

*into his courts
with praise...*



A Service of the Word
for
Sunday 15 March 2023
Fourth of Lent – Mothering Sunday.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

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INTRODUCTION

*“Sleeper, awake!
Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”*

Ephesians 5:14.



THE CONFESSION

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all.
Though we have grieved him, yet he will heal us if we confess our
sins in penitence and faith.

**Almighty God,
I confess that I have sinned against you
in thought, word and deed;
I have not loved you with all my heart;
I have not loved my neighbours as myself.
Have mercy upon me,
cleanse me from my sins,
and help me to overcome my faults,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Receive God's forgiveness

May the Father forgive us
By the death of His Son
And strengthen us
To live in the power of the Spirit
All our days. **Amen.**

PRAISE

O Lord, open my lips...
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
Give me the joy of your saving help...
and sustain me with your life-giving Spirit.

THE COLLECT

Merciful Lord, you know our struggle to serve you:
when sin spoils our lives and overshadows our hearts,
come to our aid and turn us back to you again;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Collect for Mothering Sunday

God of love, passionate and strong, tender and careful:
watch over us and hold us all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

*Suggested hymn to sing or read **Awake, awake, fling off the night!***

THE WORD OF GOD.

1 Samuel 16:1-13.

The Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a

king among his sons.' Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.' And the Lord said, 'Take a heifer with you, and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord." Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.' Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?' He said, 'Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.' And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord.' But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.' Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, 'The Lord has not chosen any of these.' Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.' He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.' Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

Psalm 23.

The Lord is my shepherd; ♦
therefore can I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures ♦
and leads me beside still waters.
He shall refresh my soul ♦
and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; ♦
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You spread a table before me
in the presence of those who trouble me; ♦

you have anointed my head with oil
and my cup shall be full.
Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life, ♦
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Ephesians 5:8-14.

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,
'Sleeper, awake!
Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.'

*Suggested hymn to sing or read **The God of love my shepherd is.***

GOSPEL John 9:1-41.

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, 'Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?' Some were saying, 'It is he.' Others were saying, 'No, but it is someone like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.' But they kept asking him, 'Then how were your eyes opened?' He answered, 'The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." Then I went and washed and received my sight.' They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know.'

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, 'He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.' Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, 'What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.' He said, 'He is a prophet.'

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' His parents answered, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.' His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, 'Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.' He answered, 'I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.' They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' He answered them, 'I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?' Then they reviled him, saying, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' The man answered, 'Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.' They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered, 'And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' He said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he

worshipped him. Jesus said, 'I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.' Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, 'Surely we are not blind, are we?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, "We see", your sin remains.

REFLECTION – A journey from darkness into light.

The Lenten theme of change continues this week with this passage from John's Gospel. We read about a miracle – Jesus restores the sight of a man born blind. We also meet the Pharisees again and John puts us there as witnesses to the Pharisees' treatment of the man. Darkness and light.

The man was presumably sitting at the gate to the Temple – a very normal place for him to be. He was hoping for alms from the worshippers as they left the building. He ended up with more than he could have hoped for when he settled there that morning. His life was changed forever as he was brought out of darkness and into the light – the light of the world. By the end of the chapter it is obvious that he has also received the light of faith in Jesus.

Of course, in Jesus' time you couldn't just "be born blind"

"His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'"

No, even the disciples were still bound by the conventional attitude that someone had sinned, in this case either the blind man or his parents – although if he was born blind it's hard to see that he would have had much opportunity to sin.

Old Testament teaching was that the sins of the parents could be visited on their children (Exodus 20:5). It was not beyond belief that the sin was the man's – he could be atoning for sins committed in a previous life.

Jesus reply;

'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him.'

Here's another Old Testament reference. Psalm 146 tells us that "to open the eyes of the blind is the work of God" In Isaiah it is a sign of God's coming.

What the disciples saw as a problem, the man or his parents had sinned, Jesus sees as an opportunity. An opportunity for the works of God to be revealed by his deeds. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus' miracles are referred to as **signs**. This is a case in point. And let's be clear that when Jesus says that the man was *born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him*, he is not suffering because God wants him to, but his suffering can result in god's work being done.

The Pharisees, predictably, failed to accept the man's coming out of darkness and into the light as a good thing. After all, there were two points of contention. Firstly Jesus had done it and even worse, he had done it on the Sabbath. There was dissent among the Pharisees;

"Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?'"

The end result of this is the man being driven out, if Jesus was a sinner then this man must also be a sinner!

The man has become a believer, another instance of God's work being done. Jesus tells him;

'I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.'

Jesus final encounter with the Pharisees sees them asking him;

'Surely we are not blind, are we?'

His response;

*'If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say,
"We see", your sin remains.*

No, they didn't see, they didn't see at all, the truth was looking them
in the eye and still they did not believe!

Of course one of the images running through this Gospel is that of
light, introduced in Chapter one;

*"The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not
overcome it."*

John 1:5

There can be no doubt that the way out of darkness and into the
light of faith is through Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.

*Jesus, light of the world, shine in our darkness and bring us your
healing life.*

Amen.

Brian Pateman.

Suggested hymn to sing or read I heard the voice of Jesus say.

THE CREED

All I believe in God the Father,
whose loving care is the pattern for family life.

I believe in Jesus, the Son of God,
who lives in my heart through faith,
and fills me with his love.

I believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens me with power from on high.

I believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE PRAYERS

A time of quiet prayer for

- *The universal Church - Bishops, synods and all leaders church*
- *The leaders of the nations*
- *The natural world and the resources of the earth*

Lord Jesus, you are the Prince of Peace.

Look upon our divided world

to be with those who are victims of violence.

We pray for the people of Ukraine

and all who have been subjected to the cruelty of others.

Help us to know the gift of your peace

in the power of your Spirit and

we ask you to soften the hearts

of those who can stop the fighting.

Creator God, we ask for your aid as your children of light

living in the darkness of our world.

Amen.

Cumbria Ecumenical Spirituality Group.

Finishing with the South Calder Mission Community prayer...

**Heavenly Father we thank you for the life of your Church
in this place, and in all the villages of the South Calder
Mission Community;**

for all who have served and worshipped you in years gone by,

for all who make up your family in our churches today,

for the faith we have in common, and for the people and

traditions which make each church unique.

By your Spirit, guide and equip us,

that together we might find new ways

to reach out to our local community,

to show your love to our neighbours,

and to encourage them

to follow the Lord Jesus in their lives.

Father, we offer ourselves to your service,

In the unity of the Holy Spirit,

And in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

and the Lord's prayer...

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

THE CONCLUSION

Suggested hymn to sing or read **Lord, the light of your love is shining.**

The following prayer is said

**Be with me, Lord, as I finish my prayer today.
May my lips always speak the truth;
may my eyes which have read your word
see only what is good;
and may my life as well as my worship
be always pleasing in your sight,
for the glory of your name. Amen.**

And now may the Lord who brought us to birth by his Spirit,
strengthen us for the Christian life.
May the Lord who provides for all our needs
sustain us day by day.
May the Lord whose steadfast love is constant as a mother's care,
send us out to live and work for others.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us always.
Amen.

So now may I go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Links for the hymns

Awake, awake, fling off the night!

<https://youtu.be/QvQ3JO4UmuQ>

The God of love my shepherd is

<https://youtu.be/uDUWSg4YuWM>

I heard the voice of Jesus say

<https://youtu.be/yYqgBMrmeZA>

Lord, the light of your love is shining.

<https://youtu.be/op17raOTXbk>