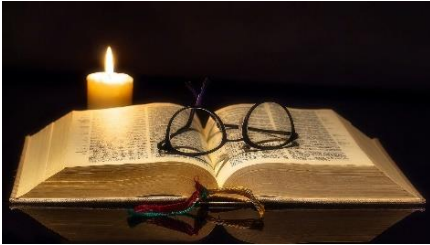


1st August 2021

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service set out below.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God our heavenly Father, thank you that you speak into the chaos, 'Let there be light.' and there is light. Thank you, Jesus, that you come as the light of the world among us, and that this light is the light and life of all humankind. Into our chaos and darkness speak today and bring your life, hope healing and forgiveness – we ask this for our whole world, and for ourselves. And as you shine on us, so may we shine, revealing your glory to our needy world.
Amen.

Song:

Light of the world
You stepped down into darkness
Open my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made
This heart adore You
Hope of a life spent with You

Glorious in Heaven above
Humbly You came
To the Earth You created
All for love's sake became poor
And here I am to worship

Here I am...

*And here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that You're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me*

Bridge:

I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross
I'll never know how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross

Here I am...

King of all days
Oh so highly exalted

Read: John 9:1-41.

God is Visible. *A summary of the talk given by Howard Wright.*

The disciples see a man born blind. Yet it's the disciples who cannot see! So, they ask Jesus, who should be judged for this man's blindness – him or his parents.

This a question still asked today. Who's to blame when things go wrong? Jesus is less interested in blaming; he is more focussed in putting things right.

The blame is simply: sin. Sin has damaged the world and its inhabitants in horrific ways, just watch the news whilst remembering that it was not supposed to be like this. The Kingdom of God into which we were invited to participate was rejected and darkness was embraced instead with awful consequences. We were blind to the light and life of God and instead embraced pride and selfishness which destroyed our relationship with God, and therefore with others, ourselves, and creation.

But Jesus has come to fix all this, and his focus is ahead to the cross and the redemption, the bringing back, of all things into his Kingdom.

In the Genesis story of creation, often alluded to by John, there was darkness and chaos, there's no discussion on it or debate about where it comes from, God just creates light! And here there is no discussion on the origin of the problem but an

offer of a solution – whatever we face, we can still live in the Kingdom and call for light!

We are all, with whatever consequence of sin we live with, are called to live to the glory of God, seeking healing such as God in his grace grants us this side of glory. We are to live as signs of his Kingdom.

Jesus calls for 'light' and the man is healed – he can see, and he believes. However, now he has a new problem: the blindness of others!



Those who knew him as blind, weren't sure he could be the same man – they were blind to the obvious healing and instead held back in the safer darkness of doubt. They want proof, and someone else to make the decision.

They took him to the Pharisees, the judge and jury of the day. The Pharisees applied their logic, and Jesus didn't fit their box. Jesus had clearly worked on the Sabbath. Therefore, Jesus is a sinner! However, if this man was actually blind from birth, surely this is an extraordinary miracle, and so there's further investigation.

His parents verify who he is, but otherwise abandon him – 'he's old

enough to speak for himself, ask him'!
The parents can see - and would surely be over-joyed for their son, and grateful to Jesus – but they stand-up for neither. They feared the anger of the Pharisees, more than their love of their son, or love for God, as revealed in Jesus. They see but won't yet believe.

The Pharisees demand the man tells his story again as they are desperate to find a flaw in his account – so blind are they to the miracle – they've tried to box Jesus and ended up trapped themselves – Jesus can't be the Messiah, can he?

We hear the man's wonderful testimony words: 'exactly who Jesus is and how this works, I don't know, but I do know this: I was blind and now I can see.'

This is all we are asked to declare. To say what we know. We can't explain the darkness, know completely who Jesus is, or how believing in him works, but we can say what we do know: 'I believe Jesus is God and this changes me.'

Some Pharisees had been unsure, but at the end they seem united in throwing the man out.

There is much in John about deciding and judgment. In this story, there is a judgement about the origin of this

man's blindness and about whether he is who he claims to be. It's all ultimately a judgement about Jesus – who is he, who will you say he is? Will you believe and receive?

The man regains his physical sight and gains spiritual sight. Jesus is Lord, King and God and the man believes and commits.

The Pharisees claim sight but are blind, and for this the consequences are severe! Read again 9:35-41.

If we will not believe in Jesus, we will be judged accordingly. Some, like many of the Pharisees are fixed in their blindness and not willing to discuss the matter, they've locked the doors and windows, and nothing can get in – Jesus may knock and invite but there's no answer and no hope.

We have these beautiful words in John's opening chapter: Read 1:9-14.

Believing has consequences! We gain life! Life in its fulness as we'll hear next week. But until we meet Jesus face-to-face, there will be challenges. This man was thrown out of his community and Jesus, himself, was crucified. Over the coming chapters we'll hear more about the rewards but also more about the challenges to following Jesus. It may not be an easy route but it is the best and with the best of company.

Prayers: I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

Collect: 9th after Trinity: Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**



The Lord's Prayer: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, COGS, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am and 9.30am. Further information is on our website or by ringing our vicar, Howard, 01420 563344.

If you know of others who would like to receive this, or you would rather not receive it; or if you find yourself isolated and not able to get neighbours, friends, or family to help, then ring Howard.

