers thanks to God saying repeatedly, 'for his steadfast love endures forever'. It has been God's steadfast love, the psalmist reminds us, which has redeemed, gathered, delivered, led, satisfied and filled God's people. Let's hear those words again, slowly, and consider how we have known these blessings from God in our own lives and in our church:

Redeemed..., Gathered..., Delivered..., Led..., Satisfied..., Filled....

As v43 says, 'Let those who are wise give heed to these things, and consider the steadfast love of the LORD.' Pay attention to the goodness of God, don't take it for granted.

In the gospel passage from Luke, things get spelled out a bit more directly. It begins with a question from the crowd, someone feels they have been wronged by their own brother, who (it would appear) is not sharing out the family inheritance fairly. The questioner wants Jesus to intervene. Just as an aside, it's very interesting that whenever anyone in the

gospels tells Jesus to take a particular action, he finds another way to respond; 'Tell my sister to help me', Martha says in Luke 10, and probably ends up wishing she hadn't, for it is Martha who then earns the rebuke she had hoped Jesus would give to Mary! Perhaps we would all do well to remember this in our own relationship with Jesus and in our prayers and beware of suggesting exactly what we think Jesus should do in any circumstance!

Here Jesus uses the question as a springboard for some teaching about possessions and spells out for us the inherent dangers in material goods, 'Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions'. He tells the story of a rich man who has an abundant harvest; lacking the space for all his crops he tears down his barns to build bigger ones. This, however, is shown to be a futile and short-sighted action, for he is about to die and will lose everything he values so highly.

August is the month in which most Methodist ministers who are changing circuits make their move. Up and down the country, many ministerial households will be packing and unpacking boxes at this time and moving to other manses – some larger, some smaller. It is a salutary exercise, and inevitably leads those involved to ponder on the 'abundance of possessions' – usually books in particular. Perhaps we need to notice that what Jesus calls out is the danger of allowing possessions to become more important than they really are, of seeing life as consisting in the abundance of possessions, of falling into greed.

We are all in danger here – indeed, most ministers live quite modestly compared with some other professions. It is not the goods themselves which are dangerous, but how we view them. Jesus gives the antidote in his final words, 'so it is with those who store up treasures for themselves, but are not rich toward God'. What a lovely expression, 'rich toward God' – let's turn to Paul's letter to the Colossians to see if he can help us to understand it.

The opening words suggest that he can; 'So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.' Paul gives us two commands which open up a different way of life, if we so choose; 'seek the things that are above', 'set your minds on things that are above'. Lest we should be unsure exactly how to do that, Paul goes on in some detail, with lists of things which are to be put to death and eradicated. He doesn't mince his words but names behaviour which characterises a life that is earthly; amongst that list we note his final inclusion, 'greed (which is idolatry)'. So the greed we heard about in the story told by Jesus has a deeper, more sinister, effect on us, it is a form of idolatry, as we put things in place of God in our lives.

In case this first list hasn't hit home, in case his readers – or we – feel we can exonerate ourselves of fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed, Paul supplements this with a further list of traits which have no place in our lives; anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive talk and lying. This is a bit more comprehensive and we may begin to squirm a little. But Paul isn't trying to make us squirm, he is reminding us that these things no longer have any power over us, for, he says, 'you have stripped off the old self... and have clothed yourselves with the new self.'

I think we need to note that all of this is both done for us by God, and done by us for God. We have 'been raised' with Christ – that's God at work in us, not of our doing - but then we must 'seek' and 'set our minds on' things which are above. There is an act of our own will involved here too – we have choices and need to make the right ones. But it's not all about us either. Let's finish by thinking about that lovely phrase in v 2 'your life is hidden with Christ in God'. In a way it takes us back to Ascension Day, 40 days after Easter, when

Jesus returns to heaven, not distancing himself from humanity, but taking us with him. In the person of Christ, we are now 'seated in the heavenlies' (as Paul says elsewhere in Colossians) and in a mysterious way, our life is so wrapped up with Jesus that Paul describes it as being 'hidden with Christ in God'. That might give us pause for thought as we recline on our deckchairs, whether that's on a Caribbean beach, a Glasgow back garden or a London park bench.<sup>4</sup>

### **Hymn:**

685 STF – In Christ there is no east or west OR

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

### **Prayers of intercession**

*Please note, particular names and concerns may be included in each stanza.*

Loving and gracious God, we bring our prayers to you today in the name of Jesus, the Lord of love, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, trusting that your steadfast love endures forever.

We pray for all situations of war and conflict, remembering especially today...

Comfort those who are suffering and give strength to all who seek to offer love, peace and healing.

We pray for all who lack the essentials of life; food, clothing, shelter, love...

Come close to those in need and make us generous to respond from whatever resources we have.

We pray for all in pain today, whether in body, mind or spirit, known or unknown to us...

Give healing and relief to the sick and patience, love and courage to all who care for them.

We pray for our community, calling to mind individuals, groups and organisations nearby...

Give wisdom and a passion for justice to all in leadership that your steadfast love may be revealed.

We pray for the church, in this place and in every place where you are worshipped and glorified...

Pour out your Holy Spirit afresh that your body on earth may demonstrate your limitless love.

We pray for ourselves, aware that so often we fail to be motivated by love for you and for others...

Reveal yourself to us afresh, that we may live the lives for which you created us, to your glory.

Loving and gracious God, we have offered our prayers to you today in the name of Jesus, the Lord of love, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, trusting that your steadfast love endures forever.

Thanks be to God,

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Jill Baker

<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Jill Baker

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

God of all grace,  
You have given us so much,  
And today we make sure to notice that, and to seek to use those gifts for your mission and not our own selfish ideas.  
Take these gifts, and may they be a blessing to those who need them most today and every day.

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

## **Hymn:**

615 STF – Let love be real, in giving and receiving OR

459 STF – Captain of Israel's host

## **Blessing**

And now we rise from this moment,  
We depart from this gathering,  
But worship does not cease here, in fact it is only just getting started.  
So, as you go from this place,  
Know that the Spirit of God goes before you, inviting you to play your part in the unfolding story of love.

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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

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