

twelvebaskets

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EPIPHANY 4B

28th January 2024

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Love comes here, as I turn aside to meet with you, Lord God.
Love transforms my heart,
Love moves me into action.
Lord Jesus, Spirit of love,
Show me how to love.

Hush. Be still. Listen.

Do you hear them?
The sounds of the prophets, sharing wisdom
through the voices of the children, the downtrodden,
the faithful, the thunder of the crowd,
whispering to you, today.

Hush. Be still. Listen.

Can you feel it?
The drums of praise, echoing in this space.
The ensemble has gathered to bring worship,
like the psalmist of old,
into this space, here and today.

Hush. Be still. Listen.

Can you see it?
The burdens I have brought here,
the anxiety of this past week,
the rising joy needing to be shared,
the Spirit of God in this place?

Hush. Be still. Listen.
This house and community welcome you.

Amen.

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

Reading: Mark 1:21-28 – [Click for reading](#)

Reflections on the reading

Today, the New Testament reading from Mark 1:21-28 tells a story from the Bible that reminds us that Jesus had power and authority. Jesus was and is a teacher who could control anything, yet cared for each individual and demonstrated his love through his actions. In the Gospel of Mark, we see him heal someone from an evil spirit.

Here is a little bit of that gospel reading:

'And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.'

Jesus began his earthly ministry by teaching people in the area where he was living and working. Some were sceptical about who he was, but many people noticed how he spoke like someone who knew what he was talking about. He had authority when he taught and instructed people.

It wasn't just knowledge; it was a power that made people sit up and take notice. And when confronted with an impure spirit, Jesus didn't negotiate or plead; he commanded the spirit to leave, and it had to obey.

This event tells us something important about Jesus. He has authority over all things, even the forces that try to harm us. It's like Jesus is saying, "I am in control, and nothing can stand against my power."

Even with these amazing stories from the Bible that help to show us who Jesus is, this passage contains a warning not to be too confident in our own ability to discern what God is saying.

It is hard to ignore the fact the unclean spirit knew of Jesus' identity when the disciples and those in the synagogue did not. Those who were most committed to Jesus' teachings failed to recognise the most important thing about him. It was an unclean spirit, something most in need of transformation, that knew the truth. It is a reminder, if one is needed, that theological authority does not reside solely in the church.

Take some time today, or this week, to reflect on these questions and find someone you can trust to discuss them with:

- Where does authority come from? For Jesus, and in your life?
- Why does it matter where Jesus' authority comes from?
- What does it take for you to recognise someone's authority?
- What does it look like to treat Jesus as our primary authority?
- Where might we find and encounter important truth outside of the church?

So, as you rise from this space today, may you be encouraged by the authority of Jesus.

Whatever challenges you are facing this week, may you remember that he is in control, and his power and love are with us now and wherever we go.

Responding in music:

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

463 STF – Deep in the shadows of the past - [YouTube](#)

Responding in prayer

Heavenly Father,

I thank you that you sent your Son to be your representative on earth, carrying all the same authority as you. Thank you that in the Bible we have the means by which to hear and respond to your authority. Help us to use the access we have to your word, to draw near and listen to your authoritative voice to us.

Lord in your mercy. Hear my prayer.

Today, I pray for those who feel overburdened and trapped by something out of their control, those who have worries so large they feel insurmountable. Lord, in your power, rebuke that which is not of you, and make quiet the voices within me that keep me from my own full potential.

Lord in your mercy. Hear my prayer.

Today, I am praying to say sorry for the times that I am arrogant and foolish enough to think I have all the answers. Help me to recognise the wisdom and truth that I can find when I venture out into the world to meet with your people, O God.

Lord in your mercy. Hear my prayer.

In the stillness, I pray for the situations in the world and this community where I want your love and peace to reign.

Leave a moment of silence

Lord in your mercy. Hear my prayer. Amen.

Blessing

Go in peace – seek the opportunities to love. Go in joy and be one of the people who bring hope. Travel well in the world, and be transformed by the Spirit within you. Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week Ahead

Monday 29th January

- Go outdoors and find something natural: a stone, leaf, flower, or something else. Consider the ways God has made this thing and then reflect on how you too are wonderfully made by God. What does this mean to you?

Tuesday 30th January

- Light a candle. Jesus is the light of the world. Pray about the places you experience darkness in your life, that Jesus light might shine there.

Wednesday 31st January

- Think about how God is at work in the lives of everyone. You can see God shining out from all people. Remember this with the next person you speak to, and give thanks for the glimpses of God you see in them.

Thursday 1st February

- God of all grace, at the start of this new month,
Help me to be open to your calling on my life.
Help me to be ready for new beginnings and old traditions,
Help me to be a sanctuary to those who I may meet.
- Come and make yourself known in my life, Lord God, by your Spirit
Amen.

Friday 2nd February

- Today is the feast of Candlemas, the conclusion of the Christmas and Epiphany season. It is based on that moment in Luke's gospel when we hear about the infant Christ being presented at Temple, and traditionally features the blessing of candles for people to use during the rest of the year.
- Today is a good day, now you are clear from all the change (and resolutions!) of January, to think about what energy and light you might need for the year ahead. You might like to make a list about how you are going to face the challenges this year brings for you – what practices or resources do you need to make a part of your daily, weekly, monthly rhythms?
- If it helps, have this reflection as a time of conversation with someone you trust. Pray about any thoughts you have during your reflection.

Saturday 3rd February

- Look up a hymn or worship song on YouTube and sit and listen: don't do anything else while you listen.
- Let your mind, body and soul tune into God through the music in prayer.