

# twelvebaskets

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## ORDINARY 23C

4th September 2022

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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## Opening Prayers

Look at your feet. Notice the scraps and marks on your shoes or slippers, or if your feet are bare notice the lines and wrinkles. Wriggle your toes and notice how that feels.

Look at the ground your feet are on. Is it a carpet? Or wood? Laminate or something else?

When you are ready, offer this time of worship to God

“Creator God, thank you that my feet are on holy ground. As I sit here I choose to offer the time to you. I long to meet with you on this holy, ordinary ground.

Amen”.<sup>1</sup>

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

### Hymn:

707 STF – Make me a channel of your peace - [YouTube](#)

**Readings:** Jeremiah 18:1-11 – [Click for reading](#)

Luke 14: 25-33 – [Click for reading](#)

### Responses to the reading

*[This response is based on a longer reflection written by Paul Craine for The Vine resources. To read the full reflection, find out if your circuit or church is subscribed by contacting us on [thevine@twelvebaskets.co.uk](mailto:thevine@twelvebaskets.co.uk)]*

The readings from Luke and Jeremiah are not easy, are they?! They put us firmly in our place! Let’s look at Jeremiah first. Jeremiah was an active prophet for the four decades leading up to the sack of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and the beginning of the Babylonian Exile. Scholars believe that editors continued to add to the book after Jeremiah’s death. We are not sure whether chapter 18 was written prior to the Exile, or during the Exile.

We are told that the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord was: “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.”

In the ancient world, pottery was everywhere – so Jeremiah would not have had far to travel to the local potter. People used clay pots for storage and cooking. They used clay bricks to line their ovens. They used small clay figures for decorations—and even for toys. The potter was one of the most important craftspeople in the community. God is preparing Jeremiah for an object lesson—revealing God’s word using pottery as an example—and people will be reminded of this lesson every time they see a clay pot.

The message from Jeremiah is that there are times when tough love is necessary to bring healing and reverse the effects of evil in the world. Jeremiah was required to

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<sup>1</sup> Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

tell the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, ‘This is what the Lord says: Look! I am preparing a disaster for you and devising a plan against you. So turn from your evil ways, each one of you, and reform your ways and your actions.’

If the words from Jeremiah are uncomfortable, so too are the words of Jesus in the second half of Chapter 14 in Luke’s gospel. Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem – and large crowds were travelling with him. Perhaps many of them thought that Jesus was going to be crowned in Jerusalem. Jesus knew he was going to be crucified. We are told that he turned and spoke to the crowd – and told them how it was for those who wanted to be his disciples. But what he had to say wasn’t exactly encouraging or enticing.

Let’s look at the words of Jesus: “if anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.”

That sounds ever so harsh, doesn’t it? Some bible commentaries wrestle with this sentence but we can be assured that Jesus does not mean this as literally as we might read it. Everything from the commandment telling us to “respect your Father and your Mother” to Jesus’ commandment to “love your neighbour as yourself” tells us that Jesus does not want us to hate our parents, spouses, children and our own lives. We should count this as hyperbole – exaggeration for effect. There are several instances in scriptures when the word ‘hate’ is used simply to mean that you like or love something less than you love something else. In Genesis 29:30-31 there is a reference to Leah being “hated” by Jacob but it appears to mean just that Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah. Jesus is not calling his followers to hate their families in terms of emotional response; instead, he is calling for undivided loyalty to himself - above family loyalties.

But even when we get over the first comment, Jesus immediately suggests that anyone who does not carry their cross and follow him cannot be a disciple. Luke was writing to Christians who understood what cross-bearing meant all too well. Persecution had begun, and Christians were being killed on crosses. For the person desiring casual discipleship, Jesus’ words about cross-bearing would be discouraging—but for Luke’s church, experiencing persecution, these words would approve their sacrifices.

This is strange marketing. This is not exactly persuading us to be followers or pupils of Jesus. In Luke 14, Jesus adds two parables to emphasise his point. The first tells about someone who wanted to build a tower. Wouldn’t they sit down and estimate the costs of the tower to be sure they could afford to complete it? The second tells of a King about to go to war. Wouldn’t he sit down and consider whether his 10,000 men could defeat the 20,000 men of a rival king?

Jesus is saying: “Before you become a disciple of mine – won’t you sit down and calculate the cost of following me?” And then adds for good measure: “...none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions”.

