

twelvebaskets

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A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Call to worship

God is here, in this space.

I am here, seeking to worship, to grow and to learn.

God of all love,

Help me to notice you, here in this space that I occupy,

Show me how to follow you.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

186 STF – Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord! - [YouTube](#)

(Please note, twelvebaskets does not own the copyright to this video for live streaming or public worship, but please listen to it in your own devotions).

Opening Prayers

When all around is noisy and busy, help me in this moment to be still with you.

Silence

When my mind is chaotic and full of wondering, help me in this moment to be sure of you.

Silence

When my soul is troubled, help me in this moment to be calmed by you.

Silence

If you feel able speak these words aloud:

Still, calm and sure I come to worship you.

Amen.²

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

Readings: Hebrews 11:29-12:2 – [Click for reading](#)

Luke 12:49-56 – [Click for reading](#)

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Jane Bingham

Response to the reading

This is part of a longer reflection offered by Gary Hopkins as part of this week's Vine resources. In order to access the full reflection, why not email us to find out if your circuit is already subscribed – thevine@twelvebaskets.org

Who do you think you are?

That's not intended to be a provocative question, but for those of you who are familiar with the BBC programme, you'll understand the reference. In remembering the past, we somehow find a sense of who we are.

In a fairly recent episode, Matt Lucas discovered how members of his family were arrested, imprisoned and murdered during World War II for no other reason than being Jewish. The episode entwined Lucas' family journey with that of the horrendous shame of the Holocaust. It's a powerful telling of history and if you haven't seen the episode, it's highly recommended.

The writer of Hebrews is no stranger to understanding the importance of individual history entangled with the history of a nation. Our Hebrews reading recalls several figures: some mentioned by name, others just a reference, some better known to us, others less known. The common thread – that all these people had faith. They're called upon to inspire us, to give us confidence, to remind us that God works through people throughout the ages – and to give us confidence that 'we have such a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us' (Hebrews 12:1).

The writer of Hebrews wants us to acknowledge those who have gone before, the great faith they've had and for us to see where they drew their power from.

Yet, this 'great cloud of witnesses' doesn't just include those from ancient times recorded in the Bible, it includes people throughout history who have responded to God's love and devoted their lives in service – and this includes people who have shaped our faith.

Who might you include in that 'great cloud of witnesses'? What about people who you knew? People who shaped your faith? Inspired you? Made God's love known to you?

If you were to write a short paragraph for a passage like Hebrews, what details about their faith would you include? I wonder what are the kind of things that we remember people for?

How many of us are caught up in maintaining the way things have been that we forget how we're making people feel when they come looking for a glimpse of God's love? Are we being remembered for the way we witness God's love, or are we busy people looking after our own?

Our Gospel reading is hard to swallow – it's fire and division – not sweetness and comfort. But God burns with the fire of justice. We are called to walk away from things that deny life for others – even if they've been precious to us, or to saints that have gone before us. Discerning God's will may mean disagreeing with others.

We have this moment in time to share God's love with others – to tell of the faith that has been passed to us as we continue to run the race ahead of us. All the examples in the Hebrews reading are different – they each witness the story of faith in their own way. We have to ask what is our way to witness the faith? Will we respond to God's love and bear good fruit – or will we grow rotten grapes?

There have been too many times when the Church has been silent on matters of injustice or has been too slow to respond or has been part of causing the injustice. In our calling to be faithful disciples, let us not forget what it means to follow Christ and have a place in the 'great cloud of witnesses'.

In his episode, Matt Lucas journeyed through a horrendous history of individual stories, of despicable torture and abuse, of murder and evil that denied the justice of God for so many Jewish people. He discovered the journey that had shaped his grandmother and why she never wished to speak of her past. But he also discovered how she went on to share God's love with others through the work she did in helping those seeking new lives and new beginnings – now that was responding to God's love for the sake of the world.

We remember the 'great cloud of witnesses' as our hope in running the race. We remember the faith they've passed to us. So let us join that 'great cloud' and respond to God's love by seeking justice.³

Hymn:

367 STF – When I was lost you came and rescued me - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

Today, I have chosen worship, O God,
For you are good.
Today, I have sung your praises and said prayers to you, O God,
For you are everything to me.
As I leave this place to follow you and seek more of your ways,
Help me to remain in a place of worship, and of prayer.

Amen.⁴

³ Reflection written by Gary Hopkins

⁴ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 15th August

- Today marks Independence Day for several countries in the world (Korea, from Japan in 1945; India, from the United Kingdom in 1947; Republic of Congo, from France, in 1960, to name three!)
- So today, our prayers are for political and world leaders – all the people in charge of big and difficult conversations about how our nations relate to each other, how we seek to maintain or strive for peace, how we can make the world a better, safer place for everyone.
- You might like to pray for your own MP, but why not use this as an opportunity to find out about a leader – either in your own country or somewhere else – who you don't know about.

Tuesday 16th August

- Who is in your 'great cloud of witnesses' (see this week's reflection)? Who are you grateful for, who has been part of your story, even though they may not be with you today?
Take a few minutes this day to give thanks for them, to pray for them – if they are still alive – and to help you learn again the lessons they have to share.

Wednesday 17th August

- God is everywhere, if only you could be still enough to notice.
- Today, your challenge is to notice.
- Look for God in the sunrise, the birdsong, the taste of pizza, the comfort of your sofa, the embrace of a loved one, a text message that makes you smile...whatever it is.
- Notice.

Thursday 18th August

- Today, one of the patron saints celebrated in some traditions is Saint Inan, who is said to have come from the island of Iona. The Iona Community continues to be an important resource of spiritual and prayerful resources today. You might like to use their prayers for peace in Ukraine today, and explore their website for other ideas: iona.org.uk/prayers-for-the-people-of-ukraine

Friday 19th August

- One of the images we have of the Holy Spirit is that of a wild goose. Beautiful in flight, slightly dangerous to approach, wild and a little unpredictable – perhaps you have a story about the Spirit that echoes this?
- Today, why not pray into some of the more unpredictable and difficult areas of your life. Is God working through those areas / spaces?

Saturday 20th August

- God my father and God my mother,
God my big sister and God my little brother,
God my best friend and God my Creator,
I open myself up to encounter you again this weekend.
Move in my life, open my eyes and heart,
That I may see your love,
And know your invitation to be a part of your Kingdom.
Amen.