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## **ORDINARY 9B**

2nd June 2024

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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## Opening Prayers

A verse from 2 Corinthians 4:

'It is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'

At the very beginning, Creator God, you called for light to shine amidst the dark, empty void of space.

Jesus Christ, come, by your grace, into this space, into this moment.

Holy Spirit, pour yourself into my life and the lives of those around me without measure in this season of the Spirit.

Thank you, Holy and Gracious God, that you are more ready to forgive than I am to confess. As I open myself to you, you shine afresh in my heart, renewing my courage and giving me the grace I need to step out again in confidence, knowing that you are at work within me. Thanks be to God.

Amen.

## Hymn:

55 STF – Immortal, invisible, God only wise – [YouTube](#)

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

**Readings:** Mark 2:23-3:6 – [Click for reading](#)

## Responding to the reading

What does your weekend involve? Does it represent a change in rhythm to the rest of the week?

From the very first story in the Bible, we learn about how God rested on the sabbath. Throughout Scripture you can hear the same invitation: human beings should do the same and regard it as a day of rest and consecration.

In 21st Century British culture, our connection with this ancient practice of Sabbath is a bit confused. The original Sabbath was the seventh day of the week, what we would now call Saturday, but often our thinking has equated it more with Sunday, and it is Sunday which we sometimes regard as a day of rest. This has developed in Christian societies because the Resurrection took place on a Sunday ('the first day of the week') so that became, for the early Christians, a day of celebration and worship. It appears that this was formalised under the Roman Emperor, Constantine the Great in March 321, when he passed legislation that Sunday should become a day of rest; gradually this developed into equating this day with the Hebrew 'Sabbath'.

It is clear that in the time of Jesus, 'Sabbath' was a red-hot issue. The Pharisees and scribes who upheld the law paid close attention to the enforcement of Sabbath laws. Indeed, the laws as laid down in the Hebrew Scriptures had been further augmented and

elaborated to provide a buffer zone of safety around the original demands. The laws were enforced rigorously, with harsh penalties for breaking them. It would appear that although Jesus had a high regard for Scripture, stating very clearly on at least one occasion: 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil.' (Matthew 5:17) he seems to sit lightly to the demands of Sabbath law, perhaps because he sees how these laws have become over-exaggerated and are applied with a disproportionate amount of zeal.

Here are a few questions to consider and perhaps discuss with someone you trust if you get chance.

Questions for discussion:

1. What has been your experience of sabbath-observance (on Saturdays or Sundays) in your lifetime?
2. What might it mean to keep a day 'to the LORD your God' – and how does that fit with your own lifestyle?
3. When legislation was changed to allow shops to open on Sundays (e.g. through The Sunday Trading Act 1994) one of the strongest arguments of the 'Keep Sunday Special' campaign was how it would affect workers' rights and freedoms. This links to the approach in Deuteronomy 5, with its concern for those in slavery. How might we interpret this call to care in today's society?
4. Is there anything you feel you need to change in your approach to weekends?

### Hymn:

158 STF – Lord you sometimes speak in wonders – [YouTube](#)

563 STF – O Jesus, I have promised - [YouTube](#)

545 STF – Be thou my vision – [YouTube](#)

### Blessing

As you rise and head out into the world,  
I go to meet you, Lord God,  
To discover where you are already at work,  
And to get involved.  
Amen.

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## Prayers and Prayer Pointers

### Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June

- Think about one of your relationships today. Perhaps with a family member or a close friend. Pray about that person, and how they are 'in relationship' with you.
- Pray that they might know something of God's presence in their lives this day.

## **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> June**

- Pick up a book or magazine that's near to you. Open it at any page. Randomly pick one word from the page you're on. Write the word down. For each letter of the word, think of a person you know whose name begins with that letter. Pray for them one by one.

## **Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June**

- 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.

## **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June**

- God of all grace, at the start of this new month,  
Help me to be open to your calling on my life.  
Help me to be ready for new beginnings and old traditions,  
Help me to be a sanctuary to those who I may meet.
- Come and make yourself known in my life, Lord God, by your Spirit  
Amen.

## **Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June**

- Think about how God is at work in the lives of everyone. You can see God shining out from all people. Remember this with the next person you speak to, and give thanks for the glimpses of God you see in them.

## **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June**

- Light a candle. Jesus is the light of the world. Pray about the places you experience darkness in your life, that Jesus light might shine there.