Jesus calls people to a kind of discipleship that is not cheap. His command to “Follow me” is both gift and demand. And he extols a commitment to finishing the discipleship journey once begun or not beginning it at all. Following Jesus is an all or nothing proposition.

So where is the hope? In Jeremiah 18, the hope rests with God’s assurance that: “... if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned”. There is more than a glimmer of hope here – God always offers us a way back home. In Luke 14, the hope comes from the knowledge that

Jesus doesn't require anything of his disciples that he himself is not willing to give. But it also comes a few Chapters later in Luke's gospel when Jesus promises that our commitment will be rewarded. "Most certainly I tell you, there is no one who has left house, or wife, or brothers, or parents, or children, for the Kingdom of God's sake, who will not receive many times more in this time (and in the world to come, eternal life)".

Today's contemporary Church has to wrestle with the reality of following a radical, counter-cultural prophet. His message and actions will not always be easy to follow or to transfer simplistically into our twenty-first century context. He does not offer an easy payment plan. He never tries to disguise the cost of discipleship. Instead, he writes the price tag of self-sacrifice large for all to see. But this self-sacrificial life in the service of the Lord is an extraordinary gift. Jesus sums it up like this: "whoever loses their life for me will save it".<sup>2</sup>

### **Hymn:**

362 STF – Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity - [YouTube](#)

*[You might like to just listen to this worship song from Graham Kendrick and sing along if you know it. Please note, Twelvestaskets does not own the copyright to this version, so please seek permission before using in public worship, including online].*

### **Blessing**

Let us go out with joy,  
And be sent forth with peace,  
Let us bear the imprint of the divine, out into the world around us.  
In Jesus' name, Amen.<sup>3</sup>

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## **Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week**

### **Monday 5<sup>th</sup> September**

- The next time you open your fridge, why not pray this little prayer:
- Gracious God,  
Thank you for the blessings you have given me, and the food for this day.  
Thank you for all the work of creation, all the work of farmers and supermarket-workers and delivery drivers that means this food can be here, in my house.  
Thank you for all that I have received.  
Thank you. Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Reflection written by Paul Craine

<sup>3</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker

## **Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> September**

Take time to find something in your home that you hold as precious and important. It may be a photograph, a flower or personal item. Whatever you choose consider:

- What is it that makes it important to you?
- What memories does it hold?
- How do you feel about it and what would happen if you lost it?

Now imagine that God is holding you as precious and important:

- Loving and caring for you and your unique character
- Following your journey of faith
- Wanting never to lose you

Bring all that to prayer, knowing that whatever you offer in this moment is precious and important.

## **Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September**

- Gracious God, I know you have plans for me- plans for me to be a part of your kingdom and an agent of love in the world.
- Today, show me how to respond to the invitations I might receive. Help me to be open to the opportunities to share your love.
- In Jesus' name I pray,
- Amen.

## **Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> September**

- The German theologian Meister Eckhart once said, 'if the only prayer you ever say in your life is "thank you", that will be enough'.
- Today, throughout the day (or whatever is left of the day), simply look for opportunities to pray the words 'thank you' to God.
- Thank you for the sunrise. Thank you for that I have enough food for the day. Thank you for my health, such as it is. Thank you for that lovely conversation with a friend. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
- Amen.

## **Friday 9<sup>th</sup> September**

- Gracious God, show me how to love without borders or restrictions, how to radically live out your calling on my life and your challenge to all of us to live in the way of love.
- Show me how to be the kind of shepherd who would always go in search of the one most in need, how to reach out to the lost sheep in my life and community.
- Show me how to love as you love, O Christ.

## Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September

Reflect on this poem today, as part of your prayer – and perhaps if you feel you need a nap!

Sleeping is almost like praying  
(If you do it right).  
I know, I know, I'm not saying  
You can just  
'Nap and know that I am God',  
Though someone should check that translation,  
And it's high-time we rebalanced the  
Equation.  
So a lot less of us  
And a lot more of Them:  
The divine, undefinable other.

Sleeping is a lot like praying  
In that it gets us past all that saying  
And saying  
Into stillness.

Sleeping is a lot like praying,  
Not working, but playing.  
Not 'yes-sir' and 'okay'-ing  
But the buzz and the thrill  
That comes from not-knowing  
Not holding too tightly  
But lightly  
Dancing in the air  
That is littered with stars  
And glittering with all that you are.  
Amen.