

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 15B

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Ordinary 15 - Year B
14th July 2024



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

18 STF – Be still and know that I am God OR

20 STF – Be still, for the presence for the Lord

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

44 STF – Come on and celebrate! OR

72 STF – Father God, I wonder how I managed to exist

Readings: Amos 7.7-15; Mark 6:14-29

Hymn:

367 STF – When I was lost, you came and rescued me OR

623 STF – A safe stronghold our God is still

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

163 STF – When listening prophets dare to speak OR

189 STF – Wild and lone the prophet's voice

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

477 STF – Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart OR

742 STF – We trust the mighty love of God

Blessing

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Call to worship

Jesus calls us here to meet him,
And we come – from afar or near, connecting together in this act of worship.

We have been richly blessed, and we come to worship the living God, and to filled again
with your Holy Spirit.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

18 STF – Be still and know that I am God OR

20 STF – Be still, for the presence for the Lord

Opening Prayers

Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here.

If you can, place your feet firmly on the floor and close your eyes.

Concentrate on your breathing.

What can you hear?

What can you smell?

What can you feel?

What would you like to give thanks for today?

Let us give thanks for this moment,

A chance to stop and listen,

To appreciate all we have.

To give thanks for the opportunities every new day provides.

In this moment we come to say sorry.

Sorry for the missed opportunities,

The smiles we didn't share, the words we didn't say,

The times when we were paralysed by our own fear.

We give thanks for the gifts of the Spirit.

The armour you have provided us with.

Even on the days when we feel small, when life feels tough,

You walk every step with us,

You are always there, to listen to our prayers.

A catalyst to empower us.

Let us praise you with joy...

Teach us to dance to the beat of your heart,

Let our whole beings praise you.

Amen.²

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Lorna Dobson

We say together the Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Items to get beforehand: a length (around 1-1.5m long) of string/wool/cotton plus something to tie it onto make a plumb line (e.g. small teaspoon, blob of blu-tack)

Conversation can go something like this:

- 1) Look around at our building; what do you like about it? [Get a few ideas]
- 2) Is it built properly? [What does that mean, hopefully an answer will relate to a wall or something being vertical]
- 3) How can we tell whether it's vertical or 'true'? [answer = plumb line, which is a very simple thing, here's one prepared earlier]
- 4) Plumb lines help compare with what's 'true' – how can we do that for God? [get ideas about what's true/good for God e.g. following the commandment to love – how can we tell when we're doing that? We don't always get it right, but God forgives – lead into prayers of confession]

In a moment of stillness and silence, let us bring to mind that which hinders our relationship with God. (Pause for a moment).

Prayers of assurance

We receive your forgiveness, Lord:

to find new experiences, new joys to share, strengthened by your Spirit.

We thank you, for our confidence is in you:

present in us, offering us the blessing of your peace,

for we are nothing without the assurance of your presence in and around us.

Amen.³

Hymn:

44 STF – Come on and celebrate! OR

72 STF – Father God, I wonder how I managed to exist

Readings: Amos 7.7-15; Mark 6:14-29

Hymn:

367 STF – When I was lost, you came and rescued me OR

623 STF – A safe stronghold our God is still

³ All Age Talk written by Patrick Stonehewer

Reflections on the readings

There are passages in the Bible which at first glance make for uncomfortable reading.

Both of today's passages fall into that category – the one from Mark's Gospel because it includes the gruesome death of John the Baptist, the one from Amos because his message of judgment is not well received.

However tricky both might seem, there is a message of encouragement and hope for us. Both John the Baptist and Amos are confronted because of their prophetic message, which has difficult consequences for both of them – John is beheaded, and Amos is asked to leave the land of Judah

Yet, their messages carry on as we seek to find our prophetic voices today, as we see and experience the challenges of the world around us, whether that's the climate emergency, injustices in our society, campaigns for peace across the world, or other events which stand in contrast to God's values and vision.

Highlighting these is often not appreciated by others, even condemned, as they are perceived as a threat to power and leadership, something which John the Baptist and Amos would understand. They stood up to the mighty Herod and the priest of Bethel (Amaziah). What might encourage us from their experiences?

The passage from Amos begins in the middle of the story, with verses 7-9 describing the third of three visions of judgment against Israel. Earlier in the chapter, Amos sees locusts eating away the spring growth (7:1-3), then a shower of fire consuming the land (7:4-6), finally a wall built with a plumb line.

This vision is different in that God asks Amos what he sees. His initial response states the obvious - a plumb line – but God wants Amos to think more deeply, with a different sort of plumb line in mind. The challenge is to see how God's people are measuring up to what's required of them.

