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ORDINARY 31A

5th November 2023

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Call to worship

God is relationship, and one you are invited into this day.

God is connection, and the Spirit is reaching out for your hand this day.

God is love, and the heartbeat of the divine is for each and every one of us, this day, and always.

Come, by your Spirit, Lord God.

[Pause]

Spirit of the invisible God,
draw close to me, I pray.

[Pause]

I worship you, Lord,
For by you all things are made, and today I give my thanks and praise.

Help me to face this day renewed and refreshed, to share the concerns of yesterday,
For I am part of a wide community, life breathed by God, I am created to be the poetry exclaiming
the kin-dom of God.

Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are most familiar.

Readings: Matthew 23:1-12 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding in music

548 STF – Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine - [YouTube](#)

313 STF – Thine be the glory - [YouTube](#)

81 STF – Now thank we all our God - [YouTube](#)

Responding to the reading

In today's gospel passage, Jesus delivers a poignant message, warning against the hypocrisy of the religious leaders of his time. He exposes their love for titles, prestige, and public recognition, contrasting it with a call to humility and authenticity in the pursuit of a genuine relationship with God.

This passage challenges us to examine our own lives. Are we motivated by a desire for recognition and praise, or do we seek a humble and authentic relationship with God? Are we more concerned with appearances and titles than with the state of our hearts?

Jesus' words invite us to reflect on our motivations and priorities. Are we serving others with genuine love and compassion, or are we seeking recognition for our deeds? Are we striving for positions of authority for the sake of power, or are we using our gifts and talents to uplift and empower others?

The challenge of Matthew 23:1-12 is clear: to live a life of humble service, to put others before ourselves, and to seek a genuine, intimate connection with God rather than the applause of the world. It calls us to examine our hearts, to strip away the masks of hypocrisy, and to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, who exemplified humility, servitude, and authenticity throughout his earthly ministry.

You could spend a few minutes just meditating on these verses, thinking about how they apply to your life. As you meditate on these verses, consider how you can align your life with the values of the Kingdom of God: to be servants of all, to lift others up, and to seek God's approval above all else. In doing so, you are not only honouring the teachings of Jesus but also finding a deeper and more fulfilling purpose in our lives.

Here are some questions that you might like to go to ponder over this week, perhaps in conversation with someone you trust, or someone else who you know uses these resources.

- Are there laws, rules or conventions that need to be challenged?
- What about current political decisions?
- What about things that happen in the life of the church?
- What might you do to challenge these in ways that might bring about good change and love of neighbours?

Responding in prayer

God of all grace, I come to you this day in prayer.

Spend a moment praying for this community that you call home – my own community and the surrounding villages, towns and cities. There is much pain here, as well as much joy. There is much brokenness, and so take a minute to pray for the situations and people you are aware of, who need prayers and who need to know something of God's love this day.

In the stillness, hold those names and situations, and any prayer requests you have received, in the light of God's love.

[You might like to write these situations and prayers down, and to light a candle if its appropriate.]

Finally, I pray for your world, recognising that there is much darkness and sadness in the world. Every time we open a newspaper or turn on the news, we see something of a grieving world, longing for healing.

In the stillness, hold those situations and the people involved, in the light of God's love.

[You might like to write these situations and prayers down, and to light a candle if its appropriate.]

Lord, you hear all of our prayers, spoken and unspoken, and for that I remain eternally grateful.

In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Blessing

Christ before, and Christ beside,
God all around me, and the Spirit at work in and through me,
May I know something of the love you have for me, and take the relationship you have with me into the relationships and situations in which I will find myself this week.
Show me how to love with your divine love, O God. Amen

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week Ahead

Monday 6th November

- Today, why not spend time in your garden or a nearby park. Observe the natural world around you and offer prayers of appreciation for God's creation.

Tuesday 7th November

- God of all grace
Today I lift up in prayer the dedicated doctors and medical staff who tirelessly care for the sick and suffering. Bless them with strength, wisdom, and compassion as they heal and comfort. Protect them in their selfless service and grant them resilience in the face of challenges. May their work be a reflection of your love and healing grace. Amen.

Wednesday 8th November

- You might like to gather some magazines, newspapers, or printed images and create a collage that represents the blessings in your life. As you cut and paste, offer prayers of gratitude for each blessing depicted.

Thursday 9th November

- Prince of peace, Lord of light,
Today I bow my head in prayer for those caught in the tumult of war and conflict. Grant them strength in their suffering, shelter for the displaced, and peace for the troubled hearts. May your light pierce through the darkness, bringing hope, reconciliation, and a lasting peace to all who bear the heavy burdens of strife. In your mercy, I pray, Amen.

Friday 10th November

- Use your camera or smartphone to capture images that reflect your spiritual journey. Look for moments of beauty, serenity, or even challenge. Reflect on how these images relate to your prayers.

Saturday 11th November

- On this day of remembrance, we know there are still wars and conflicts raging all around the world. Today, we pray for peace, and pray that we can make a world in which peace is possible for all of humanity, and all creation. Amen.