

The Vine at Home
15th Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year B
Sunday 11th July 2021

Call to worship

We gather this day, to worship the living God.
We gather together with the body of Christ, around the world and across history
We gather to pray, to sing, to reflect and to be transformed, By your Spirit, Lord God.
Amen.¹

Hymn: 277 STF – My song is love unknown -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y76ZhYKVMak>

Opening Prayers

Let us just be quiet for a moment.

[Pause]

Think of a place that you love to be in, a place that brings you peace – perhaps it reminds you of God or reveals something of God’s nature to us. It might be by the sea, in your garden, at home a favourite holiday spot, a mountain or a skyscraper. Perhaps for many of us it will be connected to a beautiful landscape or a special view.

Let us just pause for a moment, imagining yourself into that place. What can you see? How do you feel?

Firstly, let us pause and give thanks.

Lord of our special places, we give thanks for these special places and all that they mean to us. We give thanks for the memories this place connects us with, and the special people associated with this place, perhaps faces, names and stories we remember when we come here.

Living God, we give you thanks for your creation and all the joy and wonder it brings us. We pause to give you thanks. *[Quiet]*

Secondly, still imagining ourselves in this special place, we pause to say sorry, sorry to you Lord God.

As we look out on our special places, we feel a sense of connection to all the other special places people are imagining in this room and all the other precious parts of your creation, no matter how popular or appreciated. We say sorry.

We say sorry for the damage we have done to these places, and the ways we have been part of systems that have damaged your world, or the people who live there. We are sorry for the pollution, destruction and pain that we inflict on each other, and on your world.

For the sake of these special places, the people of your world, and all that we love we ask that you would move, inspire and transform us. Accept us as we are, and use us for your work to create a better, safer, fairer world. In Jesus’ name, Amen.²

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

Let us now say the Lord's Prayer

Readings: 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19 – David Brings the Ark to Jerusalem

6 David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. **2** David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. **3** They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio,^[a] the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart **4** with the ark of God;^[b] and Ahio^[c] went in front of the ark. **5** David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs^[d] and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

Psalm 24 – Entrance into the Temple

1 The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it;
2 for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.
3 Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?
4 Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.
5 They will receive blessing from the Lord, and vindication from the God of their salvation.
6 Such is the company of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.^[a]

Selah

7 Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in.
8 Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in.
10 Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

Selah

Ephesians 1:3-14 – Spiritual Blessings in Christ

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, **4** just as he chose us in Christ^[a] before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. **5** He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, **6** to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. **7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace **8** that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight **9** he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, **10** as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. **11** In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance,^[b] having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, **12** so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. **13** In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy

² Opening prayers written by The Joint Public Issues Team.

Spirit; **14** this^[c] is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Mark 6:14-29 – The Death of John the Baptist

14 King Herod heard of it, for Jesus'^[a] name had become known. Some were^[b] saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." **15** But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." **16** But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

17 For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod^[c] had married her. **18** For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." **19** And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, **20** for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed;^[d] and yet he liked to listen to him. **21** But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. **22** When his daughter Herodias^[e] came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." **23** And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." **24** She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." **25** Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." **26** The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. **27** Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's^[f] head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, **28** brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. **29** When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

Reflections on the reading

[This week's reflection is written by Jill Baker, the Chair of the Methodist Council and a former Vice President. You can read the full reflection by subscribing to The Vine resources – email thevine@twelvebaskets.co.uk to find out if your circuit is subscribed.]

Three times in today's psalm, the little Hebrew word 'selah' is used. It means 'pause' and is inserted there to remind those reading, chanting or singing the psalm to do just that, to pause and reflect on the grace of God of which the psalmist is singing... we do well to pause too and ask what God is saying to us through these – admittedly rather challenging – passages...

Let us hold one of those 'selah' moments now. *[Pause]*

As we turn towards Christ again, setting our hope on him, not on ourselves, we are given the ability to 'live for the praise of his glory', as David sought to do in his dancing, as John the Baptist had done in his preaching, as the disciples were learning to do in their mission, as Jesus demonstrates all the time. There may be a cost; there was for David, there was for John, there was for the disciples, there was for Jesus, but the end result is that wonderful

circle of blessing with which the prayer for the Ephesians begins – blessed be God...who has blessed us...with every spiritual blessing. Thanks be to God. Amen.³

Prayers of intercession

God of all grace, we come to you today to pray for the world you made.

Gracious Jesus, we come to you today to pray for the world you loved and in which you lived.

Holy Spirit of grace, we come to you today and ask your help as we offer our prayers for others.

We pray for the world in which evil so often seems to have the upper hand;

We hold in your love those who are caught up in human trafficking... those who are exploited... those who are abused... those who are victims of violence...

We pray too for those who perpetrate such violence, oppression and exploitation and for all who work for justice, peace and dignity for all people...

God of all grace, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the church, seeking a path of goodness and holiness which glorifies you;

We hold in your love all who lead the church in this and every land... those who preach... those who serve... those who speak truth to power... those who risk their own lives for the sake of others...

We pray too for churches which are divided, groups which feel marginalised or ignored, situations where individuals have been isolated.

God of all grace, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for this community, with its glimpses of glory and moments of inhumanity;

We hold in your love all in hospital, or suffering at home and those who care for them... we hold in your love our schools, their pupils, staff and governors... we hold in your love our police force and all who work for peace... we pray for those who are in prison and all involved in support for those who struggle...

God of all grace, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our families, our church family, our friends and our neighbours;

We hold in your love those who are most precious to us, each of us pausing to picture (or speak the names) of those for whom we pray today... send your grace and blessing we pray on all those known to us who are in particular need at this time... those who are sick, those who are broken-hearted, those who are grieving, those who are lost and confused...

God of all grace, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for ourselves, in our own journey of laughter and lament, wholeness and brokenness;

We offer ourselves afresh to receive your grace... praying that we may be given the resources we need to face this day, the next day and all the coming days with grace and courage. We offer ourselves to be moulded by your Holy Spirit that we may live to the praise of your glory – now and forever.

³ Reflection written by Jill Baker

God of all grace, **hear our prayer**. Thanks be to God. Amen.⁴

Hymn:350 STF - I cannot tell - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDXFTkhRuGg>

Blessing

Go out from this place, inspired and uplifted to bring about change in the world.
Go out into the world, amongst all the disheartening and disappointing moments of life, and know that the God of love goes with you, before you, alongside you and within you.
Go to be a people of love, grace and peace.

Amen.⁵

⁴ Prayers of intercession written by Jill Baker

⁵ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

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