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ORDINARY 12A

21st June 2020

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

A free resource funded by **twelvebaskets**.

For more information <https://theworshipcloud.com/terms/free-weekly-resource>

Call to worship

Here we are Lord, worshipping you. Come amongst us, God of all grace, by your Spirit – the Spirit that moves and inspires each of us. Come and transform us, as we worship. Amen.¹

Hymn - 706 STF – Longing for light, we wait in darkness - [YouTube](#)

Opening Prayers

Loving and gracious God, we rejoice to know your presence with us at all times and in all places;

When we feel needy, you hear us and answer us.
When we feel threatened, you hear us and answer us.
When we cry out to you, you hear us and answer us.

Loving and gracious God, you are good, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you;

When we have gone astray, you love us and forgive us.
When we have messed up, you love us and forgive us.
When we have followed our own desires, you love us and forgive us.

Loving and gracious God, your love for us knows no bounds, for you even came amongst us in Jesus to share our life;

We turn our hearts and minds to worship you, receive our love.
We sense your transforming power at work in our lives, receive our love.
We long to be filled with your Spirit and become more like you, receive our love.

Loving and gracious God, we worship you today. Amen.²

We say The Lord's Prayer

Readings:

Genesis 21: 8-21 - [Click for Reading](#)

Romans 6: 1b-11 - [Click for Reading](#)

Matthew 10: 24-39 - [Click for Reading](#)

¹ Call to worship by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Jill Baker

Reflections on the readings

There may have been times when you have felt badly treated – by family, friends, colleagues, teachers and, let us be honest, people in church. Perhaps these experiences feel even worse when you have tried to do what you thought was the right thing, or when the situation was unjust because of the power dynamics at play. Also, some experiences may have been downright abusive.

The varied stories in the Bible can sometimes be helpful to us because they reflect the full spectrum of our human experience. Hagar is a foreign slave and was unable to have children. Then Sarah does have a child, and Hagar and her son Ishmael are kicked out of community and into the wilderness – effectively to die.

On the face of it, this is a story that raises questions about power and jealousy. About how we treat foreigners, women (it had to be Sarah and not Abraham who could not have children) and people of different social status. It is a story of apparent exclusion. Over recent weeks people have experienced social exclusion and isolation because of Covid-19. It is sadly those already socially and economically disadvantaged who have perhaps suffered the most.

Yet, in recent weeks we have also perhaps re-evaluated how we think about, and act towards, people doing relatively low paid jobs. We have a newfound appreciation for refuse collectors, shop workers, delivery drivers, carers and, of course, nurses. God was able to act and offer hope and salvation even through the negative human emotions and behaviour that led to Hagar and Ishmael being banished. Maybe too, we can see God at work even through the suffering and grief of Coronavirus as we learn in a deeper way what it is to value and care for others.

Saint Paul too, in his letter to the Christian community in Rome, reminds us that we are people of hope and transformation, even amid suffering and death, because of the resurrection of Jesus. Yes, this speaks ultimately of eternal life but also of transformation and hope here and now; of how we can “walk in newness of life”. We have had to find new ways of living through lockdown and so may we continue to offer transformation and hope to others through our actions and words as we seek to live as disciples of the risen Jesus.

In the gospel reading, Jesus gives us challenging words. The story of Hagar and the reading from Romans speak of God’s faithfulness and, therefore, of hope. Yet here is Jesus talking about conflict. Could it be Jesus is underlining the choice each of us have if we are serious about being his disciples? Are willing to speak and act for transformation and hope, for peace and justice even if it brings us into conflict with others, even with our nearest and dearest? Are we willing to risk putting ourselves into a situation of being rejected in order to be faithful to what we understand to be the good news of Jesus? If we are then, perhaps, we might find ourselves needing to come full circle back to the cry of Hagar that our hope is in God alone. And the good news is, these stories show us that we are not alone. God is with us now and eternally.

Like the words of Jesus, maybe this pandemic underlines the choice we have as disciples to continue to speak and act for transformation and hope, and a world that values and cares for others – especially the most disadvantaged – even when this risks putting our values into conflict with ones which can't wait for a return to the status quo.

So, what do we choose?

A short spoken-word piece to finish:

Cast down
Locked down
My cry against violence
Screaming into silence

Yet on the wind, an echo's return
A still small voice that yearns to be heard
Love's faithfulness for those we thought worthless
Solidarity against injustice

An invitation to something new
A choice given to me and you
It's in what we say and what we do

For the transformation
Of the desolation
Is the resurrection

So, what do we choose?
Who will we include – Here and now as well as above?

Choose love – it is the best of us
Choose love – because it first chose us.³

Prayers of intercession

We live in a world where price is often confused with value; as we bring our prayers for others today, we hold in our minds those on whom little value is sometimes placed, knowing that God's love for each one is immense:

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for babies and small children; those who live near to us, those who live far away in lands torn apart by war or famine, those who are sick...

Lord, graciously hear us.

³ Reflection written by James Morley

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for young people; those scarred by the past, those who fear the future, those whose lives have been disrupted in recent months and who feel lost...

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for all who are sick in body; people in our families with cancer or degenerative diseases, people near and far affected by the Coronavirus and other illnesses...

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for all who struggle to hold onto good mental health; friends living with depression, anxiety, addiction... and for ourselves in these times of uncertainty and fear...

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for all who are dying and those who have been recently bereaved; we know that your love is stronger than death – surround them with that love...

Holy God, gentle and strong God, we pray today for any who feel lost, abandoned, neglected or unvalued, for whatever reason... we know that you came to seek and to save the lost and we pray that they may know your gentle and strong love surrounding them at this time.

Lord, graciously hear us. Amen.⁴

Hymn – 673 STF – Will you come and follow me - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

We will leave here, never the same again.
We will follow you, our God, into the week ahead.
We will go where you will lead us.
Lead us, heavenly father, lead us. Amen.⁵

⁴ Prayers of intercession written by Jill Baker

⁵ Additional prayers by Tim Baker