



Opening Prayer for Ordinary Time

God of adventure and growth,
open our hearts, ready our minds
and fire our imaginations,
so that as we gather together before you,
and ponder the life-giving stories of Jesus,
we might discover more of your goodness,
and be swept up by the Holy Spirit
as she nurtures, disturbs and inspires us
on our journey into fullness of life.

Amen

'Starter for Ten' Discussion Question

Have you ever been part of a crowd drawn to a particular person or group of people? Who were they and what was the experience like?

Prayers of Thanks and Praise (Psalm 147:1 – 11, 20c)

Praise the Lord!
How good it is to sing praises to our God;
for God is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting.

The Lord builds up Jerusalem
and gathers the outcasts of Israel.
God heals the broken-hearted, and binds up their wounds.

She determines the number of the stars;
he gives to all of them their names.
Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
God's understanding is beyond measure.
The Lord lifts up the downtrodden,
and casts the wicked to the ground.

Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre.
The Lord covers the heavens with clouds,
prepares rain for the earth, makes grass grow on the hills.
God gives to the animals their food,
and to the young ravens when they cry.
Her delight is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the speed of a runner;
but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear God,
in those who hope in God's steadfast love.
Praise the Lord! **Amen**

Reading Mark 1:29 – 39

Sermon – A Day in the Life of Andrew

Scene One – Andrew enters the house, and removes his jacket.

What an incredible day it's been! We've just got back from our local synagogue, here in Capernaum. Today's the first Sabbath since my brother Simon and I met Jesus of Nazareth. We were out fishing on the lake when he called us to follow him, and since then it's all been a bit of a rollercoaster. There's these other two blokes, called James and John; they're also fishermen, but a bit better off than us and I'm sure with ideas to match. The four of us are now disciples, which is taking a bit of getting my head around. Normally, it's just the best of the best, the most academic and the most pious, who get to become disciples of a Rabbi. Mind you, it seems that Jesus isn't any ordinary

Rabbi. When he stood up in the synagogue to teach, it was obvious that there's something special about him. You could hear a pin drop in there; people were hanging on his every word. Usually, preachers build on what others have said before them, but Jesus had this kind of quiet authority, if you see what I mean. And then, when this bloke with an unclean spirit stood up and starting shouting, he healed him, calm as you like... When we were leaving, I heard everyone saying, "Who is this guy? How did he do that?", and if I'm honest, it felt really quite good to be able to tell them that 'he's with us'. Takes our minds off Simon's mother-in-law being poorly, if nothing else. I need to go and check on her. Do excuse me...

Scene Two – Andrew leaves the bedroom, carrying used bedding.

You aren't going to believe what I've just seen! It's amazing! Esther, that's my brother's mother-in-law, had been really ill for several days now. Running a fever and too weak to get out of bed. We were more than a little worried about her, to be honest. I'd been sitting with her, cooling her forehead down with a cloth, when Simon came upstairs with Jesus. I moved over, so that he could hold her hand for a while, and then he took her hand and lifted her upright. We wondered what he was doing, disturbing the poor woman like that, but before either of us could say anything, Esther opened her eyes and began getting out of bed. I reached out to steady her, but she brushed my arm off, and told me not to make such a fuss. Simon and I were just stunned. One minute, she'd looked like she was at death's door, and then the next moment she was completely fine. "Well, don't just stand there"; she goes; "help me change the bedding". She's downstairs, starting on the dinner now. I've never seen anything like it!

Scene Three – Andrew sits at the kitchen table, nursing a hot drink.

I'm feeling utterly exhausted! After the sun went down and Sabbath finished, we all mucked in, and started tidying the house and getting

food ready for the next day. James and John were up on the rooftop, cleaning up after dinner, and they spotted a steady stream of people walking towards our house. When they shouted down to us, my first reaction was to panic – was this something to do with earlier today? Turns out it was, but not in the way I thought. People were gathering because Simon told them Jesus was staying with us, and they were looking for his help. I guess some were just curious, but most of that crowd were sick or troubled by demons. We all went out to help with crowd control; it looked like the whole town was heading up towards the house and you know how easily things can get out of hand when people are desperate. Before we knew it, we were crammed against the front wall like sardines; Jesus could barely get through the door!

As hard work as it was, to be honest, I really quite enjoyed the buzz of it all. It felt good to be associated with Jesus and respected by an enormous number of people once we'd got things under control and marshalled an orderly queue. Jesus healed and set free everybody who came to him; it was incredible to watch. I noticed that, unlike in the synagogue earlier on, he didn't allow the demons to speak when he cast them out. I must ask him why when the crowds come back, in the morning. Speaking of which, time to turn in. Goodnight!

Scene Four – Andrew is stood by the front door, putting his coat on.

So, we woke up this morning to find Jesus had left without bothering to let anybody know where he was going. To say I was unimpressed would be an understatement! It wouldn't be too long before daylight would bring the crowds back to the house, and there would no doubt be trouble if we had to tell them that Jesus wasn't there! Simon told us to get ourselves ready; we're going to hunt Jesus down and bring him back before people start gathering outside. He can't have gone too far, and we need him to heal the crowds, and set them free from their demons. I need to go now and find where he's gone – see you when we get back!

Scene Five – Andrew is upstairs in the house, packing a rucksack.

We're moving on again later today. It took us ages to find Jesus, as he'd gone right out into the middle of nowhere, and it turns out John and James were correct about him not being impressed that we had sought him out. When Simon spotted him, he seemed lost in prayer, and did not seem to notice when my brother told him that everybody was looking for him. It took an absolute age for Jesus to answer and tell us that we needed to move on so he could teach in neighbouring towns as well. I was more than a little angry; what about all the need in Capernaum, and all those people depending upon us? Didn't they matter anymore? I think Jesus realised what we were all thinking as he made it clear it was the end of the discussion. He had come here to proclaim his message of the Kingdom of God being at hand, and that was what he was going to do. So, we're off on the road again it seems. I don't doubt it will be extremely busy; after all, hundreds of people were there last night, and they'll spread the word throughout the rest of Galilee, I'm sure. It's still a little sad to leave Capernaum, though, but at least we don't need to worry about Esther, I suppose. We all loved the excitement of being right in the centre of the bustle around Jesus, and I hope that continues. It's good to be needed...

Prayers of Renewal

God of healing and wholeness,
in Christ you came to proclaim good news in word and deed,
and so we bring to you those things in need of renewal
in our own lives, and in the life of the world we share:

We bring to you those things for which we are sorry:

God of mercy, forgive us.

We bring to you the burdens we carry and sorrows we bear:

God of love, comfort us.

We bring to you the brokenness and oppression in our world:
God of justice, disturb us.

We bring to you the times we've hidden from the risks of love:
God of courage, fortify us.

We bring to you the failures of the Church to stand for justice:
God of liberation, convict us.

Silence is kept for a few moments...

God of healing and wholeness,
in Christ you came to proclaim good news in word and deed;
thank you that you set us free to follow you,
and to be ambassadors for your Kingdom of love. **Amen**

Recommended Resource of the Week

Ann Morisy's 2004 book *Journeying Out* is very relevant to what we have been thinking about today, as it challenges us to examine our motivations for what we do as churches (including meeting needs).

Prayers of Intercession

Lord's Prayer

Blessing

God of all our journeys,
as we go forward into the rest of the week,
may you be the light to our path and the breath we breathe,
and may the blessing of the Father, the Son and the Spirit
be with us and those whom we love and pray for,
now and forevermore. **Amen**