

# twelvebaskets



## EPIPHANY 3C

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

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

**Third Sunday After Epiphany - Year C**  
23rd January 2022



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**154 STF – Come, divine Interpreter OR**

**759 STF – Come, O Lord, give us your Spirit**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**164 STF – Your words to me are life and health OR**

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

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

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**463 STF – Deep in the shadows of the past OR**

**693 STF – Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair**

What am I being called to?

**Hymn:**

**709 STF – Of all the Spirit's gifts to me OR**

**701 STF – Heaven shall not wait for the poor to lose their patience**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

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

**239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I**

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**

God of all grace,  
We come to encounter something of your grace this day,  
To hear again your words of forgiveness and hope,  
Your messages of love and peace.

May we be inspired to continue our journey of discovery with you.

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## **Hymn:**

154 STF – Come, divine Interpreter OR

759 STF – Come, O Lord, give us your Spirit

## **Opening Prayers**

The heavens declare your glory and the skies proclaim your handiwork.  
Morning sun and moon by night, the light and warmth that fuel our life:  
Rolling hills and mountain peak, flowing stream and ocean deep:  
Thunder's roar and gentle rain, creation sings its song of praise:  
The heavens declare your glory, and the skies proclaim your handiwork.

Amen.

A prayer of confession

You speak to us in many ways, through rushing wind or still small voice, in scripture's word or through your grace.

And we in turn find many ways to hear the world's insistent voice break through and take your place.

Forgive the frailty of our faith. Help us hear your voice above the clamour of this world, recognise the difference and follow only you.

Amen.

A prayer of thanksgiving

Generous God, for all that sustains us, air to breathe, warmth and light, food to eat, water to drink, we gratefully offer our songs and praise.

Holy God, for your Spirit who joins us, one people, one body empowered for service, we gratefully offer our hands and feet.

Saving God, for your love that inspires us, healing and wholeness, freedom and justice, we gratefully offer our hearts and souls.

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

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

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

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers taken from The Act of Prayer by John Birch

## All Age Talk

How are we showing our love?

We are called to be Christ's hands and feet, to be agents of love in the world – and yet the question I want us to explore today is: how do we show it?

There is a much-quoted slogan in Christian circles: 'if you were to be accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?'

In response to this, many people offer their knowledge of the Bible, their ability to sing all the hymns in the hymn book, the number of times they have been to church, the volunteer roles they take on as flower steward or leading prayers in church. No doubt, all of these things can help us to grow in our knowledge and love of God – but are they really the kind of evidence Jesus displayed in his life?

As we will hear in one of our Bible readings later in our service, Jesus often stood up for those most in need in the community he lived in, and tried to help anyone who was suffering or in trouble. How then, can we do the same?

Do you have any ideas about how we can be a church that helps people in need – let me hear your suggestions:

*[Take ideas from amongst the congregation. There may be chance for some discussion about things that are already happening, but do encourage the church to think about new ideas too. It may also be possible to spend some time reflecting on whether some of these ideas are more suitable to your context than others].*

There are so many ways we can respond, and each of us have different skills, availability and levels of energy. As well as our own community, there are the needs of the wider world – issues we could be campaigning on, international development charities who we could be supporting, political topics we as a church could be raising our voice about. Amongst all this need – let us find a way to show our love.

As we come towards the end of the first month of 2022, I wonder how we are all doing with our New Year's Resolutions! Perhaps as a church, we can make a commitment to take on one new way of serving our community today. Let's see if we can make that happen in conversation after our service is finished...

Let us pray.

Living God, we thank for your challenge to us to be a church that is serving those around us. We read in the Gospels about how Jesus always sided with the most in need, help us to do the same – may we resist the temptation to be comfortable with where we are and seek to show our love to all those we meet.

In Jesus' name we pray

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

## Hymn:

164 STF – Your words to me are life and health OR

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

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

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

## Reflections on the readings

The beginning of the New Testament describes a time of political turmoil, of large nations accruing wealth and military power, of rising inequality, the rich getting richer and the poor poorer, of mistrust in leaders and politicians.

Nothing like the times we live in at all then?!

