

twelvebaskets

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EPIPHANY 3B

21st January 2024

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Here I am, Lord God, ready for you.
Here I am, coming in worship and silence.

Hold a period of quiet, you might like to read these words several times over.

I wait in the stillness, my soul is like water,
Pushed and pulled by the gravity of life's commitments.
I pour myself out, bend myself,
and distort myself for others,
muddying myself into something that isn't authentic.
Refresh and refill me, O God,
For you alone my soul waits in silence.

I wait in the stillness, keeping my faith alight, sometimes only barely.
May my faith be a fire that brings comfort,
one that radiates love and care to those around me;
Rekindle and fuel me, O God,
For you alone my soul waits in silence.

I wait in the stillness, the silence amongst the chaos.
The sounds of the traffic, the appliances, the crowds,
the all-encompassing dirge of life.
May I be aware of the still, quiet voice,
Speaking words of wisdom.
My hope is in you God,
For you alone my soul waits in silence.

Amen.

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

Reading: Mark 1:14-20 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the readings

Today's Gospel reading – from Mark's gospel – starts with a bang!

We find Jesus saying "The time has come! God's special kingdom is here! Believe in this good news and turn back to God."

Wow, now, that might sound a bit fancy, but it's like Jesus is saying, "Something amazing is happening, and God's love is here for all of us!" How awesome is that?

Right after saying this, Jesus walked by a lake, and he saw some fishermen. Their names were Simon, Andrew, James, and John. They were busy fishing, trying to catch some fish to feed their families and make a living. Fishing was a hard job to do, it was long hours and tough work, and not always great pay – that depended on what you could catch. In society, those that were fisherman would be looked down on in society unfortunately.

We have similar roles that can often be looked at in negative ways. Those that are known as dustbin men or women, and other similar roles. This role can sadly be looked down upon. However, without their important role we wouldn't have our rubbish and more importantly our recycling taken.

So back to our story. Despite their place in society, Jesus says to these fisherman "Come and follow me! I'll teach you how to fish for people instead of fish." Now, that might sound a bit funny – people aren't fish, are they? But what Jesus meant is that he wanted these guys to help him tell everyone about God's love.

And guess what happened next? Simon, Andrew, James, and John left their fishing nets right there and followed Jesus. They became Jesus' special friends, His first helpers, and they went on incredible adventures with him.

Jesus is like our best friend, and he invites us to follow him on an amazing adventure. We might have to leave behind some of our "nets," like the things we're used to, but it's because Jesus has something incredible for us to do.

Looking at this story today, towards the start of a New Year, do we find it exciting, or scary? Or perhaps a bit of both? How might God be calling us today? What are the things we are already good at, as the disciples were good at fishing, which Jesus might use in the way he calls us to particular tasks?

As you consider how you might respond to Jesus' invitation to be a part of his team, let's return to where we started and ponder for a moment what might have happened had the disciples replied to Jesus, 'Catching people? No, sorry, that's not really my thing – this is the sort of person I am and I can't really change now. Sorry.'

Is that you, or have you got a different answer for Jesus today? Will you play your part in the story of love, unfolding around us.

Responding in music:

Listen to, and sing along with, as many of these songs as is helpful for you as you reflect on the questions raised in today's response to the readings.

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

255 STF – The kingdom of God is justice and joy – [YouTube](#)

407 STF – Hear the call of the kingdom – [YouTube](#)

404 STF – God's spirit is in my heart – [YouTube](#)

Blessing

Source of all love,

God of peace,

Divine energy of justice,

Accept my life today, I pray,

And put me, my skills, my hopes, my dreams, my desires to work to build your kingdom here on earth,

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week Ahead

Monday 22nd January

- Gracious God, show me how to love without borders or restrictions, how to radically live out your calling on my life and your challenge to all of us to live in the way of love.
- Show me how to be the kind of shepherd who would always go in search of the one most in need, how to reach out to the lost sheep in my life and community.
- Show me how to love as you love, O Christ.

Tuesday 23rd January

- The German theologian Meister Eckhart once said, 'if the only prayer you ever say in your life is "thank you", that will be enough'.
- Today, throughout the day (or whatever is left of the day), simply look for opportunities to pray the words 'thank you' to God.
- Thank you for the sunrise. Thank you for that I have enough food for the day. Thank you for my health, such as it is. Thank you for that lovely conversation with a friend. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Amen.

Wednesday 24th January

- God of all grace, 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.

Thursday 25th January

- Take time to find something in your home that you hold as precious and important. It may be a photograph, a flower or personal item. Whatever you choose consider:
 - o What is it that makes it important to you?
 - o What memories does it hold?
 - o How do you feel about it and what would happen if you lost it?
- Now imagine that God is holding you as precious and important:
 - o Loving and caring for you and your unique character
 - o Following your journey of faith
 - o Wanting never to lose you
- Bring all that to prayer, knowing that whatever you offer in this moment is precious and important.

Friday 26th January

- The next time you open your fridge, why not pray this little prayer:
- Generous God,
Thank you for the blessings you have given me, and the food for this day.
Thank you for all the work of creation, all the work of farmers and supermarket-workers and delivery drivers that means this food can be here, in my house.
Thank you for all that I have received.
Thank you. Amen.

Saturday 27th January

- Today, take some time to observe nature. The first signs of spring are starting to show. We are nearing the end of the season the Celts refer to as 'Imbolc', the ending of the depths of winter and the time when new life starts to show.
- Are there signs of new life in your spiritual journey, your discipleship? Are you able to discern some sense of what you are supposed to do next?
- However those questions make you feel, spend some time praying about them, and maybe find time to talk to a trusted friend or someone from the pastoral team at your local church about your answers.