The answer doesn't make for easy reading: they are not upright, the plumb line demonstrates their tottering and wavering and God has drastic action in response. The high places of worship will be destroyed and more; that punishment against the cultic places and the king will highlight the exact elements within Israelite culture that do not measure up. The book of Amos (and elsewhere, in Hosea) will condemn these high places as improper locations for worship of God.

Amaziah, the priest in Bethel, is understandably and particularly upset. He sends a message to the king Jeroboam that Amos is conspiring against him. He doesn't quite get the prophet's quotation correct, but it's basically right 'in spirit': Amos is prophesying about the death of Jeroboam and the disastrous fate of Israel.

If it's not enough to send a message to the king, Amaziah, confronts Amos and tells him to leave at once and never again prophesy at Bethel – the place of sanctuary for the king. Amaziah again shows us his concern – he's nervous by Amos' judgment against the king. The holy place at Bethel belongs to the king and his kingdom and because Amaziah is supported by the king, this prophecy has repercussions for his role as the local priest.

Amos responds that he can't simply pack up and move on - he's not like others – he's not from an ancestral line of prophets. God called him while he was tending his flocks to prophesy to Israel, and has offered these words of judgment because God called him from his day job and made him a prophet. If you care to read further into the chapter, that's something he continues to live out in yet another prophetic judgment, perhaps some of his most condemning, even cruel words

Alongside this, in Mark's Gospel, John the Baptist is killed because of his prophecy and his confrontation with Herod. Both passages speak prophetically and come up against resistance and opposition, not least from those who have a stake in the power and systems under attack.

Both do make for uncomfortable reading, but remind us that we are called to challenge those things which don't measure up to God's vision. Like Amos, we are just 'ordinary folk' in the places we are called to be, looking at and experiencing the world through our eyes in God's name.

What do we think? A few questions to consider and perhaps discuss in small groups if time allows:

- a) Drawing on recent history, who do you consider modern day prophets?
- b) Which issues and causes do you care passionately about?
- c) Inspired by Amos, John the Baptist and your modern prophets, how are you called to respond?

As we respond, let us pray

God of justice,
you long for everyone to have life in all its fullness,
help us to refuse to accept inequality and poverty.

You yearn for a right relationship with people and planet
help us to enable flourishing of all creation.

You created one people and one world;
help us to stand for justice for all people seeking refuge.

You fashioned everyone in your own image;
help us resist all forms of discrimination.

You desire justice and reconciliation for all people and nations;
help us to be peace-builders in our lives and in the world.

May your justice roll like a mighty river,
your righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

And may your people say Amen!
Amen.⁴

⁴ Reflection written by Patrick Stonehewer

Hymn:

163 STF – When listening prophets dare to speak OR

189 STF – Wild and lone the prophet's voice

Prayers of intercession

Holy God, grant us the help of your Spirit

as we bring our prayers for your world into our minds and hearts.

Leader: Lord, hear us; **Response: Lord, graciously hear us**

We pray for the peoples of the world, in our desire for justice, freedom and peace for all.

Let us bring to mind a current piece of news...*(pause a moment)*

We pray that all may serve one another in compassion, with wisdom, and honestly.

Leader: Lord, hear us; **Response: Lord, graciously hear us**

We pray for those among us with whom we live and work, as we seek joy in all your creation.

Let us bring to mind a place or person in our community...*(pause a moment)*

Be with us and our neighbours and may we use your gifts for the common good.

Leader: Lord, hear us; **Response: Lord, graciously hear us**

We pray for all in sorrow, need, anxiety or sickness

Let us bring to mind a person who needs God's gracious touch...*(pause a moment)*

We pray that in their weakness they may know your strength and in despair find hope.

Leader: Lord, hear us; **Response: Lord, graciously hear us**

We hold ourselves before you and pray in faith and unity, one family on earth and in heaven

We remember those who have died giving thanks especially for those who have revealed to us your grace in Christ...*(pause a moment)*

May we be constantly renewed by your Holy Spirit, for mission and service.

Leader: Lord, hear us; **Response: Lord, graciously hear us**

We offer all our prayers to you now: those said aloud, those in our minds and hearts, even those for which we cannot find words.

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Patrick Stonehewer

Gracious God, we give you praise for your goodness to us. Take these gifts, and use them in the ongoing transformation of the world, in the name of all that is good, and right, and just and loving.
Amen.⁶

Hymn:

477 STF – Teach me to dance to the beat of your heart OR

742 STF – We trust the mighty love of God

Blessing

Let us go worshiping God, our creator.

Let us go following Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Let us go inspired by the Holy Spirit, our guide and friend.

Go and encounter the Spirit of God. Amen.⁷

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Patrick Stonehewer