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ORDINARY 16C

17th July 2022

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening / Centring prayer

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.

Breathe in...breathe out...

I bring everything I have experienced this past week - the things I'm proud of, and the things I wish had been different.

Breathe in...breathe out...

I bring the people that enriched my week, and the people I found it hard to share my week with.

Breathe in...breathe out...

I bring the moments of joy, peace, pride, sorrow, frustration, regret and pain.

Breathe in...breathe out...

I bring my hopes for next week.

Breathe in...breathe out...

I lay all of these things at your feet, and rest in your loving presence.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

28 STF – Jesus calls us here to meet him - [YouTube](#)

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

Readings: Colossians 1:15-28 – [Click for reading](#)
Luke 10:38-42 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

Is the world burning? Is it all about to end? How do we preach the gospel in the context of a climate crisis?

Well, as the Climate Coalition resources say, "Hope is not lost: it is not too late to tackle climate change and the destruction of the natural world." They go on to

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

demonstrate how lots of people are already part of trying to build a different and more hopeful narrative about how we can and are making a change. Can we, the church, lead the way on social change, as we have so often before in our history?

David Benjamin Blower, the Christian musician and writer has recently said: “hope is on the other side of lament.” This rather appealing phrase was part of a wider discussion around climate change, and the importance of entering into the ‘lament’, the grief and the pain of the current situation. Blower observes that our most natural reaction to statistics and stories about large issues like global heating or the refugee crisis is to turn aside, to put it to the back of our minds, to focus on other, smaller, less-scary things. In some of his work, however, he invites us into the painful but essential process of lament. He reminds us that it is important to sit with the pain, in order to find true hope.

His logic is messianic: Jesus did not leap from the highest point of the temple in order to claim instant fame as the devil offered, nor did he ‘come down from the cross’ as those around him taunted him to, nor did he burst straight from the tomb within minutes of his burial. The Jesus story, the resurrection narrative, has to include the pain of Good Friday and the lament of Holy Saturday. We have to weep with the terrified disciples, the confused women, Cleopas and his companion walking the road in despair. The story invites us to lament.

And, as David Benjamin Blower recognises, it is in this process that we find hope. It is in the act of grieving and grieving thoroughly for a world in need that we start to recognise the potential for change, we catch a glimpse of a God who moves in mysterious and revolutionary ways. We experience resurrection.

That’s what Paul is beginning to understand at the beginning of Colossians. That the hope of Christ in you is transformative – not just for us, but for the whole of creation. “In him all things hold together” might just be my favourite phrase in the whole of the New Testament. The Christ of Paul’s vision is so much more than a man who lived in Palestine and was part of a few remarkable stories – this Christ is cosmic and transforms everything.

And Paul means, everything. Not just the socially acceptable things. Not just the sort of things we usually think about in church. Not just the things we like. Not just the people we like. In fact, not just the people – but *all things*. This is a universal Christ, who is holding all of creation together. God’s plan is for the entirety of creation and the cosmos.

What are you being called to do, to change, to transform, in Jesus’ name?

In today’s Gospel reading we heard Luke’s version of this familiar tale of Mary and Martha. In the context of climate change and the societal breakdown that Amos is warning us about, perhaps we can re-examine our typical interpretations of this passage. We often try to redeem Martha – perhaps out of our desire to defend the Protestant work ethic or even the important role of ‘housework’ which doesn’t always get a good reputation. And of course, there is much work to be done on recognising different calls to ministry, different impulses around caring or listening.

However, perhaps Jesus’ rebuke for Martha is born out of his understanding of timing, of waiting, of reflection – even of lament. In the face of so much social change, is Jesus inviting the two women who are hosting him to just sit with that for a moment? Perhaps what we can hear from this reading is the invitation to pause, to sit at the feet of Jesus, to learn something new, to enter into the pain of the world we live in...and to believe that sitting there long enough that might give us hope.

Perhaps, or perhaps he meant something else all together...

The great joy and challenge of the Christian faith, and of all our work to attempt to make sense of our place in it, is that we do not *know*. We believe, we hope, we pray, we reflect on and we learn – but we can never know. As we trust in God’s future for this planet, and our own lives, we embrace the uncertainty of Paul in Colossians: “The glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

May that mystery be true for you, and for all of us. Christ is in us – the hope of glory.²

Blessing

I shall go out with joy, and be sent forth with peace.

I shall seek to know you more, Lord Jesus, and to follow in your way.

I will hold together, in you.

Amen.³

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 18th July

- Take a moment to notice the sky today. Whether it is sunny and clear where you are, or mostly cloudy, you could spend a few minutes – perhaps several times throughout the day – noticing what is happening above you.
- As you look to the sky, see the vastness of God’s creation, stretched out above you. Notice your own smallness, and the smallness of some of the worries and concerns that have been consuming you.
- Give the smallnesses to God, and allow the divine bigness to wash over you.

Tuesday 19th July

- 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.

² Reflection written by Tim Baker

³ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Wednesday 20th July

God of all creation, I worship you.

You know me - what I need, what I rejoice in, what I'm nervous about.

You see me – as the unique individual you created with all my little habits and characteristics.

You hear me – when I pray aloud or silently.

You meet me – here and now and I am content. Amen

Wonder to yourself if you are really able to say the words. Imagine what it would be like to hear someone else say them for you. Notice how you feel as you read them. Take time to tell God what you've discovered.

Thursday 21st July

Today, when you are washing your hands, or in the shower, or brushing your teeth, or even when you are doing the washing up – you could notice the water, falling from the tap or the showerhead. You might like to pray these simple words.

Living God, thank you for the water of life that you give to us. Thank you for the privilege of clean water that I can rely on. Thank you that you wash away all that is sinful and broken in me. Thank you for the water. Amen.

Friday 22nd July

In July 1799, the Rosetta stone was found in Egypt. This discovery was remarkable because the stone contains the same text in three different languages – Ancient Greek, and two versions of the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic scripts. The stone therefore allowed major breakthroughs in translating these ancient languages and unlocking the wisdom of previous civilisations.

- Today we pray for the boundaries and borders in our own lives, communities and countries (the barriers of language, culture, belief systems, class, opportunity, prejudice), and pray that you would show us how to cross these borders, and bring down the walls between us.
- Lord God, show us how to build bridges and not dig trenches. Amen.

Saturday 16th July

- God of all time and space I notice you here.
- I am ready.
- Show me. Amen