Into that context, into that uncertainty, steps Jesus of Nazareth. We've just celebrated the amazing story of his birth, and the wonderful miracle of God with us – the incarnate Immanuel. But now, after a few decades of mystery, we are starting to get to grips with Jesus the man, Jesus the rabbi, Jesus the Messiah.

Here, in his first sermon, his first public appearance as an adult, he lays out some of what he is going to stand for, what his ministry is going to be about. Some scholars refer to this passage as The Nazareth Manifesto. And it reads a bit like a Manifesto doesn't it: a kind of political (with a small 'p') statement of the key priorities and principles for Jesus' time on earth. You could call it a vision or mission statement. Or a strategy document.

Can you remember the five things Jesus says he will stand for? Here they are:

- Good news to the poor
- proclaim release to the captives
- recovery of sight to the blind
- the oppressed go free
- proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

That last one, perhaps the most poetic, has been translated a whole range of different ways, including 'this is God's year or this is God's time', but there is also a hint of the Old Testament idea of the 'jubilee' here: the idea that there is a time when all debts and injustices are wiped away. A time of equity and equality.

In which case, all five of these 'manifesto statements', these 'strategic goals', are about social justice. Jesus is committing to a transforming of the social order – a transforming that begins with the prophets of the Old Testament, and which he comes to continue, to update and to renew. A reminder that his ministry – indeed all God's ministry – needs to include good news to the poor, the possibility of people's potential being fulfilled, a hope for and a working towards a better time.

In Luke's gospel, perhaps more clearly than the others, we see the role this social justice agenda plays throughout Jesus' ministry. Luke presents Jesus as always sticking up for the poorest and most marginalised, always on the side of the oppressed, always upsetting the social order. Jesus flips the whole thing on its head.

Equally, we also see in Luke's gospel that it is this social justice agenda that gets Jesus in so much trouble. People don't like it. The rulers, the religious authorities, right through to Pilate and Herod at the other end of his earthly ministry, get upset because Jesus threatens the power structures, the status quo. We see that if we read on a bit in Luke 4 – at the end of this first moment of teaching, the crowds get so upset with him that they take him up to the cliff and try to throw him off.

In fact, it seems to me that part of the reason Jesus ends up on the cross is because he's not afraid to upset the applecart of society at the time. And, of course, if Jesus

doesn't end up on the cross, then there is no resurrection, there's no Sunday worship, and there certainly isn't a chapel here for us to worship in today.

Luke 4 reminds us that social justice is at the heart of Jesus' ministry, and we can't separate out ideas of eternal salvation from earthly justice.

But, crucially, Jesus doesn't stop there. He says his five points, about social justice, but he is actually reading from the scroll of Isaiah. Many of his original audience would have already known all these words. Perhaps they were mouthing along with him. Perhaps a few groaned, muttering to themselves, 'not another one on this passage, surely'. Perhaps a few lent forward, thinking, 'I wonder what this young rabbi makes of this passage, it's one of my favourites...'

And this is when Jesus says a sixth thing. 'Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'

And that's when they get really upset. This is the point at which a few people would have walked out. This is when someone probably starts the muttering and murmuring that leads them to taking him up to the cliff top a few minutes later. Because this would have been shocking to his original audience. It's a bold and a brave statement.

But it is also the most important, most exciting moment in this gospel passage – and for us, the most relevant. It might even be the single most important thing Jesus says in the whole of his ministry.

Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

And in that moment, what was word, becomes flesh, what was old becomes new, what was law becomes relationship, what was dead has come to life.

Jesus hasn't just reminded people of the principles Isaiah was writing about thousands of years before, he's embodied them, brought them to life, moved them out of an ancient scroll and into the world of people who are living, moving and breathing. Can he do the same for us today?

That's our challenge – can we say the same today? Can we embody these principles of social justice, of God's love in action? Can we be Christ's hands and feet here on earth?

Which takes us to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, and that passage we read earlier in our service, where we hear about the image of the body, and the body parts. The embodying of Jesus' ministry requires us all to play our part. We can't do it alone, we are called to follow Jesus in community, as church, seeking to know more of each other and ourselves, and to find ways to serve Jesus together.

