

Welcome to this act of worship. As you pray, read and reflect, know that others worship with you.

**Call to Worship** Psalm 126: 4-6

Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb.

May those who sow in tears, reap with shouts of joy.

Those who go out weeping, bearing the seeds for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy,

Carrying their sheaves.

**Hymn** StF 116 Sing for God's glory Kathy Galloway

Sing for God's glory that colours the dawn of creation,  
racing across the sky, trailing bright clouds of elation;  
sun of delight  
succeeds the velvet of night,  
warming the earth's exultation.

Sing for God's power that shatters the chains that  
would bind us,  
searing the darkness of fear and despair that  
could blind us,  
touching our shame  
with love that will not lay blame, reaching out  
gently to find us.

Sing for God's justice disturbing each easy  
illusion,  
tearing down tyrants and putting our pride to  
confusion;  
lifeblood of right,  
resisting evil and slight,  
offering freedom's transfusion.

Sing for God's saints who have travelled faith's  
journey before us,  
who in our weariness give us their hope to  
restore us;  
in them we see the new creation to be,  
spirit of love made flesh for us.

**Prayers**

Thanksgiving Creator God, thank you for the gift of sight, which enables us to appreciate life and the wonders of your creation in a particular way. Give us grace to master the frustration that sometimes comes when things aren't as sharp as they once were.

Thank you too for the gift of insight, enabling us to understand both ourselves better and to see another's perspective, things which oil the wheels of good human relationships.

Thank you, Lord that you are a God of action and relationship too: You see and want to be seen by us.

Thank you for the amazing sights you have for us, if we are prepared to call on you.

Thank you that you are a God of healing, and whichever way you choose to act is always best.

Thank you, Lord. **Amen.**

Confession Loving God, we come with our fragile lives,  
knowing our weaknesses, and aware of our tendency to sin.

There are times we have not noticed what it is you have been showing us, because we are too distracted by other things, things that are not worthy of our attention.

Lord of mercy, we are sorry...

Cleanse us and forgive us, that we might have a fresh start with you today.

Wipe the dust from our eyes, and blow the fog from our minds.

May your Spirit bring release, clearing away all that hinders, and bring us back into your beautiful light.

Help us to know your presence with us today. In Jesus' name we ask. **Amen.**

**Lord's Prayer**

**Reading** Mark 10: 46-52 NIV Translation

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

“Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

**Hymn** StF 440 Amazing grace

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.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
his word my hope secures;  
he will my shield and portion be  
as long as life endures.

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!

And when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
and mortal life shall cease:  
I shall possess, within the veil,  
a life of joy and peace.

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.

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.

**Reflection**

The story of Bartimaeus is perhaps a familiar one but this is not just a story about Jesus’ miraculous restoration of human sight. It shines a light on the insight that Bartimaeus has about Jesus.

Previously, in Ch 8 of Mark’s gospel, Jesus heals and restores sight to another blind man, at Bethsaida, and in all the gospel stories afterwards, up until this one, the disciples, the crowd and the Jewish leaders are struggling to see who Jesus is....the awaited Messiah.

The disciples have flashes of insight...Peter declares Jesus to be the Messiah when Jesus asks him, ‘Who do you say that I am?’ but most of the time they just don’t get that it is the way of service and suffering that will characterize Jesus as Messiah. It is the blind men who ‘see’ who Jesus is, and their faith brings healing.

Now Jesus and his disciples are on the road from Jericho towards Jerusalem, only 15 miles away, and Jesus alone knows what lies ahead.....the cross. And on the roadside they encounter blind Bartimaeus.

Bartimaeus spent all his time sitting on the roadside, his beggar’s cloak spread out to receive the alms people tossed in his direction, in response to his pleas....a familiar sight to the locals.

But we realise that Bartimaeus knows something of Jesus; blind people often have very acute hearing.

Snatches of conversation from passers-by fell on Bartimaeus’ ears, stories of Jesus’ teaching and miracles of healing, others’ opinions and thoughts about Jesus.

Bartimaeus had time to think about these stories and his faith blossomed, unseen, unknown by others until the day when news of Jesus himself, approaching on the road, spurred Bartimaeus to action. His teacher was coming and Bartimaeus wasn’t going to let the chance of Jesus seeing him pass him by.

I wonder if sometimes we feel like we get stuck on the roadside, whilst others pass by on the journey of life and faith. Perhaps we may feel our journey has been interrupted by the hard knocks life, illness, separation, financial worries, worries and anxiety, all kinds of things which trouble us.

What did Bartimaeus do? Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus...a heartfelt cry, one which came from the depths of his being...urgent, needing to be heard because I feel that Bartimaeus knew that if only he could meet Jesus, his life would be different. Those overheard conversations about Jesus' miracles together with his own thoughts and desire, sowed the seeds of faith in Bartimaeus' heart, enabling him to cry out Jesus in his need.

