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ORDINARY 33C

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A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening prayers

This is the Lord's Day, and on this day of remembrance, I come to you in worship, in gratitude, and in prayers for peace.

As I remember wars past, grieve for wars current, and pray for future peace, show me how to follow you as I pray, listen, sing, share and reflect today.

Come here, into this sacred space, this ordinary space, this space of love and healing and peace, by your Spirit, Lord

[Pause]

Opening Prayers

Compassionate and steadfast Lord of all,
As I come today to worship you,
To remember what has been,
and commemorate the lives lost in the pursuit of peace,
I bring all that I have and am into your presence.

I come to say sorry, knowing that you forgive and accept me, just as I am.
I come to praise you and give thanks.

I ask that the songs of praise may be like honey to your ears,
that my words of confession and forgiveness will be a balm to me, and to everyone around me,
and, that I will grow closer to you and to those in my community, my family, my neighbourhood,
as I remember, listen, learn, and pray.

Amen.¹

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

Hymn:

350 STF – I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship - [YouTube](#)

Readings: Isaiah 65:17-25 – [Click for reading](#)
Luke 21:5-19 – [Click for reading](#)

¹ Opening prayers written by Sheila Matthews and Tim Baker

Response to the reading

Isaiah 65 is a promise. “See I will create a new heavens and a new earth!” - the broken world we live in is not the end; darkness will not have the final word. One way to read God’s promises throughout the Bible is that they are something we have no part in, something beyond us, that if we passively hang around we might get to see these promises completed. Or otherwise it might be something we are rewarded with when we die for a life faithfully lived - nothing to do with this life or this world.

Today, however, I’d like to suggest that we are called, as Christ-followers, to be active participants in bringing about God’s promise for a new heaven and a new earth in the here and now. We are called to get stuck in bringing them about.

Luke 21 is another kind of prophesy; Jesus speaking of the trials and tribulations to come for his followers. Some theologians think that these times that Jesus speak of are end times; the birthing pains for the new heavens and the new earth. Others believe that these times came not long after Jesus’s death, perhaps even in the disciples’ own life times - they did, after all, experience their fair share of persecution. When do you think these times of war, betrayal, earthquakes, famines and pestilences refers to?

I look around at the world and I see signs of great hope. Hope that a new heaven and a new earth is being born into existence now. Walking through the countryside as the shadows grow long and the swallows swoop and dive, I think I see a glimpse of God’s creation that is full of joy and celebration. Meeting a friend’s brand-new baby recently, I was caught with a lump in my throat at the reminder that God is constantly making new things.

But I also look around and see that the world is caught up in the crises that Jesus predicts in Luke 21. This winter we know that the cost of living crisis is exacerbating poverty and increasing inequality. 2022 has been a year in which we’ve been reminded that war in Europe is not a thing of the past, and that mindless violence at the hands of cruel dictators is still a reality of this world and for too many people’s lives.

What do we do with this? With daily struggle we see between joy and hope and rejoicing, and pain and suffering and strife?

In all of this, remember: God is God. God is creating a new heaven and a new earth. Even if sometimes it feels like the darkness is winning, God continues to whisper hope into being.

Some questions for reflection, perhaps you might like to think about one or more of these with a friend or neighbour this week:

- What signs of hope are you seeing?
- And what signs of end times?
- What do you think you might be called to do to bring God’s promises about?²

² Reflection written by Lucy Zwolinska

Hymn

611 STF – Brother, sister, let me serve you - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

On this day of remembrance, may you go out into the world and remember, be present to those around you, may you appreciate the big story that you are apart,

And may the prince of peace rule in your heart.

Amen.³

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 14th November

- You might like to use this prayer as a blessing or grace before one of your meals today.
- Gracious God, thank you for the many ways you have blessed me, and for the nutrition in the meals I am eating this day. Thank you for the strength that comes from my food to keep me going. Thank you for the tastes I can enjoy and the refreshment I can feel.
- Gracious God, today, as I eat, I remember that all I have is gift – and I look out on the world around me, knowing that many people are not as blessed as I am, and many will go hungry today.
- God, help me to seek justice in your world.
Amen.

Tuesday 15th November

- Take a moment to look at your hands. Reflect on the things you have used them for already this week: to do housework, to write emails, to make phone calls, perhaps some digging in the garden or some manual labour tasks.
- Thank you God, for these hands. Help me to use them as your hands in the world – to use my body, my mind, my whole life, for the building of your Kingdom here on earth.
Amen.

³ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Wednesday 16th November

- When you have chance today, head outside and look at the sky (ideally not when it's pouring with rain!). Take note of the clouds, of the speed they are moving, of the light the sun is casting, perhaps you can see the moon or some stars if it is after sunset.
- Under the vastness of the open sky, reflect on how far away the clouds are, and how much further the sun and the stars are...
- As you look at the huge expanse of the horizon, think about how much bigger our Creator is, how the God we worship knows each one of us and yet is also holding the whole universe together.
- You may wish to give thanks for the amazing universe you get to be a part of.

Thursday 17th November

- On this day in 1558, the Elizabethan era began – with the ascension of Queen Elizabeth I to the throne. Our own recent times have seen much tumult and change in leadership here in the UK, between the death of our longest-standing monarch and the multiple changes in leadership of the ruling party, and therefore new Prime Ministers.
- Today you are invited to pray for all who find change difficult, and who are wrestling with the anxiety and uncertainty of these tumultuous times. If that's you, take some time out today to pray for yourself, to ground yourself in God's unchanging, infallible, unconditional love for you.

Friday 18th November

- As we head into the winter months, and the evenings get darker, and colder, and wetter, we pray for all who feel isolated by this time. All who are forced to withdraw indoors when they don't find that comfortable or know it brings with it a loneliness and isolation.
- If that's you, spend some time praying for yourself today, and reflecting on ways you can seek connection, maintain relationship, stay grounded in the natural world and God's beautiful creation.

Saturday 19th November

- Holy God, you have called me here, in this moment, this day, this weekend.
Lord of life, I see you at work in the world around me.
Open my eyes, and open my heart,
That I may be ready to receive your Spirit into my life.
Amen.