

# Circuit Written Service for Sunday 24th October 2021

Revd Steph Jenner

## Psalm 121: 8

The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and for evermore.

Welcome to a Sunday that is between Harvest and All Hallows, a Sunday that means half term for some, still a week away from an extra hour in bed as the clocks change, but preparing for Remembrance and Advent. A sort of breathing space Sunday, so breathe and let God's Spirit enter you bringing peace.

## Hymn StF 440 / H&P 215

1. Amazing grace – how sweet the sound –  
that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
was blind, but now I see.
2. God's grace has taught my heart to fear,  
his grace my fears relieved;  
how precious did that grace appear  
the hour I first believed!
3. Through many dangers, toils and snares  
I have already come;  
God's grace has brought me safe thus far,  
and grace will lead me home.
4. The Lord has promised good to me,  
his word my hope secures;  
he will my shield and portion be  
as long as life endures.
5. And, when this heart and flesh shall fail  
and mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess within the veil  
a life of joy and peace.
6. When we've been there ten thousand  
years  
bright shining as the sun,  
we've no less days to sing God's praise  
than when we first begun.

John Newton

## Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Creator God,  
on this day, and all our days  
we bring to you our love and praise;  
and if we cannot voices find,  
we praise you with our hearts and mind.  
And if we should be full of doubt,  
help us see you, work it out –  
that you are with us all our days,  
worthy of our love and praise.

Loving God, you know our deepest thoughts and feelings, what we have done, what we might do, what we have said, what we may say. Help us to put you as a filter between our thoughts and feelings to our words and actions. We reflect on when we have not done so, when we have operated without you at the centre of our lives and we are sorry. We repent and make amends by trying our best not to repeat our mistakes and to learn from our errors, knowing that your forgiveness will allow us to cleanse and renew ourselves in your love. And we bless you name, so in your name we pray... Our Father....

## Reading Mark 10: 46 – 52

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stood still and said, 'Call him here.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; get up, he is calling you.' So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'My teacher, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has made you well.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

### Thoughts

I have an online Christian acquaintance who, amongst other things, is blind and has a guide dog to enable him to be as independent as he can be. Since we have become virtual friends nearly 3 years ago, I have learned much from him, and others, about ableist language and attitudes and how to be better. (Those of you who know me personally know that inclusive language is very important to me, and this is the latest addition.) Online and newly published books are coming forth more and more where people openly discuss Bible passages in light of their own experience (Reader Response) so when I looked at today's lectionary Gospel reading, my heart sank. I initially looked in Mark's gospel for passages that weren't covered by the lectionary and I came to this:

#### Mark 8: 22 – 26

They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, 'Can you see anything?' And the man looked up and said, 'I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.' Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Then he sent him away to his home, saying, 'Do not even go into the village.'

I decided that this was what I needed to think about! The first thing that struck me was that the Mark 10 passage is one of the ones used by some churches to spiritually abuse people who are unwell/disabled because, apparently, they 'do not have enough faith to be healed'. So, let's look a bit closer:

Jesus and his disciples came to Jericho and then left – nothing of note is recorded, but they left with a large crowd. The crowd may be intending to travel with them to the next town/city, or maybe just holding on to the last moments. Some may even have been making sure they left entirely. As they leave the crowd come across Bartimaeus, begging by the roadside. He is known and he is named, as is his family. He could tell that something big was happening, so he presumably asked some of the crowd, and he heard who it was passing by. We therefore know that he is active, not passive, especially when he raises his voice to attract Jesus' attention. His words are not 'help me', but 'have mercy on me'. He was told, by the crowd to shut up – I expect he was spoiling their moment, making them uncomfortable, but this just encourages him to shout louder.

Jesus stops and requests Bartimaeus to come to him. Jesus doesn't try to go to him, so the crowd have to acknowledge and help this man. The same crowd that told him to shut up change their tune when Jesus is involved and interested. They tell Bartimaeus that Jesus is calling him, so, full of hope and the energy that accompanies hope, Bartimaeus jumps up and gets to Jesus. Perhaps the crowd parts for him or they hand over hand guide him to Jesus, either way they are now involved too and show active kindness to this previously ignored, shunned man.

