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ORDINARY 19C

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A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening / Centering Prayers

Look at your feet.

Notice the scraps and marks on your shoes or slippers, or if your feet are bare notice the lines and wrinkles. Wiggle your toes and notice how that feels.

Look at the ground your feet are on. Is it a carpet? Or wood? Laminate or something else?

When you are ready, offer this time of worship to God.

Creator God, thank you that my feet are on holy ground.

As I sit here I choose to offer the time to you.

I long to meet with you on this holy, ordinary ground.

Amen.¹

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or language that you find most helpful.

Hymn:

455 STF – All my hope on God is founded - [YouTube](#)

Readings: Isaiah 1: 1,10-20 – [Click for reading](#)

Luke 12: 32-40 – [Click for reading](#)

Response to the Reading

This is part of a longer reflection offered by Kevin Dobson 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

"Is NOT hamster. Hamsters are small and cuddly. Cuddle this, you'd never play the guitar again."

These are the immortal words of Basil Fawlty, Manager of "Fawlty Towers" during one of the finest half-hours of British TV comedy ever made. This episode, entitled "Basil the Rat" tells the story of when the health inspector visits the hotel and the temperature rises when Spanish waiter Manuel's pet "Syrian 'hamster" (confusingly also called "Basil"!)" gets loose in the hotel. Basil (that's Basil the Manager, not the rat) in this scene is explaining to Manuel that his hamster isn't actually a hamster – it is in fact a rat, and panic abounds as everyone tries to avoid the catastrophe of the inspector discovering the rodent during his visit.

It's utter joy, and I would thoroughly recommend it to you if you haven't seen it either recently, or ever.

¹ Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

Perhaps in your life you have experience of this too – an inspector who doesn't tell you when they are coming. The visits are always a surprise. This way... we simply have to be ready – all of the time. We simply - and justifiably - have to be working to a high standard all of the time so that we are “ready” if the Inspectors turn up.

Today Jesus teaches us all about this. He tells us in this passage today:

“You must be ready”

This is one of a series of very punchy “proverb-style” teachings in this short extract from Luke’s record of Jesus’ teachings - all designed to encourage us to not wait to change our lives, but instead to try to live every moment of every day in a way that we could be comfortable with should we sit back and analyse it.

But what does it mean to be “ready”?

The combination of our lectionary readings today intertwine very subtly to start to help us answer this question today.

Isaiah has a vision from God which spells out some of the ways in which we should try to live, especially summarised in one beautiful verse... *“learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow”*.

Then of course Luke gives us the account of Jesus simply telling them to be “ready”...

Jesus uses the example of a thief “visiting” in the night which you might imagine would induce a sense of fear in the minds of the listeners... but I’m not so sure fear is the best angle to take on all of this. Maybe some of this is lost in translation, but it is certainly true that Jesus often talks of the urgency of the need for Kingdom values in the world and is clear in his assertion that the Kingdom is “near”... letting us know that we should not be waiting to bring change when there is a need for that change in the here and now.

It was true then and it is just as true for us now. I have always loved the definition of faith by the comedian Milton Jones. He says this:

“Faith is like standing still in the noise, knowing that the bus is coming... and occasionally, through the fog and the traffic, catching a glimpse of something big and red”

We can be confident that the “bus is coming”, and that confidence can help to deal with the fear we feel. This can help us be at our clear-headed best.

Jesus’ promise to us all is that the love he has for all of us will never fail. He showed us this love in the way he dealt with people in the gospel stories we read. What Jesus is encouraging in us is that we are fundamentally aiming in the right direction with our intentions and emotions, and always remembering the call of our Christian basics... just as Isaiah said:

Do good. Seek justice.

If we can focus our basic thinking, our faith, our trust, our approach and outlook on life, our very selves in fact - on these simple principles, whilst all the challenges of the world are happening around us, then we will be as “ready” as Jesus would ever want us to be to face those challenges with love and grace.

*Are you “ready”?*²

Hymn:

440 STF – Amazing grace – how sweet the sound - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

God of all grace,
I leave this place, this moment, drenched in your grace.
Show me how to be the very best version of myself this week,
To bring love and hope and joy into the world.

Amen.³

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 8th August

- On this day in 1786, Mont Blanc on the French-Italian border was climbed for the first time. 30 years later, Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote a famous poem about this mountain in the alps.
The opening line and a half is: ‘The everlasting universe of things / Flows through the mind.’
Today, as you go about your day, notice the things that flow through your mind: what grabs your attention? What thoughts arise that you didn’t expect? What are you reminded of?
Each time you notice one of these thoughts arising, try to use it as a prompt for prayer – perhaps for the person the thought is about, perhaps for healing for that particular memory, perhaps for an issue connected to the thought.

² Reflection written by Kevin Dobson

³ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

Tuesday 9th August

- On this day in 2014, Michael Brown, an 18 year-old African American, was shot and killed in Ferguson, USA by a police officer, sparking protests. Sadly, Michael is by no means the last black person to be killed by the police in America, or the last black life to be lost seemingly needlessly. Today, your prayers could be for racial justice, for all those in positions of power to do the work of anti-racism, for all of us to play our part in building a better, fairer, more-just society.

Wednesday 10th August

- God of all grace,
I am here to seek more of you, and to learn how I can follow in your ways.
Show me the way to be your disciple today.
Show me more of your love,
More of your glory,
More of your grace.
May I notice.
Amen.

Thursday 11th August

- In the midst of an ongoing cost-of-living crisis, today we pray for all who are affected by rising prices, by pressure on budgets, by difficult choices about how to spend money, recognising that could include us. Let us pray for justice, for hope, for a better world to come.
Amen.

Friday 12th August

- On this day in 1492, Christopher Columbus arrived in the Canary Islands on his first voyage towards the Americas. We know now that, whilst an impressive sailor, Columbus and his voyages of 'discovery' also did much damage and paved the way for empire and even the slave trade. Today, we pray for our relationships with other nations and the complex world of geo-politics. We pray for our leaders and all who play a role in international relations: may they seek peace and justice over self-service and greed.

Saturday 13th August

- Today, the invitation is to reflect on the word 'presence'. How present are you, to this moment, to this day, to this time of prayer? Or is your life full of distractions? Today, as you go through the day, try to practice presence, and to recognise that doing so is a kind of prayer.