What part are you called to play? What is it that is yours to do? In a moment, we'll offer a space where you can reflect on those questions, on your place within the body. Because we know that there is far too much injustice and inequality in the world for us all to do everything. Just watching the news in the evening, or browsing through a newspaper over morning coffee is overwhelming because – on any given day – there is too much going on for us to do it all. And sometimes the charity appeals and the calls to action feel too much.

Amongst all that, it's important we find our place. If we are a hand, we can be the best hand we can be. If we are a lung, we must do the best job of bringing oxygen into the rest of the body that we can. If we are an eye, let's do all the seeing we can... The Vine resources, which we are using to help shape our service today, partner with two organisations to help us engage with social justice issues, the Joint Public Issues Team – which advises and guides churches in their engagement with

public policy on a range of issues, from homelessness to climate change – and All We Can – the international development agency working alongside local communities in some of the poorest parts of the world to help people fulfil their potential. Perhaps you could use one or both of them to help you understand your role better?

Jesus goes to the place where he is known, in his home town, and demonstrates how he embodies God's love for the world, and particularly for those in need. Can we do the same? Can we fulfil this scripture in people's hearing today?<sup>4</sup>

**Hymn:**

463 STF – Deep in the shadows of the past OR

693 STF – Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair

**What are you being called to?**

To what extent is your faith integrated with and overlapping with issues of social justice?

What are the issues and causes that make you angry, or that you wish you could change?

What are the injustices in our world where you might have some relevant skills or experience, and could play a part in changing?

What is it that God might be calling you to do?

Today, in the stillness, reflect on that image of the 'body' of Christ from Paul's letter to the Corinthians. In that body, each organ, each body part, has a role to play, a function, and a contribution to the larger whole. What is yours? Where do you fit in? Do you know what that is already, or are you searching?

Use the quiet to reflect...

*[Hold a time of stillness. You might like to play some quiet music, and/or invite people to make notes or draw as they are thinking.*

*When people have had long enough, invite them to pray this prayer with you – either repeating it a line at a time or you could project the words on a screen or similar so people can join in].*

God of all grace,  
You call me to be a part of your body.  
Help me to find my place this day,  
And to play my part for the building of your Kingdom,  
Here on earth.  
Amen.

**Hymn:**

709 STF – Of all the Spirit's gifts to me OR

701 STF – Heaven shall not wait for the poor to lose their patience

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

## **Prayers of intercession**

Almighty God

We thank you for the gift of scriptures which we hold, passed to us through many voices and hands, over many centuries from different parts of our world.

We pray for your church, that we make work in unity to study and listen to your heart of love revealed to us in those scriptures.

We pray for the parts of the world where misunderstanding, human failing and greedy power have used scripture to beat, control, hurt and kill other human beings and our natural world.

Help us to live as people shaped by scripture.

We thank you for the gift of your Spirit. Your very self, Holy God, come close to us.

We pray for your church that it may be open to the leading of your dynamic Spirit. Leading, teaching and empowering the church for action in an ever-changing world.

We pray for those, near and far away, who need the comforting, healing presence of your Spirit. We also pray for those, near and far away, who need the disturbance of your love.

Help us to be open to your Spirit, to water and grow our spiritual discipleship.

We thank you for the gift of your good news. The message of grace for all, embodied in Jesus Christ.

We pray that your church may be authentic to the message of good news, so that its words be matched by its deeds.

We pray for those who are marginalised. May they know the truth of the Jesus manifesto as we work together to make our world inclusive, joyful and just for all.

Help us to be disciples who demonstrate the meaning of good news to others even as we continue to experience the freedom, hope and love shared with us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray,

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

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

### **Blessing the offering**

Living God, accept these gifts, that we may use them and ourselves to bring good news to those in poverty, freedom to the oppressed, release to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind – may we proclaim that this is God's time.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Andrew Dye

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

**Hymn:**

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

239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I

**Blessing**

As you leave this place, go with the courage to live the Jesus manifesto, go united in the Spirit, seeking peace in a divided world. Go, by the grace of God.

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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