



EASTER 4C

A complete sunday service ready to use
by those leading Local Arrangement

Easter 4 - Year C
12th May 2019



Order of Service

Call to Worship

Hymn:

57 STF – Let all the world in every corner sing OR

30 STF – Jesus, stand among us

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

Talk

Hymn:

479 STF – The King of love my shepherd is OR

626 STF – Even though I walk through the valley

Readings: Psalm 23 John 10:22-30

Hymn:

481 STF – The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want OR

535 STF – God, when I came into this life

Reading Acts 9:36-43

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

513 STF – Take this moment, sign and space OR

559 STF – Lord, you have my heart

Response

Intercessions

Offertory

Offertory prayer

Hymn:

489 STF – All I once held dear OR

415 STF – The Church of Christ, in every age

Blessing

The Complete Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets using the resources available on www.theworshipcloud.com

The following resources are a small selection of what is available. Many more resources and inspiration for this week's lectionary, leading worship and other church use are available on The Worship Cloud.

All resources featured can be downloaded as separate files from the website as part of a subscription.

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Call to Worship

Good Shepherd, who leads us beside still waters and into green pastures, be close to us in our gathering today. May we feed on your word, know your protection and be sustained by your Spirit, this day and every day.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

57 STF – Let all the world in every corner sing OR

30 STF – Jesus, stand among us

Opening prayers

Prayer of adoration

God of love,
you care for us as Shepherd,
leading us to fresh pasture and living water.

You care for us as Father,
drawing those you love close into your embrace.

You care for us as Saviour,
forgiving all who draw near to you in faith.

You care for us as Lord and King,
bringing us into the heart of your kingdom.

God of love,
you care for us.

What greater blessing can there be
than this?

Prayer of thanksgiving

Praise and honour,
glory and power
belong to our God
for ever and ever.

Accept this offering today—
our thankfulness
for all that you have done
and are yet to do in our lives;
and our sacrifice,
all that we might do for you
and for those you lead us to.

Praise and honour,
glory and power

¹ Taken from The Act of Prayer by John Birch

belong to our God
for ever and ever.
Amen.²

Prayer of confession (based on Psalm 23)

Voice 1: The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,

Voice 2: Good Shepherd, you give us all that we need and more.
But we have been ungrateful.

All (or voice 3): Forgive us.

Voice 1 He refreshes my soul and guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

Voice 2: Good Shepherd, you have shown us how we should behave.
But we have chosen to act in ways that please us and not you.

All (or voice 3): Forgive us.

Voice 1: Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil,
For you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Voice 2: Good Shepherd, you have promised always to be with us
But we have forgotten your promise and been afraid.

All (or voice 3): Forgive us,

Voice 1: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Voice 2: Good Shepherd, you call us to close communion with you
But we have spurned your invitation and been careless of your company.

All (or voice 3): Forgive us.

Voice 1: Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Voice 2: Good Shepherd, it is a privilege to worship in your name
But we have been thoughtless and careless in our prayers.

All (or voice 3): Forgive us.

Voice 1: Christ the Good Shepherd gave his life for his sheep,
That all who believe in him might never be snatched from his care.

Voice 2: We hear Christ's word to us: Your sins are forgiven.

All (or voice 3): Thanks be to God.

Amen.³

² Taken from The Act of Prayer by John Birch

³ Prayers written by Jonathan Hustler

We say together the Lord's Prayer

Talk

Lots of people have attempted to summarise everything about being a Christian in a few words – perhaps if you can't think of anything else to do in the rest of the service, you might like to have a go at it yourself!

However, I'd like to suggest one possible summary of the whole Christian faith: 'You are loved'.

There you go, three short words, and it's probably not good enough – because it doesn't mention God, or sin, or Jesus, or penal substitution, or the Holy Spirit, or grace, or a million other things that people would want to include in their sentence. But it works for some people – because it helps us to hear those three words: 'you are loved'.

We live in a world where, sometimes, it is easy to forget that we are loved. There is so much pressure on us to be better, the adverts on TV, the articles in magazines, things other people might say or the jokes they tell can all make us feel like we are not good enough.

Perhaps it is an advert for new clothes, which only works if it makes us feel like the clothes we currently own aren't good enough – that is how the company will persuade us to buy new ones.

Or perhaps something that one of our friends or someone from our class, our workplace, our community says. They might not mean to be offensive, but they have their own worries and insecurities and in trying to protect themselves, they put us down, or say something negative about something that matters to us. It is easy to forget that we are loved.

But God loves us, no matter what. And an important part of the Jesus story is inviting us to recognise that – to see that God is close, God is with us, God loves us, just as we are.