Unlike Bartimaeus, we don't have to wait on the roadside for Jesus to pass by...for he is with us every moment of every day, ready to hear our cry, ready to respond.

Mark has it that Bartimaeus cries not Jesus' name but 'Son of David', a Messianic title. The disciples and the Jewish leaders have not understood who Jesus was and in contrast it is a blind, roadside beggar who had the insight to recognise Jesus as Messiah. The story symbolizes the ability of those who have faith in Jesus, to see the truth of who Jesus is.

And what did Jesus do when Bartimaeus stands before him? He asks him a question. 'What do you want me to do for you?' Why, we might ask, does Jesus ask such an obvious question of a blind man?

Jesus knew that being able to see would mean a complete change of circumstance for Bartimaeus. He would no longer be justified to beg on the roadside but Jesus lets Bartimaeus make his own decision about what to ask for. I think we can see what Bartimaeus' answer will be in the way he jumps up to respond to Jesus call, his beggar's cloak already left behind.

Bartimaeus' life is changed in an instant when, because of Bartimaeus' faith, Jesus restored his sight. No longer is he someone on the roadside going nowhere but a disciple of Jesus setting out on the way to a new, transformed life.

This story holds challenges for its readers....

The crowd did not want to listen to Bartimaeus' shouts, they wanted to silence him for he was considered a nobody in that society.

Are we as individuals, faith communities, a nation, willing to open our ears and eyes to the cries of the ignored, the unseen and unheard in our communities, to pay attention to their needs and desires, not presuming that we already know what's best for them? And then are we willing to stand and shout out against the injustices that prevail against them.

Jesus took the time to ask Bartimaeus what he could do for him and in doing so recognised his value and worth as a person, in front of the whole crowd. Can we look upon others as Jesus did, seeing value and worth in each one?

Are we willing to join Bartimaeus on the Way of discipleship, following Jesus even though, for him, the road led to Jerusalem and everything that happened there?

The way of discipleship is a costly one in terms of our own will and desires but God sends his Spirit, enabling us day by day to put one foot in front of another on our journey with him. May we put our trust in him. Amen

**Prayer:** I invite you to sit quietly and imagine that Jesus is standing before you, asking the same question that he asked Bartimaeus, 'What do you want me to do for you?'

What is your response?

### **Prayers for Others**

Softly, quietly, children die and mothers weep.

Softly, quietly, crops fail and wither in the land.

Softly, quietly, weapons are sold and taken up.

Softly, quietly, refugees pay the fixers and float on dangerous waters in hope  
Softly, quietly, the poor get poorer, the rich acquire more wealth.  
Softly, quietly, the ice melts and sea levels rise due to climate change  
Softly, quietly, drug deals are done in darkened rooms.  
Softly, quietly, lives are sold and passed along.  
Softly, quietly, death creeps in, decay takes over.

For we do not hear and we do not see, so we do not shout.

God, open our ears, prise open our eyes to see the trouble you see,  
to hear the torment you hear, and to cry out loud for justice in the land.

Let us hold the grieving mothers in our arms,  
send the good seed to grow, learn to live without damaging the planet  
fight the trade in weapons, welcome the refugees,  
speak up for the rights of the poor, demand justice among the nations,  
value each human life, end our dealing in death.

In all this, let us not be blind to what the world does, nor to what we can do.  
Let us not be deaf to the cries of those who need mercy, nor turn away from all who need our help.

Let us not be quiet as long as others suffer in silence, but shout out our solidarity with them.

Softly, quietly, the Holy Spirit comes among us,  
then with flames and like the wind stirs and moves us,  
opens our ears and eyes and gives us a voice to shout out for justice, goodness and peace  
throughout the earth.

Come, Holy Spirit, come. **Amen.**

**Hymn**            StF 563 O Jesus I have promised

1 O Jesus, I have promised  
to serve you to the end;  
Lord be forever near me,  
my Master and my Friend;  
I shall not fear the battle  
if you are by my side,  
nor wander from the pathway  
if you will be my Guide.

2 O let me feel you near me,  
the world is ever near;  
I see the sights that dazzle,  
the tempting sounds I hear;  
my foes are ever near me,  
around me and within;  
but, Jesus, now draw nearer,  
and shield my soul from sin.

3 O let me hear you speaking  
in accents clear and still,  
above the storms of passion,  
the murmurs of self-will;  
O speak to reassure me,  
to hasten or control!  
Lord, speak, and make me listen,  
O Guardian of my soul!

4 O Jesus, you have promised  
to all who follow you  
that where you are in glory  
your servant shall be too;  
and, Jesus, I have promised  
to serve you to the end;  
O give me grace to follow,  
my Master and my Friend!

### **Blessing & sending**

Lord, may we look out into your world with your eyes, listen with your ears, and love in your name.  
And may the blessing of God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, be with us always. Amen.