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ORDINARY 26B

29th September 2024

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Take time to find something in your home that you hold as precious and important. It may be a photograph, a flower or personal item. Whatever you choose consider:

- What is it that makes it important to you?
- What memories does it hold?
- How do you feel about it and what would happen if you lost it?

Now imagine that God is holding you as precious and important

- Loving and caring for you and your unique character
- Following your journey of faith
- Wanting never to lose you

When you feel able put down your object and pick up again these written words.

Come then to worship, knowing that whatever you offer in this moment is precious and important.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation that is familiar to you.

Reading: Mark 9:38-50 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

This gospel passage begins with John telling Jesus about someone casting out demons in his name, and telling Jesus that this person wasn't part of their immediate group. Jesus' response, "Do not stop him," underscores his inclusivity, which comes up a few times in this section of Mark's gospel.

This moment from the Scriptures challenges us today – how do we view others who are different from us but are also working towards similar goals of justice, peace, and healing in the world. Reflect on areas in your life where you might be gatekeeping the work of the Spirit based on your own expectations or standards. How can you broaden your embrace and celebrate the good works of others, even if they don't belong to your 'group'?

Jesus then shifts to a stern warning about causing "little ones" to stumble. The imagery is vivid and drastic: it is better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone around one's neck than to cause harm to these believers. This metaphor highlights the responsibility we hold over our actions and their impact on others' faith and lives. In your reflection, consider how your actions and words might influence those around you. Are there ways you could be more mindful or supportive to foster others' growth rather than being a stumbling block?

Lastly, Jesus uses hyperbolic language to discuss the sacrifices necessary for true discipleship, like cutting off a hand or foot if it causes one to stumble. While not a call for physical harm, these statements emphasise the need for drastic measures in avoiding sin and promoting spiritual health. They challenge us to take a hard look at our lives and identify what might be hindering our spiritual journey or leading us into temptation. What are the "limbs" in your life that need addressing? These could be habits, relationships, or practices that do not align with your values.

As you reflect on this passage, consider how you can apply Jesus' teachings in practical ways:

- Inclusion: Actively seek and celebrate the diversity and unity of the global church. Engage with and learn from Christians who might practice their faith differently than you do.
- Responsibility: Think about how your lifestyle, decisions, and words impact others. Make choices that uplift and support the faith of those around you.
- Personal Integrity: Honestly evaluate your life for anything that might be leading you away from God. Commit to making changes that foster your own spiritual growth and enable you to be a better disciple.

Today, you are invited to hear again the gospel calling to live out a discipleship marked by openness, care for others, and personal integrity. May these challenges inspire you to deepen your walk with Christ in a way that reflects his radical, inclusive love and unwavering commitment to justice and peace.

Responding in music

83 STF – Praise, my soul, the King of heaven – [YouTube](#)

258 STF – You are the vine, we are the branches - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

May you leave this space, knowing the power of peace in your heart,

May the Spirit of the living God go with you.

May you be a blessing to others, and receive blessings from those around you,

Go in peace, hope and love, and in the power of the Spirit,

To be a sanctuary to others and to yourself

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers

Monday 30th September

- Open your Bible at random and read a chapter out loud very slowly. Notice any word or phrase that jumps out at you.
- Write it down and carry it with you for the rest of the day, noticing prayerfully if it connects to anything you experience.

Tuesday 1st October

- Today, our prayers reach out for all affected by conflict, thinking of those that grab the news headlines and those that don't.
In the conflict, may we find peace,
Amen.

Wednesday 2nd October

- God of all grace, today I am grateful.
Thank you, for all I have received.
Help me to use those gifts to build kindness and grace in your world.
Amen.

Thursday 3rd October

- Be still today – seek out moments of stillness, and let them wash over you.
- If it helps, hear again the mantra from the Psalms: 'be still and know that I am God.'

Friday 4th October

- Today is the first day of the Methodist 3 Generate event – with over 1,000 young people and their leaders gathering in Birmingham.
Today we pray for all involved in ministry for children and young people, that we may not get in the way of them experiencing something of God's nature, and we may listen to the things they have to teach us...

Saturday 5th October

- Holy God, help me to strive for justice today.
Help me to see what is mine to do in the arch of history, that – as Martin Luther King identified – bends towards justice.
- Show me how to follow in your way.
Amen.