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## ORDINARY 16A

23rd July 2023

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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## Opening / centering prayers

The Spirit of the Lord says 'come'.

Jesus Christ, the bride of the church, says 'come'.

Let anyone who hears this say 'come'.

Let anyone who is thirsty, thirsty for the water of life, come.

Come, you are welcome,

The Spirit of God is in this place.

This is a holy moment, you are in a holy space.

Be still for a moment now, and notice:

The spirit of God is here.

*[Pause]*

You might like to say aloud:

Lord, I come into your presence.

I come just as I am

The Spirit of the Lord says come.

Amen.

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

**Readings:** [Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43](#)

## Responding to the reading with questions

The reading from Matthew points us towards a future time in which all will be made right: in which the evil things (I'm more comfortable with this metaphor being about evil things like greed, discrimination and hate, rather than evil people...are you?) that are entangled in our lives have been removed and destroyed.

As RS Thomas puts it in his poem 'The Kingdom':

It's a long way off, but to get there takes no time...[if you] present yourself with ...and the simple offering of your faith, green as a leaf.

Or, as the Oxford Bible Commentary puts it:

The Kingdom of heaven is both future and realised.

It is 'yet to come', in its fullest, completest sense, when there will be no more crying and weeping and cancer and pain and grief and lockdowns and redundancy and abuse and poverty and homelessness and war...

But it is also realised. It is right here. It is now. It is happening, in our hearts, in our minds, in our lives, in our communities. We are the Kingdom of God, when we join in with what the Spirit of God is up to in the places we call home. Can you hear the invitation today?

What does that look like for you?

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what it would look like for God's dream, God's vision for your community to come true. You might like to draw, doodle and make notes about what comes to your mind as you reflect.

What does it look like for you to see the glory of God revealed in you, if only for a moment?

What would it look like for you to live a life unhampered by the weeds of wickedness and distraction that take you further away from God's plan and dream for your life?

And what do those questions look like as you turn them out, from yourself into the world around you?

That is what gospel saturation looks like. That is what 'having a little heaven down here' looks like. That is what the Kingdom of God is. A world in which we can begin to imagine what it might look like for us all to be experiencing mutual flourishing.

### **Responding in song**

You might like to spend some time listening to these hymns, or singing along. As you do so, listen for a particular line that might be speaking to you, or challenging you.

239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I - [YouTube](#)

67 STF – This, this is the God we adore - [YouTube](#)

367 STF – When I was lost you came and rescued me - [YouTube](#)

### **Responding as you leave**

God of grace, Spirit of hope, Christ who transforms me:

Take me from this space, from this time,

Let me go out into the world that you have created,

The world that is broken and in need of healing:

Send me out with your courage, your love, your peace to bring into a community and a world in need.

Amen.

## Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

### Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July

- Listen to or read aloud the words of this hymn: 503 STF – Love divine all loves excelling - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-dl3Dx-apA>
- Is there anything in particular in the words, the tune or the overall ambience created by the music that speaks to you?
- Pray about how you feel.

### Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> July

- 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.

### Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July

- Be still. Crave stillness today. Find as many moments, minutes, or even hours today where you can simply hold stillness, switch off distractions, and listen.
- If this is difficult for you, find some stilling or relaxing music and listen to that as you try to hold a space for God to whisper, in the still small voice, something of God's love...

### Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July

- Healing, loving God,  
Today I pray for all the people involved in healthcare, here in this country and around the world.  
Bring courage and wisdom to doctors, strength and grace to all involved in providing healing, comfort, diagnosis and support.  
Come healing God, by your Spirit, Amen.

### Friday 28<sup>th</sup> July

- God of love,  
Today I pray for refugees and exiles all around the world,  
Those who are living in fear and have fled the place they call home.  
Show me how to show love to those in need,  
To be a place of sanctuary to all who encounter me,  
In Jesus' name,  
Amen.

### Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> July

- The Eastern Orthodox Church marks today as the holy feast day of Lazarus of Bethany – the friend of Jesus who he raised from the dead in the gospel accounts.
- Today, let us pray for all the things, projects, places and people who are in need of resurrection energy. Let us pray for new life to break out amongst death, despair and pain.