

twelvebaskets

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ORDINARY 15A

16th July 2023

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening / Centering Prayers

Just be quiet for a moment.

[Pause]

Think of a place that you love to be in, a place that brings you peace – perhaps it reminds you of God or reveals something of God’s nature to us. It might be by the sea, in your garden, at home, a favourite holiday spot, a mountain or a skyscraper. Perhaps it will be connected to a beautiful landscape or a special view.

Pause for a moment, imagining yourself into that place. What can you see? How do you feel?

Firstly, pause and give thanks.

Lord of our special places, I give you thanks for these special places and all that they mean to me. I give thanks for the memories in this place, the special people associated with it, the faces, names and stories I remember when I picture it.

Living God, I give you thanks for your creation and all the joy and wonder it brings me.

[Quiet]

Secondly, still imagining yourself in this special place, pause to say sorry.

I say sorry for the damage our society has done to these places, and the ways I have been part of systems that have damaged your world, or the people who live there.

Loving God, thank you that you accept me as I am, and use me for your work to create a better, safer, fairer world.

In Jesus’ name,

Amen.

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

Readings: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 – [Click for the reading](#)

Response to the reading:

Have you ever planted a seed, and watched it germinate?

That which appears dead, coming to life in the soil – slowly, carefully, deliberately, seeking out the light and the nutrients.

Jesus so often turns to the natural world for his images, metaphors and parables and – in a largely agrarian society – he naturally tells stories about farming. We get that again today with the famous ‘parable of the sower’.

This is a parable about Good News. About the planting of the gospel into the places

and spaces around us. The sower recognises the abundance of the seed – sowing without discrimination and minimal concern as to where the seed lands, because he seems to know that enough will find that good soil and flourish. The parable ends with this evocative challenge: ‘whoever has ears, let them hear’.

You might like to find someone you trust, or someone else who is using these resources, and have a conversation with them around these questions at some point this week.

The third one in particular is only really useful for someone who has read this gospel story recently, or knows it well.

1. What does ‘good news’ look like in our neighbourhood / community?
2. How can we plant seeds of hope here, or nurture the existing seeds that are growing?
3. How valuable do you find the explanation of the parable in Matthew’s gospel? Should we treat this with the same level of reverence as the story itself? Are there any reasons why we shouldn’t?

Responding in prayer:

God who is Spirit, thank you for your presence in my life,
Thank you for planting seeds of hope and joy in my life,
Thank you that, by some miracle, you are holding all things together though Jesus Christ.

Help me to be Good News in the spaces and places where I am known this week.

Amen.

Responding in song:

Sing along or listen to these songs, and reflect on what God might be doing in your life and community.

615 STF – Let love be real, in giving and receiving - [YouTube](#)

463 STF – Deep in the shadows of the past - [YouTube](#)

Responding in action:

This week, perhaps using the prayer prompts below, you could walk through your town or community, ideally with someone else – or a few people. And as you walk, pray for the people who live in the houses, the people who work in the businesses, the people who work in and use the shops, the restaurants, the pubs.

As well as praying using words, make sure you spend time listening. Listen, to what God might have to say to you, to the prompts of the Spirit, to the invitation to get involved in what God is already up to in the places you call home.

If you are not able to do this, you could invite others to do the same and pray for them as they walk, or be there to listen to their stories when they finish the walk, or you could get up a map of your local area and pray your way around the streets and shops as you see them on the map.

Blessing

Go out from this place, inspired and uplifted to bring about change in the world. Go out into the world, amongst all the disheartening and disappointing moments of life, and know that the God of love goes with you, before you, alongside you and within you.

Go to be a part of a movement of people of love, grace and peace.

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 17th July

- 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.

Tuesday 18th July

- Go outdoors and find something natural: a stone, leaf, flower, or something else. Consider the ways God has made this thing and then reflect on how you too are wonderfully made by God. What does this mean to you?

Wednesday 19th July

- God of every time and space,
God of this moment and this place where I am today,
Thank you that across all of the universe you are present, you are here, you are amongst us.
Thank you for the work you are doing in me, in my home, in my community.
Show me how to get involved with what is happening here,
With all that is loving, and healing and hopeful.
Amen.

Thursday 20th July

- Draw around the shape of your hand. Write on it the things that you're carrying that feel like burdens. Offer them to God in prayer, remembering that God carries your burdens with you.

Friday 21st July

- Sit silently for ten minutes and let your mind wander. Offer any thoughts and feelings to God.

Saturday 22nd July

- Make a cup of tea or coffee, or something else to drink. As you drink it, imagine all the places and people that are responsible for making it, from source to your lips.
- Thank God for them, the source of all life.