Jesus, although I am sure it is obvious what is afflicting Bartimaeus, treats him as a cognisant human being and asks him 'What do you want me to do?' The answer comes back, 'let me see again'. Again. Bartimaeus wasn't born blind, something happened that caused his blindness – disease, accident, violence, we don't know, but he has had life, status, a role before he was reduced to begging. We can infer that he has been rejected by his family and community if he is outside the city walls begging, rather than inside being cared for. There is so much of his story that we don't know.

Jesus restores his sight and tells him to go. Go back into the city to show the priests he can be readmitted, go back to his family to become an economic help, not hinderance, go back to his previous life. But Bartimaeus follows Jesus and is probably not shy in telling people what has happened as we know he was not afraid to speak up. Jesus has a new disciple and evangelist, the crowd and existing disciples are taught that everyone, whoever they are, and whatever their circumstances are worthy of kindness and compassion, help and attention.

And that is our mission, not to wait for Jesus to show interest before we do, but to be active in our part of witnessing by doing, witnessing by speaking, witnessing by caring. We talk to the person, we look beyond the physical, we do not judge and we recognise that everyone has a story and a song, if we just take the time to listen and support.

### Hymn StF 618

1. Sacred the body God has created,  
temple of Spirit that dwells deep inside.  
Cherish each person; nurture creation.  
Treat flesh as holy, that love may abide.
  2. Bodies are varied, made in all sizes,  
pale, full of colour, both fragile and strong.  
Holy the difference, gift of the Maker,  
so let us honour each story and song.
  3. Love respects persons, bodies and  
boundaries.  
Love does not batter, neglect, or abuse.  
Love touches gently, never coercing.  
Love leaves the other with power to  
choose.
  4. Holy of holies, God ever loving,  
make us your temples; indwell all we do.  
May we be careful, tender and caring,  
so may our bodies give honour to you.
- Ruth C Duck

### Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

In the midst of everything going on in the world let us find a moment to be thankful to God:  
I am thankful for my life, the past, the present and the future;  
I am thankful for my health, even if it's been better than it is now;  
I am thankful for my family and friends, though they may be far away or not seen for a while;  
I am thankful for my church community, that nurtures me, cares for me, prays for me:

(From the New Zealand Prayer Book)

As the earth keeps turning, hurtling through space, and night falls and day breaks, let us remember people – waking, sleeping, being born, and dying – of one world and one humanity.

Loving God, we pray for the church in our world and its caring action that witnesses to your love.  
We offer you our deeds, our words and our lives **that we may be witnesses to your love.**

Loving God, we pray for the church in our world and for its caring words that witness to your love.  
We offer you our deeds, our words and our lives **that we may be witnesses to your love.**

Loving God, we pray for your church in our world, for all Christians, everywhere, that we may be one with your followers throughout the ages, whose ways of living and dying have witnessed to your love.

We pray that

our church life together  
our personal priorities  
our family life  
our political involvement  
our use of money  
our attitude to others  
our attitude to work

may all be effective witnesses to the Gospel of Christ, to his way of self-giving love and to the faith that nothing separates us from God's love.

We offer you our deeds, our words and our lives **that we may be witnesses to your love. Amen.**

### Hymn StF 652

1. Lord, we come to ask your healing,  
teach us of love;  
all unspoken shame revealing,  
teach us of love.  
Take our selfish thoughts and actions,  
petty feuds, divisive factions,  
hear us now to you appealing,  
teach us of love.

2. Soothe away our pain and sorrow,  
hold us in love;  
grace we cannot buy or borrow,  
hold us in love.  
Though we see but dark and danger,  
though we spurn both friend and stranger,  
though we often dread tomorrow,  
hold us in love.

3. Help us live in one another,  
bind us in love;  
stranger neighbour, father, mother –  
bind us in love.  
All are equal at your table,  
through your Spirit make us able  
to embrace as sister, brother,  
bind us in love.

Jean Holloway

### Blessing

May the light of God surround us.  
The love of God enfold us.  
The power of God protect us.  
The presence of God watch over us.  
Now and forever. **Amen**