Later in our service, we will be reflecting on what it is that God might be inviting us to do with our lives, our 'calling'. But, in order to get to that place, in order to see the potential we have, it is important that we hear that message of love. We act, not always from a place of feeling guilty, but of feeling loved. The first thing God is calling you to be, is you.

Tim Minchin, the Australian singer, has a song called 'Not Perfect'. If you haven't heard it – I suggest looking it up. This song is his reflection on the importance of loving himself, even though he recognises that he is not perfect. The verses reflect firstly on the whole earth, then his country, his house, his body and finally his brain. He recognises that each of these is 'where I spend the vast majority of my time. It's not perfect, but it's mine'.

Perhaps we can come to the same realisation about ourselves? We are not perfect, but we have been created by a loving God who loves and accepts us just as we are. Can we learn that lesson again today?

God is saying to each of us: 'you may not be perfect, but you are mine.

'And you are loved'.

Hymn:

479 STF – The King of love my shepherd is OR

626 STF – Even though I walk through the valley

Readings: Psalm 23

John 10:22-30

Hymn:

481 STF – The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want OR

535 STF – God, when I came into this life

Reading: Acts 9:36-43

Reflections on the readings

The Assistant Secretary of Conference, Rev Dr Jonathan Hustler, offers our reflection for today's service.

Acts 9, verse 42 says, "News of it spread all over Joppa and many came to believe in the Lord."

Which, we might think, is not surprising. Tabitha, or Dorcas, was someone who was well-known and well-liked; she was clearly a very able seamstress (as those who met Peter when they were mourning would have showed off garments that were well-made); she was renowned for her kindness and charity (and it might be that the widows were showing Peter work that she had done for them without charge).

The community would have been bereft to hear that she had died and astounded and overjoyed to hear that she had been restored to them. Of course it became widely known. The news would have spread through every conversation in the market, through the gossip on the street corner, through the chatter in the Synagogue.

The news spread and was believed.

I wonder, where do you get your news?

Over the last ten years, that might have changed. We no longer have to wait until the 6pm broadcast on Radio 4 or BBC 1 to find out what has happened in the day; we no longer even have to turn on the television to a rolling news service; alerts pop up on our phones and tablets throughout the day.

But as the news media have changed so has our level of trust in the news. Each year, the dictionary publisher Collins declares a 'word of the year', something that seems to express the most common feature of that twelve month period. In 2017, the 'word of the year' was 'Fake News'. It's a term that cuts two ways – 'fake news' can be reports that are spread deliberately even though the person who starts the rumour (and sometimes those who pass it on) know that what they say is not true. Or 'fake news' can be a way of dismissing something that someone does not want anyone to believe or does not want others to believe. Time and again, we will hear

'Ignore it. It's fake news' – even when we are confident that what we have heard is true. So what the phenomenon of 'fake news' has done is to erode trust in news media, in social media, in government, in each other, and we find ourselves asking 'how can we believe what we have been told?'

Gospel means 'good news'. Our reading from the Good News today told of an encounter that Jesus had in the temple. It does not appear to be a friendly encounter; those who came with questions gather round him, literally 'encircle him', and demand that he tell them whether he is the Messiah. Jesus refuses to answer their question directly. He has already told them, he says, and they have refused to believe him. But if they won't believe because of what he has said, they should believe because of what he has done.

The scene is set in winter, at the Festival of Dedication when the Jews celebrated the liberation of the temple by the Maccabees about two hundred years earlier. God who acted to save them then was acting now, Jesus tells them – but they have chosen to treat this as fake news not good news.

Those in Joppa who heard about the raising of Dorcas treated it as good news. The way that Luke (the writer of Acts) tells the story reminds us of other stories, particularly that of the raising of Jairus' daughter. In both stories, there is an urgent summons to help; in both stories, the mourners are excluded from the bedside; in both stories the command is 'Get up!' What we can believe about this story is that the power of Jesus is at work in Peter. Both those stories also have echoes of the Old Testament stories of Elijah and Elisha raising the dead. So when the news spread, people believed because they saw that God was acting as God had acted in the past.

Jesus asked those who were encircling him in the temple to believe because of his works. It's a term that means more than his miracles. Dorcas, a disciple whose kindness and charity were famous, was already good news before Peter came to her. Peter came because he was asked to come, presumably because the disciples in Joppa had heard that here was an apostle through whom God was clearly at work.

Today is kept in some churches as 'Vocations Sunday'. It is a day on which we are asked to consider what part we play in the ministry of God's Church.

