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EASTER 5B

28th April 2024

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening prayers

As I come to you today, may I centre myself on you again, O God.
Help me to turn aside from the busy-ness and business of the day, to meet with you again in this space.

Come here, Holy and remarkable God,
By your Spirit I pray,

Amen.

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

Reading: John 15:1-8 – [Click for reading](#)

Hymn:

503 STF – Love divine - [YouTube](#)

Reflections on the reading

Read these challenging words written as part of a longer reflection for The Vine resources by Raj Patta (for a full subscription to The Vine, email us at thevine@twelvebaskets.co.uk to find out if your circuit is subscribed).

Over the years, we have conveniently bracketed and narrowed 'love for one another' as love for our inner-circle of family and friends, making love a domestic affair and a private affair, with no engagement with the dynamics of power in our love for one another. On the other hand, we don't fall back on the language of 'justice' and 'equity' in our domestic lives, thinking these are secular words that people use out in the public sphere. This bifurcation of love as private and justice as public, is not only unhelpful but also unspiritual, for justice and love co-exist and co-work together, which has been demonstrated in the life and witness of Jesus Christ in his mission and ministry. Alluding Cornel West's expression, "justice is what love looks like in the public," justice is the visible action of the invisible love, and love is the bedrock for justice.

What does this mean for you:

- Are there times you have turned 'love' into something private, that only affects those close to you, similar to you, or with whom you already have a relationship?
- Do you see a relationship between love and justice?
- How can your justice work be motivated by love?
- How are you loving in a way that seeks justice?

All love is from God, and God is the source of all love. When we love, with a love that reaches beyond our comfortable lives and into the whole world, reaches those most in need, we are worshipping the God of love.

What does that look like for you this week? How can you demonstrate God's love for those most in need, as well as those closest to you?

No one has ever seen God, if we love one another, God lives in us, the Easter story becomes relevant and God's love is perfected in the creation.

Responding in music:

Take the time to reflect on what all this means for you as you listen to and/or sing along with one or more of these songs:

410 STF – Lord, your church on earth is seeking - [YouTube](#)

615 STF – Let love be real, in giving and receiving – [YouTube](#)

663 STF – I, the Lord of sea and sky - [YouTube](#)

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Blessing

This is the day that the Lord has made,
As you go out into the remainder of this day, and the week ahead,
May you experience the Creator God, the Christ-light and the Holy Spirit at work,
Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week Ahead

Monday 29th April

- Draw around the shape of your hand. Write on it the things that you're carrying that feel like burdens. Offer them to God in prayer, remembering that God carries your burdens with you.

Tuesday 30th April

- 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.

Wednesday 1st May

- 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 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.

Thursday 2nd May

- Gracious God, 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.

Friday 3rd May

- Read this poem "blessing and rest" by Malcolm Guite. <https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/tag/sabbath>

Or read this by David Adams taken from "The Open Gate" published by SPCK

Blessings are what God bestows upon us, continually. His whole action towards us is blessing, from the blessing of life itself to the gifts He showers upon us. The great blessings are the gift of Himself, and the gift of eternal life. No blessing is ours by right, but in His love He offers them to us all freely. Grace is the free action of God to us. What we are asked to do is to respond, to allow the blessing to work, and to see God at work in our lives.

Consider the blessings you have received today. Give thanks for them.

Saturday 4th May

- Holy God, you have called me here, in this moment, this day, this weekend.
Lord of life, I see you at work in the world around me.
Open my eyes, and open my heart,
That I may be ready to receive your Spirit into my life.
Amen.