

After all, this was the start of a brand-new life! When he opened his eyes, he saw the world for the very first time. It is almost perfect, but not quite because he can see the sky and the trees and his neighbours... but not the one who healed him. He doesn't know where Jesus is. Sometimes it is hard to see God.

Yet Jesus seeks him out (verse 35) and when he finds him, we can perhaps imagine this man singing *happy birthday* for a second time... the scales fall from the eyes of his heart and he cries out with joy "***I believe!***"

Jesus has delivered him from blindness once again – this time from the darkness of the soul to the joy of knowing Christ.

In the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, we might also find ourselves looking for answers or someone to blame. God hears our questions and holds our fears but what he offers us is something of far greater value: a Saviour who sees us when we can't find our way, who draws intimately near to us and touches us, who invites us to wash not only our hands but everything that holds us back from seeing his face.

When we are feeling lost and disoriented, we have a Father who seeks us out and finds us, a Saviour who holds us close and a Spirit who draws us into worship!

#### **Silent prayer**

*Focus on the image of Jesus holding the world as you pray for those who are suffering and for those who are caring for others at this time*

#### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **What a Friend We Have in Jesus (StF 531)**

*Sing or meditate on the words of this hymn*

**May the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen**

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22 March 2020



Burley in Wharfedale **Methodist** Church

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#### **Prayer**

In the stillness of these strange days,  
in the wilderness of waiting and wondering,  
in the face of an uncertain future,  
we come before You, Lord.

***Spend some time in quiet prayer being honest with God about your thoughts and emotions.***

We turn our eyes toward You.  
Open them that we might glimpse Your glory.  
It is beyond our human limitation to grasp the magnitude and majesty of all that You are, yet You choose to enter our world and our lives... perceptible in the beauty of all You have made, encountering us in unexpected moments, present in our suffering.

***Spend some time in quiet prayer praising God for the many ways you have perceived His goodness.***

We tune our hearts to Your grace.  
In stillness and silence,  
in the sight of skies blue and untraced,  
we are reminded that the busyness of life can push and pull and distract us from You.  
There is so much we take for granted and much of what we treasure is insignificant.  
When it is all stripped away You remain – Faithful and unchanging in your steadfast love.

***Spend some time bringing your own confessions to God in quiet prayer.***

We lift our hands to you,  
longing for the contact that has been denied but knowing we will never be denied your touch.  
Put our hands to your service in the coming days.  
Inspire us to put pens to paper,  
encourage us to pick up the phone,  
attend to us as we tend to our gardens,  
envelop us as we fold fingers in prayer.

***Spend some time in prayer without words, allowing a sense of God's love to wash over you.***

## John 9:1-41

As he 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 worshiped him. Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment 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

This Gospel reading brings us to a community in angst. The man blind from birth longs to see. In the first century, unseeing eyes meant a life of poverty and isolation. His parents are afraid - things are happening that they do not understand. The religious leaders are getting antsy because it feels like things are spinning beyond their control. The disciples are desperate for answers: *Why has this happened? Who can we blame? What sin has caused this affliction?*

This was a man unable to see Jesus, but that did not stop Jesus from seeing him. He was a man for whom social distance was a constant reality as he was shamed and judged for his affliction, but that did not stop Jesus from reaching out to him. Jesus mixes up saliva mud, rubs it on his eyes and sends the man to wash. I have to wonder if he washed for twenty seconds and I'm almost certain that he didn't sing *happy birthday*. Perhaps, however, we can imagine that he did!