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ORDINARY 27A

8th October 2023

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Look at your feet.

Notice the scraps and marks on your shoes or slippers, or if your feet are bare notice the lines and wrinkles. Wiggle your toes and notice how that feels.

Look at the ground your feet are on. Is it a carpet? Or wood? Laminate or something else?

When you are ready, offer this time of worship to God:

Creator God, thank you that my feet are on holy ground. As I sit here, I choose to offer the time to you. I long to meet with you on this holy, ordinary ground.

Amen.

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

Hymn:

504 STF – May the mind of Christ my Saviour - [YouTube](#)

Reading: Matthew 21:33-46 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

Who has influenced you on your journey of faith? Occasionally it might be a minister or teacher. More likely, if we sat down with most of you and chatted, we'd find it was someone different. Maybe the person who knew when to pick up the phone or offer you a meal to heat up at home. Or it was someone who offered to pray when all else seemed futile. It was, in short, people who put their energy into living out the teachings of Christ.

This small, local measure is something that is reflected around the world, from issues significant to issues small. The local people often have the correct answer to complex and demanding situations.

The country of Sudan has been caught up in conflict many times. When conflict broke out earlier this year, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a Christian peace, justice and nonviolence movement, sent a message of peace and solidarity to its partner branch in Sudan.

After a few weeks, the Fellowship of Reconciliation then had a fascinating dispatch from its partner in the world's newest country, South Sudan. In it Light, their colleague who runs the South Sudan Fellowship of Reconciliation branch explained how civil society had leapt into action when conflict broke out. Civil society is a clunky phrase, but its meaning is simple. It's not the government. It's not business. It's people like you and me who just get on and do things! People in South Sudan and Sudan communicated to share stories of safety and security. Then, people in the south mobilised to pressure all sides to start talking. Soon, a

broader network sprung up called 'Because of our Country,' which aimed to provide humanitarian help to people fleeing south from Sudan.

This network sprung up because they recognised that larger organisations would take time to respond, and time wasn't on their side. Instead, like the parable of the loaves and fishes, people would use the resources they had at the moment to respond – knowing that longer-term help would come in later days.

The people in the network knew about the principles of peace and nonviolence. But it was only when put into the situation that they discovered what they were truly capable of. This transformative nature is at the heart of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (You might like to look up their work online at www.for.org.uk). If I took you through many stories, you would soon find a similar example. Ordinary people caught up in extraordinary conflict or post-conflict situations. They turn from everyday people into agents of transformation because they were trained in skills they could share with others.

Today's Gospel reading encourages us all to find power within. It's a fairly rough story. A vineyard is established with all the resources and tools required to harvest and benefit from a rich crop. Unfortunately, the people who work in the vineyard take short-term moves - including acts of violence - to make short-term financial gains instead of using their skills to bring in the harvest.

Why does Jesus tell this parable? Because he is warning the religious leaders and rule-setters that the people who live out the spirit of his message will discover the Kingdom of God. Those who don't will have it removed from them.

The Kingdom of God is a beautiful and wonderful place. We hear snippets of it littered in images and stories throughout the bible. What is clear is that peace, justice and equality will flourish and all will find a home. That vision is transformative because we are also reminded that the kingdom of God can be found here on earth.

So we are challenged to decide, over the next week, will you use your skills, gifts and talents to further build the kingdom of God? Because if you do, you will discover new talents within yourself and further enrich the lives of others.¹

Blessing

May I leave guided by God's ever present care and love
May I go forward in the assurance of God's faithfulness and forgiveness,
In the beauty and peace,
In the creation God has called each of us to care for
Amen.

¹ This reflection is adapted from a longer one featured in The Vine. To get a full subscription to The Vine, contact us on thevine@twelvebaskets.co.uk

Our thanks to John Cooper, from The Fellowship of Reconciliation for sharing his thoughts as part of the reflection. Find out more about their work and how you can support them at www.for.org.uk

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 9th October

- In this week's Vine at Home, we've learned a little bit about the work of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Today, let us pray for peace, and for all working to help build and achieve peace around the world.
- How can you be a person of peace in your life, community, family and home?

Tuesday 10th October

- Today is World Mental Health Day, and this year's theme is 'mental health is a universal human right'. Why not use today as a day to find someone you don't normally talk to, and check they are okay. Or make a phone call to someone you haven't been in touch with for a while. It's good to talk.
- If its appropriate and helpful, you might like to find someone you can pray with, even if it's just to sit in silent prayer for a few minutes together. See what comes up as you make space for God.

Wednesday 11th October

- Holy Lord, show me how to follow in your ways this day, this week, and beyond.
- Help me to love like you love me. Amen.

Thursday 12th October

- Draw a picture of your local church. Include on the picture all the ways you see God at work, and all the things you want to ask God to work in. Pray about it.

Friday 13th October

- Pour a glass of water. Think about the things you do that get in the way of your relationship with God. You might think it muddies the water of your life, but God forgives us for all these things, and offers us living water. Drink some of the water and give thanks for the way God reaches out to you with love and forgiveness.

Saturday 14th October

- Think about the fruits of the spirit. Pick one of them that you don't feel you are very good at, or that needs some intentional work. Spend some time praying about this, and then practice it for a whole day in all you do.