Am I called to ordination, to local preaching, to stewarding, to youth or children's work, to share musical gifts, to the position of treasurer or property steward that no-one seems to want to do?

Each of us has to answer that question for ourselves. We have our specific, individual vocations that are different; but those are part of our common vocation. Christ calls us all to be Good News, not simply to speak about God's love for God's world (though hopefully we will all do that to some extent) but to show that love through our actions and through the way that those actions remind others of the actions of Jesus.

We are called to be Good News. There will always be sceptics and doubters. There will always be liars who try to get others to believe what is not true for their own ends. Perhaps there have always been fake news and those who are quick to shout 'Fake News!' To them and to those who are confused by them, the best answer that we can give is to be good news, to live our lives in ways that are shaped by the things that we have believed.

We might not work miracles like Elijah or Elisha. But like Peter, we can be disciples and respond when we are called to help. Like Dorcas, we can be kind and charitable. Like Jesus, we can face down the doubters and be Good News.⁴

Let us be quiet for a moment, in prayer.

[Pause].

Hymn:

513 STF – Take this moment, sign and space OR

559 STF – Lord, you have my heart

[Please note: the following reflections take inspiration from 513 – Take this moment. Therefore, if you choose to use another hymn here, you may need to edit or amend the following reflection and prayer].

Response

On this 'Vocations Sunday', have we heard again the invitation to respond? In what ways can we use all that we have to build God's kingdom, here and now?

In the hymn written by John Bell and Graham Maule, that we just sang, the final verse goes like this:

'Take my talents, take my skills,
take what's yet to be;
let my life be yours and yet,
let it still be me.'

I invite you turn to the hymn now (number 513 in Singing the Faith – or put the words on the screen if people are not using books) and spend a moment in quiet, reading them over and reflecting on your own sense of vocation, your own calling.

Is there something God is calling you into?

[Quiet – for around 3-4 minutes].

Perhaps there is something jumping out at you: perhaps there is something you have been running away from or hiding from for a while, and it is nagging at you again, perhaps there is something that makes you feel angry that you think might be a prompting to be a part of the change.

Is there a new role you could be taking up, within the life of the church, the community, your family or friends?

Is there a relationship you want to build on or attempt to rescue?

Is there a person, or group of people, to whom you have something to offer?

Is there a new way you can love your neighbour this week, this month, and in the years ahead?

⁴ Reflection written by Jonathan Hustler

God is calling each of us to be ourselves, to be the person we were created to be, but also to be the best that we can be – to fulfil our potential and to build a better world, in Jesus' name.

Let us say the words of that verse again together.

'Take my talents, take my skills,
take what's yet to be;
let my life be yours and yet,
let it still be me.'⁵

Prayers of Intercession

Good Shepherd, we ask you to be our guide:

Lead us out of darkness,
Lead us out of trouble,
Lead us out of fear,
Lead us out of death,
And bring us to the fullness of life eternal.

We rejoice with the saints and the whole company of heaven and say, "Salvation belongs to our God".

We pray for all pastors and those who are spiritual directors and counsellors.

Faithful Shepherd, lead us from darkness to light,
From death to eternal life.

We pray for all who direct the minds of the young, for teachers, and for all who broadcast through radio and television.

We give thanks and pray for those who provide us with food through farming and agriculture, for those who provide for us in supermarkets and shops.

Faithful Shepherd, lead us from darkness to light,
From death to eternal life.

We remember before you all who have been our teachers and guides;

We pray for our local schools and places of learning.

We ask your blessing upon our communities, our homes and our loved ones.

We pray for all who have lost direction, for all who have lost faith in themselves, in the world and in their God.

We pray for the despondent, the disillusioned and the despairing, for all who feel desperate or distressed,

That they may know that God loves them and seeks for them.

We pray for all who are ill or struggling at this time.

We rejoice that you lead us through the valley of the shadow of death.

Faithful Shepherd, lead us from darkness to light,
From death to eternal life.

Amen.⁶

⁵ Response written by Tim Baker

⁶ Taken from Glimpses of Glory by David Adam

We will now take up the offering

Offertory prayer

Living God, we offer you these gifts. On this Vocations Sunday, we offer you the days and weeks to come. Use us, to bless each other, to bless our nearest and dearest, to bless the world around us – may we be a people of transformation.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.⁷

Hymn:

489 STF – All I once held dear OR

415 STF – The Church of Christ, in every age

Blessing

The faithful Shepherd protect you from all evil,
Strengthen you with his goodness,
Lead you to the fullness of his love;
and the blessing of the Creator, the Christ and the Holy Spirit, be with you now and always.

Amen.⁸

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁸ Taken from Glimpses of Glory by David Adam