

twelvebaskets

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ORDINARY 21A

27th August 2023

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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For more information <https://theworshipcloud.com/terms/free-weekly-resource>

Opening Prayers

Use the following words to help centre yourself in the moment. Say them out loud, or speak them in your mind;

Jesus, open my heart.

Prepare yourself to hear God's word in a new way;

Jesus, open my heart

Listen for God's voice, calling you to serve others and love radically;

Jesus, open my heart.

Hold the joys, regrets and frustrations from the week, and look ahead to the opportunities next week will bring;

Jesus, open my heart.

Hold the people you share your life with, and the challenges that come with relationships and friendships;

Jesus, open my heart.

Rest a moment in the quiet;

Jesus, open my heart.

Amen.

You might like to pray the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar

Reading: Matthew 16:13-20 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

If licensing permissions are in place, watch a little of 'Frozen 2' where Anya realises that all she can do is 'the next right thing' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFkCIV2gM-s>

You may have heard the mantra, 'Act as if it all depends on you, pray as if it all depends on God'? It expresses something of the essence of today's bible passage: that the whole story of God's involvement with humanity is exactly that, a story of involvement, combining human agency with divine activity.

Today's gospel reading is a critical turning point in the story of Jesus's ministry. Jesus asks his disciples what people are saying about him, and then probes more deeply... how do they themselves regard this man with whom they have travelled around, witnessing miracles and signs, receiving attention and adulation from many, but also suspicion and hostility from others. Perhaps we might see this conversation as Jesus asking his disciples whether, in the midst of all their busy activity, they have been able to discern the presence and activity of God in Jesus?

Peter has and, as so often, he is the first to speak up, claiming that indeed Jesus is 'Son of the living God'. This declaration leads to Jesus's first mention of the church,

the community built around that claim which will become the body of Jesus on earth, making known the activity of God whatever the circumstances. Through the church, this collaboration between God and humanity will continue.

Our actions, our words, our lifestyles and choices today fit into this continued, unfolding tapestry of human agency and divine activity. What we do matters, and we are called to do what is right and just and good. But it's not our fight only, God is still holding the canvas and offering us threads of grace and justice to weave into the picture. So, let's 'Act as if it all depends on us, and pray as if it all depends on God'.

Some questions for you to reflect on, and find someone you trust to discuss these with at some point this week:

- How do you respond to the idea that we should 'Act as if it all depends on us, and pray as if it all depends on God'?
- Do you think there is a parallel between Egypt's treatment of the Israelites and racism in Britain today?
- If you had to answer Jesus's question, 'But who do you say that I am?', what would you say?
- What, if anything, do you feel you could do differently in order to weave more grace and justice into the world's tapestry?

Responding in music:

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

547 STF – Beyond these walls of worship - [YouTube](#)

552 STF – Here am I, Lord - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

Lord of all hopefulness,
Lord of all joy,
Lord of all we have and are,
Inspire me by your Spirit to be a part of your mission.
Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 28th August

- Think about the fruits of the spirit. Pick one of them that you don't feel you are very good at, or that needs some intentional work. Spend some time praying about this, and then practice it for a whole day in all you do.

Tuesday 29th August

- 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.

Wednesday 30th August

- What injustices make you angry in the world? Consider the ways you see God as a God of justice and pray that God will work through those injustices.

Thursday 31st August

- 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?

Friday 1st September

- Today is the beginning of a new academic and church year. Let us pray for new starts, for all those making a fresh beginning today, and all who feel a bit intimidated by the change this month brings.
- Come, God of Genesis, into the start of this year's story. Come by your grace, Amen.

Saturday 2nd September

- Think of all the precious gifts you have received from God: the strength to face difficult situations, friends and family, and an everlasting relationship with Jesus rooted in a love beyond all understanding.
- Give thanks to God.