

# twelvebaskets

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## ORDINARY 21B

25th August 2024

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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## Opening prayers

God of this moment,  
God of this place,  
God of all time and space,  
Come here and speak to me this day.

There's a song of praise  
that wants always to spill from my lips  
and from my heart,

Creator God.  
A song started long ago,  
when creation began.

A song of praise that's written into the fabric of the universe  
and reverberates in my very soul.

My soul, that knows it cannot breathe its deepest without you.

In your goodness and care, all creation can know its place,  
and I can know my full worth.

You bless me and keep me in ways  
I can hardly begin to believe.

All my being longs to be in your presence, ever closer to you, even for a moment.

You are all love, all life,  
and I long to follow your ways.

Yet, sometimes I forget to look  
beyond my own devotion  
to noticing others and serving them.

Sometimes I speak without thought  
and hurt others.

Sometimes I am slow to act in  
the ways of kindness and love you have called me to.

Forgive me, God,  
for while I cannot be wholly myself without you,  
I have not wholly shaped my days  
in the pattern of your love,  
and have forgotten to listen to you.

Amen.

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

**Reading:** John 6:56-69 – [Click for reading](#)

## Responding to the reading

*Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden.*

(From 'Burnt Norton' in the Four Quartets by T.S. Eliot)

The words above, taken from TS Eliot's poem 'Burnt Norton', part of the Four Quartets series, are quite hauntingly beautiful. In the series, Eliot is trying to wrestle with time, the Divine, the wide universe. The series comes together after 6 years, three of the poems being written to the backdrop of the bombs of World War 2 dropping, a time when the world is thrown into sharp relief, and taking stock becomes a more urgent activity.

Eliot writes of the sound of footsteps echoing around in the memory, as one wonders about, and perhaps regrets, the things that *might have been* if we'd taken different paths, made different choices, or spent our time differently in the days we have spent so far. The words carry with them a poignancy, and more than a hint of regret.

In the Gospel of John, we learn that there are some people who followed Jesus who took the decision to stop following, when it is made clear that the path ahead is narrow and not easy. Some decide that they cannot give their time and energy to following Jesus at that point.

Jesus looks at his closest 12, and asks them 'do you also want to go away?'

Simon Peter speaks for the group, in what I imagine to be hushed tones: 'Lord, to whom could we go?' Picking up on Jesus' habit of answering a question with a question, Simon Peter hits the nail on the head: where on earth could they go, what on earth could they do instead, when they know that Jesus is the Holy One of God, the one with the words of eternal life?

No, the path is not easy, it promises many challenges. But, knowing the truth of who Christ is, how could we go anywhere else?

It's time to think about how we use our time well for the things we are passionate about. Can we be sure that, if a stranger were to look at our diaries, it would be clear that we are passionate about following Jesus, and knowing and sharing the love of God?

If not, maybe it's time for a shake-up, so we don't find ourselves looking back, the sounds of footsteps that might have taken us closer to God echoing in our memories as we regret not taking the path towards devotion and sharing God's goodness with others.

Some questions that you might like to reflect on in your own time, or share with someone you trust this week:

- Are there moments in the week ahead when you have time for personal devotion, fellowship with others, and other activities that bring you closer to God? Has this time been helpful? Could you commit to doing it more regularly?
- Are there lots of church meetings in your diary this week? Do these bring you closer to God, or are they lots about the church and not much about faith?
- How could you make changes in your diary to increase your time with God, increase your time learning about Jesus and studying the Bible, increase your time for prayer and holy conversation?

## Responding in music

409 STF – Let us build a house where love can dwell - [YouTube](#)

663 STF – I, the Lord of sea and sky - [YouTube](#)

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## Blessing

Let us build a house where love can dwell, here in this church, in our own homes, in our towns, villages and communities. Let love thrive and grow here, and let it begin with me, and you, and you, and you.

Amen.

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## Prayers and Prayer Pointers

### Monday 26<sup>th</sup> August

Find a ribbon or a piece of string. Tie a knot in it, and think of a person you know who needs prayer.

Tie two more knots praying for two more people. Put the string somewhere you'll notice it throughout the day where it'll remind you to pray for the three people.

### Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> August

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.

### Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> August

When all around is noisy and busy, help me in this moment to be still with you

*Silence*

When my mind is chaotic and full of wondering, help me in this moment to be sure of you

*Silence*

When my soul is troubled, help me in this moment to be calmed by you

*Silence*

### **Thursday 29th August**

Find a comfortable position to sit or lie down in. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and let it out through your mouth. When you are ready, say out loud or in your head:

Lord, I come into your presence.

Breathe in...breathe out...

I come just as I am. Come and make your presence known to me this day, that I may see you at work in my life and in the world, I pray.

Amen.

### **Friday 30th August**

God of all time and space I notice you here.

I am ready.

Amen

### **Saturday 31st August**

Read this poem "blessing and rest" by Malcolm Guite. Consider the blessings you have received today. Give thanks for them. <https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/tag/sabbath>