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ORDINARY 25A

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A short act of worship for use in peoples homes while churches are closed.

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Call to worship

Generous God,
We come to you knowing that we need your grace again,
Your generosity again,
Your love again.
We come to you, just as we are, knowing that we are accepted.

Amen.¹

Hymn: 132 STF – O God, our help in ages past - [YouTube](#)

Opening Prayers

Gracious God, we come to worship as people seeking to know you more, seeking to take our next step in following Jesus Christ. Come amongst us, as we worship.

We pause, for a moment, to give you thanks for all the blessings and gifts we have received from you – in the quiet, we are grateful.

[Hold a moment of quiet]

Gracious God, we have come to worship, knowing we don't always get it right, knowing we have failed your hopes for our lives, knowing we have hurt others, and knowing we have missed opportunities to spread your love.

We pause, for moment, to say sorry, and to acknowledge where we have gone wrong.

[Hold a moment of quiet]

Gracious God, in the stillness, we know ourselves to be forgiven and accepted by you. No matter where we have fallen short, you love us all the same.

We pause, for a moment, to offer you the rest of our time in worship. Remove our guilt, our burdens, our weariness, our negativity, and move through us to bring hope, grace, possibility and love.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.²

We will now say the Lord's Prayer

¹ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers by Tim Baker

Readings: Philippians 1:21-30 - [Click for Reading](#)

Matthew 20:1-16 - [Click for Reading](#)

Reflections on the readings:

What are you being called into next?

What does your walk of Christian discipleship look like so far? How might you describe that journey?

Have things on that journey always gone smoothly? Have they always gone the way you might expect?

Or have things been rather more up and down?

Life can often be like a roller coaster. We never quite know what is coming next and, as the Baz Luhrmann song puts it:

“Don't worry about the future,
Or worry, but know that worrying is as effective as trying to solve an algebra equation by chewing bubble gum
The real troubles in your life are apt to be things that never crossed your worried mind.”

Our gospel reading today certainly leaves some people with a story to tell...you can almost hear the conversation in the pub, on the corner, over the fence: ‘you won't believe what happened to me at work today!’

The injustice of it seems apparent to those who have been working all day for the same pay as those who have worked but a few hours. As it would be to us, perhaps, in their shoes. And there is much important work being done today on ‘equal pay for equal work’, ensuring that women – and other disenfranchised or overlooked groups of people – are not receiving less money for the same work. There is much that could be interrogated here, but much of that does not seem to be Jesus' point in telling the story.

Rather, he tells this story to get to the heart of what all good story-telling does – to help us change the way we see the world, to challenge the prejudices and biases that we carry around. This is a story about a radical new system of finance, which is not about ‘earning’ our place in society, but understanding that God's grace is at work in all of our stories. This story is a warning to all of us who feel happy with the lot we've been given in life, we who feel we ‘got a good deal’. ‘Watch out’, this story warns us – another world is possible, where grace abounds.

No more meritocracy. Only love, and generosity.

Are we envious, because he is generous?

Or can we be generous, like the Master?

Do we tell our stories through the lens of grace, or – when we reflect on our lives to this point – do we prefer to think that we earned our place at this table, that we worked hard for this house, that we are somehow ‘owed’ something?

How do you tell your story?

Paul offers us a powerful example of how we might do it: ‘For me, to live is Christ, to die is gain’.

That oft-quoted, oft-misused little sentence is – for me – a great invitation into rethinking our lives. An invitation to let go of the narrative the world is selling us: ‘me, me, me, more, more, more...etc.’ and embrace a Christ-centric narrative, a story where I see God at work in my life, and make space for God to work through my life in order to touch others.

Then, when we embrace that as a way of life (and it takes work, consistently finding that base-note and returning to it), then we begin to see that our lives are not about ourselves. I am not here for me. I am here for you, for you all, for us.

Me becomes we.

I becomes us.

Selfish becomes community.

Ambition and envy become love.

Greed becomes generosity.

It won’t always be easy, and the challenges of living our lives as if they are not our own is counter to so much of the way the world asks us to think. How might your story become more in line with Jesus’s invitation to be more connected, more neighbourly?

Perhaps you might like to begin, or end, or summarise, with something like Paul’s words: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

May your stories be rich with the grace of God,
And may you come to see that grace at work in your life,
Amen.³

Prayers of intercession

For our intercessions, we will hold three short periods of quiet, in which each of us is invited to bring our own prayers to God.

Firstly, we pray for those close to home, calling to mind the name or the face of somebody in our own family, amongst our church congregation or a close friend. In the quiet, we hold them and their situation up to God.

[Silence]

³ Reflection written by Tim Baker

Living God, you know our hearts and our hurts. We commit them to you now, and invite you to come close to those we have prayed for, bringing them your healing, your comfort, your hope.

Secondly, we pray for situations further afield – taking a moment to pray for something we have heard in the news that troubles us, or for someone we have never met but whose story has affected us. In the quiet, we hold these people and situations up to God.

[Silence]

Living God, you know the pains of your world. It can feel like a dark world when we switch on the news, or read our newspapers. In the darkness, bring your light. In the conflict, bring your peace. In the brokenness, bring your healing.

Finally, we spend a moment praying for the church: perhaps this church congregation, the wider Christian church, or all people of faith. In the quiet, we pray for all who are gathering in worship today.

[Silence]

Living God, help us – your people – to be your hands and feet in the world. May we find ways to be an answer to prayer, to bring transformation in our own lives, communities and our world.

We pray these, and all our prayers, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.⁴

Hymn: 351 STF – In Christ alone my hope is found - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

I want to live in a world more like your kingdom,
And less like the kingdom of greed we find ourselves in.
No longer the kingdom of comfort,
But forever, the Kingdom of heaven.

Be at work in me, Lord God, by your Spirit,

Amen.⁵

⁴ Prayers of intercession by Tim Baker

⁵ Additional prayers by Tim Baker