

The Vine at Home
24th Sunday of Ordinary Time – Year B
Sunday 12th September 2021

Call to worship

You have called us here, O God,
And we come – to gather in your name.

You have called us this far on our journey and we come – to take stock, to reflect, and to take our next steps on our walk with you.

In Jesus' name, by the power of the Spirit, we come,

Amen.¹

Hymn: 36 STF – There's a quiet understanding

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTfESpt74Iq>

Opening Prayers

Gracious God, your love finds us here.

In this moment, just as we are, coming to seek a connection with the spiritual base-note that is all around us.

In a world that feels increasingly full of treble-notes and surface-level conversations, show us a glimpse of something deeper; something richer, something more meaningful, O God.

That is why we come in worship this day.

That is why we come to pray, to sing, to listen, to think, to reflect, to connect, and to be transformed by our encounter with you.

Come amongst us holy God, God of all creation, God of this moment, this space, these people gathered here.

Come, by your Spirit.

Loving God, you already know that many of us are carrying baggage and burdens with us into our time of worship. A mixture of our own failings, of the mistakes we've made, of the times we have fallen short of reflecting your glory into the world around us.

As we begin our time of worship, help us to lay those burdens down.

Help us to learn again that we never have to earn our place in your love, that your kingdom is not a meritocracy, but a community of grace.

And even as we are loved and accepted, even as we are forgiven and set free, may we live the same way with those we meet. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.²

Let us now say the Lord's Prayer

Readings: Proverbs 1:20-33 – The Call of Wisdom

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

20 Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice.

21 At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

22 “How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?

How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?

23 Give heed to my reproof; I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you. **24** Because I have called and you refused, have stretched out my hand and no one heeded, **25** and because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, **26** I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you, **27** when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.

28 Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but will not find me. **29** Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord,

30 would have none of my counsel, and despised all my reproof, **31** therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices.

32 For waywardness kills the simple, and the complacency of fools destroys them; **33** but those who listen to me will be secure and will live at ease, without dread of disaster.”

James 3:1-12 – Taming the Tongue

3 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters,^[a] for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. **2** For all of us make many mistakes.

Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. **3** If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. **4** Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. **5** So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! **6** And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature,^[b] and is itself set on fire by hell.^[c] **7** For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, **8** but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. **9** With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. **10** From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters,^[d] this ought not to be so. **11** Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? **12** Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters,^[e] yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

Mark 8:27-38 – Peter’s Declaration about Jesus

27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” **28** And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.” **29** He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.”^[a] **30** And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. **32** He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. **33** But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **35** For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel,^[b] will save it. **36** For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? **37** Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? **38** Those who are ashamed of me and of my words^[c] in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Reflections on the reading

To read or use the full reflection from today's The Vine resources, written by Tim Baker, find out if your circuit is subscribed to The Vine. Email us on thevine@twelvebaskets.co.uk

The danger of a surface-level interpretation of the proverbs passage is that we turn away from all the distractions and ‘hype’ of this world, only to focus even more on ourselves. That our meditation – and even our prayer – we only become more self-centred, we only serve the ego even more than before. This is not what Wisdom is inviting us to do, and it is certainly not what Jesus is calling us to do. Rather, Jesus the Christ always invites us to overcome our ego-centric way of looking at the world, to die-to-self, in order to be fully present to God. This is not about some sort of brutal self-loathing, or a search for detachment from ourselves...but rather a commitment to getting beyond our own inherent selfishness. A way of putting love ahead of lust, peace ahead of power, grace ahead of gossip.

Doesn't that sound like a better world? A world we might like to “turn” towards?

What are you being called to?

So today, you are invited to think about what you could ‘turn away’ from. What are the things, the habits, the parts of your life, the relationships, and the addictions that are ultimately destructive?

Are there ways you waste your time that don't help you to rest or to grow?

Are there hobbies and habits that damage your mental and physical wellbeing?

What happens when you are stressed – do some of those habits you have been away of for years start to creep back in?

At this point, you don't necessarily have to consider how you are going to turn away from them, but let us begin by recognising them. Recovery, genuine change, ‘turning around’ is a long and windy road, but it's one we are all on, in some way or other.

Just as every person's journey through the Alcoholics Anonymous meetings has to begin with the courage to admit their own addiction, before the process of healing can fully begin, so too must we come to terms with the things we need to ‘turn away’ from. The work of metanoia starts (again) with us, today.

So, what is it that you need to turn away from? You won't have to share this with anyone, we are not setting up a church-wide accountability group here, but perhaps you are beginning or continuing your own journey towards recovery. Let's take a few moments. Write if it's helpful. Draw if it's helpful. Go for a little walk if it's helpful. Use this time with your thoughts. What do you need to ‘turn away’ from?

Let us pray. Gracious God, your love has called us here. And we come.

As bring much that is difficult with us, much we would choose to turn away from, in order to make the world and our lives a better, safer, fairer place. We know we can't fix everything, not today, not now. But we want to take the next step.

Move amongst us now, by your grace, and show us how to choose wisdom, love, peace, grace, hope. In Jesus' name. Amen.³

Prayers of intercession

Lord of all grace, our worship comes in the context of much that is wrong with our world, our society, our community, our whole lives.

In the midst of so much that is broken, so much injustice, we turn to prayer.

As we pray, we invite you, holy God to change and transform us, by your Spirit, that we may play our part in being an answer to someone's prayer today.

And so, we hold this space, as a space for each of us to bring our prayers for other people. In the stillness, I simply invite you to bring your prayers for those known to you who need God's love, who need to know comfort, who need to connect in with the spiritual base-note, this day. You might like to just whisper a person's name under your breath, you might like to just hold a picture of a face or two in your mind in an atmosphere of prayer, you might like to think about a news story or a documentary that has affected you in recent days. In the stillness, let's bring our prayers to God.

[A time of quiet - during which you may wish to play some gentle, reflective music].

Lord God, you know our hearts, and you know our hurts. You know the names, the faces and the situations we have brought into this prayer space in the last few moments. You know the people we pray for on a regular basis. You know the world and her needs right now.

As we pray, show us how we can be an answer to prayer. Teach us how to be a people of grace, justice, live and comfort, amidst a broken world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.⁴

Hymn: 404 STF – God's Spirit is in my heart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzi2q2m65mA>

Blessing

Arise from this place with the Spirit of God in your hearts.

Arise from this moment to continue your walk of discipleship and faith.

Arise from this time to travel with people who need a companion today,

And take your next steps in faith. Amen.⁵

³ Reflection written by Tim Baker

⁴ Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

⁵ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

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