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ORDINARY 26A

27th September 2026

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Use the following words to help centre yourself in the moment. Say them out loud, or speak them in your mind:

Jesus, open my heart.

Prepare yourself to hear God's word in a new way:

Jesus, open my heart.

Listen for God's voice, calling you to serve others and love radically:

Jesus, open my heart.

Hold the joys, regrets and frustrations from the week, and look ahead to the opportunities next week will bring:

Jesus, open my heart.

Hold the people you share your life with, and the challenges that come with relationships and friendships:

Jesus, open my heart.

Rest a moment in the quiet:

Jesus, open my heart.

Amen.

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

Reading: Matthew 21:23-32 – [Click for reading](#)

Responding to the reading

The religious leaders come to Jesus with a question: "By what authority are you doing these things?"

It sounds like a reasonable question: who gave you the right to teach like this? Who authorised you to challenge the religious establishment? Who said you could welcome these people, heal these people, forgive these people?

They want credentials, but Jesus gives them a question instead. And suddenly, the conversation isn't really about authority at all. It's about honesty.

Then Jesus tells a simple story about two sons. Their father asks them both to work in the vineyard. The first says no, but later changes his mind and goes. The second says yes, but doesn't go.

And Jesus asks: “Which of the two did the will of his father?” The answer is obvious: the one who actually went.

There is something wonderfully challenging about this little story. We often place enormous importance on what people say they believe. We ask whether someone has the right theology, belongs to the right church, uses the right language, or can give the right answers. But Jesus seems much more interested in what happens after the words.

Do our lives reflect our beliefs?

Does our faith make us more compassionate?

Does our theology make us more generous?

Does our worship lead us towards justice?

Does our relationship with God change the way we treat other people?

Because it is perfectly possible to say yes to God with our lips while saying no with our lives. And the opposite is also true. Someone who begins by saying no may discover something along the way that changes them completely.

That is particularly good news for those of us who have questions about faith, because perhaps changing your mind isn't failure, perhaps it is growth.

The first son changes his mind. And Jesus doesn't condemn him for initially saying no. What matters is that he eventually responds. There is grace here for the doubter, the questioners, the ‘I don't know’-ers.

Grace abounds for the person who has walked away from faith and later finds their way back. Grace for the person whose understanding of God has changed over the years. Grace for the person who once thought they knew exactly what they believed and now isn't so sure. The Gospel leaves room for becoming.

And then Jesus makes the passage even more uncomfortable. He tells the religious leaders that tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of them. Why? Because those people changed direction.

Jesus is not saying that particular groups are inherently better. He is exposing the danger of religious certainty that becomes so concerned with being right that it can no longer recognise where God is actually at work.

That is a challenge worth hearing today. Especially for those of us who value an open and inclusive faith, there is always the possibility that we can become just as certain and closed-minded as the people we criticise. We can become so confident that we have understood grace that we forget to keep receiving it.

So perhaps the question for discipleship is not simply: “What do I believe?”

Perhaps it is: “What is my belief making me become?”

So today, you might like to reflect on these questions:

- Where might God be inviting you to change your mind?
- Are there places where your actions don't quite match the values you profess?

- Who might you be tempted to dismiss, while God is inviting you to recognise something of Christ in them?

The good news is that God does not require us to get everything right the first time. We are allowed to change, we are allowed to grow, we are allowed to discover that the God we thought we understood is bigger than our understanding.

May you have the courage to question, the humility to change, and the grace to let your actions speak the love that your words profess. And may you always remember that in the vineyard of God, there is room for unfinished people still learning how to say yes.

Hymn / Song

455 STF – All my hope on God is founded – [YouTube](#)

Blessing

Guide my feet, O God,
That I might walk in your way.
Light my way, O God,
That I might be drawn towards all that is good and right and holy.
Call me to you, O God,
That I might play my part in your Kingdom of love, in Jesus' name,
Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers For This Week

Monday 28th September

- Lie on the floor or on your bed. Place your hands down by your sides, and simply rest there for a while. Breathe in deeply, allowing the air to fill up your belly, then breathe out slowly. Do this a few times, reflecting on all the chaos and busy-ness you are putting to one side.

Tuesday 29th September

- Today is Michaelmas, also known as the Feast of Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael (the Archangels)
- It is a holy day, associated with celebrating the angel Michael, but also falls close to the equinox and so is associated with the beginning of autumn and the shortening of days.
- Today, you might like to notice the shifting in the season happening around you, and use this as a prompt for prayer.

Wednesday 30th September

- Take a piece of paper and a pencil. On the paper, draw as many circles as you can, of different sizes. Fill the page with them if you can. Feel free to add colour if you wish.
- As you draw, reflect on how a circle has no beginning and no end; it is complete, whole and eternal. God's kingdom is like this, with each of us made whole and beautiful, unified in God's eyes. May God encircle you in love today, and empower you to do the same for those you meet.

Thursday 1st October

- 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.

Friday 2nd October

- Today is International Day of Non-Violence, celebrated on what would have been Mahatma Ghandi's birthday.
- Let us pray.
God of all grace, in a world of conflict, war, division and divisive rhetoric,
Help me to be a person of peace.
In my own relationships and communities,
And in the context of global war,
Help me to play the role of peacemaker, a prayer for peace, a sanctuary for all who are divided.
Come, Prince of Peace, by your grace, I pray. Amen.

Saturday 3rd October

- Speak your own name into the silence. Remember you are loved and that God calls you by name.