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ORDINARY 13C

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A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

God of each moment, we give to you this moment of prayer at the start of our service,

We bring to you all that we are,

All that we feel,

All that we think.

Move in our hearts and minds today.

God of each hour, we give to you our time of worship this day.

Use this space to fill us again with your love,

That we might be champions of love in the world around us,

And that we might sing your praises.

Move in our hearts and minds today.

God of each day, we give to you this day,

The opportunities that will arise to share your good news with the people we meet,

The failures we are already aware of, or live in fear of.

Forgive us for our failings this day, Lord God,

Move in our hearts and minds, by your grace.

God of each year, we give to you this year,

The days and weeks to come,

The hopes and anxieties we hold in our hearts.

Even as we thank you for all that we have received,

We look to trust you for all that is to come.

Be the way maker for us today, O God,

And move in our hearts and minds,

By your Spirit.

Amen.¹

Hymn

83 STF – Praise, my soul, the King of heaven - [YouTube](#)

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

Reading: [Luke 9:51-62](#)

Responding to the reading

Pilgrimage is very much back in fashion in Britain today and not only as a religious practice. Television schedules include a variety of programmes in which celebrities

¹ Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

and others are challenged to make a pilgrimage of some sort. In particular, the ancient pilgrim paths to Santiago da Compostela in Northern Spain have become immensely popular, with around 350,000 such pilgrims in 2019. Of course, numbers were drastically reduced by the Covid-19 pandemic but are now building up again.

In planning a pilgrimage, two key questions need to be considered – ‘Where am I heading?’ and ‘How am I going to get there?’ Luke’s Gospel is often seen as a gospel of journey, of pilgrimage, and today’s passage offers some interesting answers to these two questions. Luke makes it very clear that for Jesus, the destination is not in doubt – indeed, the whole gospel can be seen as a journey to Jerusalem, and here we are told that Jesus, knowing that the end of his life is approaching, ‘set his face to go to Jerusalem’. That expression suggests mixed emotions – both longing and resignation perhaps. We know that Jesus felt compelled to go to Jerusalem and that he felt great love and compassion for the city; a few chapters later (13:33-34) Luke records Jesus saying, ‘... it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!’ It is clear too that Jesus knew it would be in Jerusalem that he would face the final challenges of religious and political opposition and that it would be in Jerusalem that he would die. Luke tells us that Jesus sent messengers ahead of him – the reason for this is not clearly explained – was it a way of ensuring that he didn’t change his mind?

Why don’t you just pause for a moment and consider any journeys you have made with that mixture of longing and resignation, of anticipation and apprehension, of hope and fear... perhaps to a meeting which you knew would be both joyful and difficult... perhaps to a funeral... perhaps, after the lockdowns of the past two years, to a much-postponed event or gathering where you can rejoice to see family or friends, but would also be all too aware of those no longer with us, or no longer able to travel... Perhaps, in such circumstances each of us might, like Jesus, need to ‘set our face’ to make the journey and not allow ourselves to be deterred or delayed.

It seems that the body language of Jesus makes clear to all those he encounters that he is a man on a mission. The Samaritan village does not receive him, which the disciples James and John find insulting; they want to punish the village, but Jesus rebukes them and moves on.

Again, let’s pause and reflect on our situation now. Today within British Methodism is Conference Sunday. Those who will be received into Full Connexion and ordained this very day have, in a way, set their faces towards a particular destination and may need something of this sense of resolution themselves as they travel a path which will not always be smooth. Indeed, all of us, ordained or lay, are pilgrims on a journey. Over the next few days, the representatives gathered in Telford from across the Connexion will be considering all sorts of questions about our journey, our pilgrimage, as a denomination. Both connexionally and locally we all have to return again and again to the same two pilgrimage questions, ‘What is our destination?’ and ‘How are we going to get there?’ They are not easy questions to answer at a time

like this but do we need to hear something of the commitment and urgency of Jesus' replies to these would-be followers? Do we need to note the willingness of Jesus to embrace sacrifice and rejection? If we are going to travel the same path as Jesus, we too need to set our faces towards a future which might involve challenge, change and conflict.²

Some questions for discussion with a friend or to reflect on today:

- Do you think it is always necessary to have a destination in mind for a pilgrimage?
- Is there a sense in which your local congregation (or the wider Methodist Church or Church grouping you are part of) is on a journey? Where do you feel we are going?
- How do you feel about the way in which Jesus answered his would-be followers in Luke 9:57-62? Are you aware of a sense of urgency about the church's mission at this time?
- Do you find yourself 'looking back' at times? How does this affect your mission?

Hymn

545 STF – Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

There is a world out there, just waiting for the good news you carry.
There are people out there, hoping for the kind of hope you have.
There are lives out there, waiting to be shaped and changed by God's love, through you.

May you go out and seek to serve the God who loves you.

Amen.³

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 27th June

- Can you 'notice joy' today? Whatever your day holds, maybe it's lots of things that energise and excite you, or perhaps the complete opposite...
- Throughout the day, just look out for the little things that bring you joy – maybe a flower, a glimpse of the moon, the smile of a stranger, a delicious taste.
- When you notice these things, why not say a little prayer of thanks and give thanks for the glimpses of joy in your life.

² Reflection written by Jill Baker

³ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Tuesday 28th June

- God of all grace,
I'm sorry for all the times I have failed you, for all the things I've done that do not bring glory to you, and for the opportunities I've missed to share your love with those around me or with whom I share this world.
- Help me to unload the burden of guilt and shame onto you, and be set free by your grace.
- Thank you that you have already forgiven me and love and accept me just as I am, whilst calling me to be the best version of myself.
Amen.

Wednesday 29th June

- On this day in 2007, Apple released the first ever iPhone. 15 years later, the iPhone – and smartphones in general – have reached nearly every household or family in the UK. Even if you don't have one, I bet you know lots of people who do!
- Today, can you find space to step away from all the distractions of modern life and spend 10 mins, or an hour, or perhaps even longer, in quiet and stillness. No phone. No TV. No computer. Just stillness and space.
- Allow God to speak into the space.

Thursday 30th June

- Today is the last day of the Methodist Conference, which has been meeting in Telford all this past week.
- As people go their separate ways from the Conference itself, and Methodist Churches around the country begin to put into practice the decisions taken, as well as the messages shared by the incoming President and Vice-President... you may wish to offer your prayers for the future of our church. Both the local church where you are, and the national and international movement that is the Church!

Friday 1st July

- On this day in 1972, the first Gay Pride march took place in the UK. Pride, which has become an event for celebrating the LGBTQA community, and giving thanks for diversity in our sexuality and gender.
- Throughout our history, sadly the Church has often not been a welcoming place for people from this community and we continue to live with contradictory convictions on some of these issues.
- Today, perhaps your prayers can be for unity, and for welcome. For a world, a church, in which all can feel welcomed and acknowledged, just as they are.

Saturday 2nd July

- It's the weekend! Why not take some time today to give thanks for your favourite leisure-time activity. Whether this weekend will feature some of your favourite hobbies or not, take a moment to say thank you – for the hills you enjoy walking in, the books you like reading, the games you like playing, the body that enables you to play sport...whatever it is!
- Thank you God. Amen.