

**Lent Liturgy (4) – Soul Food “Nourished by unconditional Love and forgiveness”**

*Give us this day our daily bread to repair our soul.* We have broken bits and worn out bits and missing bits; bits that make us much less whole...

*Give us this day our daily bread to repair our soul.* Life challenges, damages, hurts and scars us, body mind and spirit all...

*Give us this day our daily bread to repair our soul.* Be our balm, the loving thread that gently tends our wounds, the thread and patch that makes us whole.

O Lord our God, on this Lenten journey,  
**repair our broken fragile bits. Amen.**

**Call to Worship**

As we come to Worship you, Loving God,  
we remember with thankful hearts our families, and the care of our mothers,  
and the many people who take on a caring role for us, through our journeys of life.

We thank you today for all those who care for us and remember those who are now with you, who have cared for us in the past. Lord Jesus, you knew the love and care of parents, help us to love and care for others.

As we worship you in our homes, together now, help us to learn more about what it is  
To love our families and friends as you love us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen.**

**Prayer**

Today we thank you God, for the gift of Caring and mothering across our community. God is a Mother to us, comforting and carrying us in her arms. **Gentle, patient God – thank you for your tender care.** God will never forget us and he knows each one of us just as a mother knows her own children. In God's presence we are quiet and at peace, and we are able to trust god like a child safe in it's carer's arms. **Gentle, patient God – thank you for your tender care.** Jesus Spoke of himself as a mother, longing to wrap his arms around us like a mother-hen gathering her chicks under her wings. We thank you Lord for this image, and your great love and care for us. **Gentle, patient God – thank you for your tender care. Amen.**

*And now a prayer for those for whom Mother's Day is difficult day:*

Loving Father, we pray for those for whom Mothering Sunday is a time of heartache rather than celebration. We pray for those who have never known their mother, or whose Mothers have died. **Heavenly Father, bless them with your love.** We pray for those who long to be Mothers but as yet have not had their own children. **Heavenly Father, bless them with your love.** We pray for those who struggle with the way their children have chosen to live their lives. **Heavenly Father, bless them with your love.**

We pray for those who have a difficult relationship with their mother. **Heavenly Father, bless them with your love.** May they have the comfort of knowing that your love for them is constant, your understanding is perfect, your compassion is never-ending. **Amen.**

**Prayer of Confession: -**

Merciful God, in the things we have done, and the things we have not done. Our faith has been weak, our discipleship hesitant, our commitment poor. Mothering God, In your mercy, forgive us. We have not worshiped you as we should, served you as you desire, or obeyed you as you command, and yet still you offer us unconditional care. Nurturing God, in your mercy, forgive us. Merciful God, forgive us, cleanse us, restore and renew us.

*We pause for a few moments to lift confessions of heart and mind to God.*

Assure us once more of your forgiveness, for we are truly sorry, and send us out in newness of life, to live, care and nurture others to your glory. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

### Reading:

#### **John 9: 1 – 21:**

9 As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' 3 Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. 4 We<sup>[a]</sup> must work the works of him who sent me<sup>[b]</sup> while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' 6 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, 7 saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. 8 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?' 9 Some were saying, 'It is he.' Others were saying, 'No, but it is someone like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.' 10 But they kept asking him, 'Then how were your eyes opened?' 11 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.' 12 They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know.' 13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14 Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 15 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.' 16 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. 17 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.' 18 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 19 and asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' 20 His parents answered, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 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.'

### Sermon

I once met a pastor in America called Max. He was blind. He became proficient in reading and writing braille. At school he was musical and enjoyed being part of the community, where he made many friends. He described life as living out a number of vocations. And he advocated strongly that for him and so many people – 'healing happens' when we have felt loved and welcomed, and when we get a sense that what we **think** and **Say** and **do**, matters. Max spoke powerfully about the hurdles he faced when he felt a call to be a pastor at his church. People asked him questions like: How can you be a pastor if you can't see? How could you serve communion? How will you read the bible? How will you visit people?

Not one question was about God's love calling him to be pastor and serve. Later those affirmations came, but like the Pharisees in our passage from John's Gospel, the first reaction was to say – 'How could that be possible?' because, because, because... Max's powerful testimony was that "the love of Jesus came in the form of supportive people along the way who believed in my abilities to work as a

pastor, to raise a family, **to be the person God called me to be**". He was cared, nurtured, loved and welcomed by his community.

Some of you at home today don't have perfect vision, some have very little vision, some are blind. We take it for granted that all people can see, that all people can see in the same way as us. Our reading today from the Gospel of John tells us that Christ calls us to look beyond what we can see, or do, to become the people that God would have us be. The Blind man knew that transformation could come for a single encounter with Christ. Christ came not to just transform the sight of the blind man, but to transform all the world, to be the light in the darkness, our beautiful Saviour.

So we have the man who was blind from birth. Not only is he blind, but he has to deal with prejudice of his context and society, who would have felt strongly that he was blind because of either his own SIN or the SIN of his parents! Jesus comes along and the first thing he does is drop to floor, pick up wet mud, and rubs it into your eyes. And he has the audacity to command you to go and wash the mud off your eyes! But the man makes no protest, and he faithfully goes to the pool of Siloam, and washes his face clean. The man having been sent, then returns proclaiming not only that has a clean face, but that he can see. Then he gets sent by Jesus to proclaim the truth about his healing with all those he meets along the way. He was Blind, and now he sees.

**Recognition** was the key for pastor Max. And I think the notion of Recognition is key here in this passage. Once the man receives sight, even his own friends and neighbours don't recognise him – even though it protests on several occasions that he is the person they know. It's a bit odd – that sometimes we know someone really well, really intimately, because of the context we know them in, but when that changes it can sometimes be very hard to recognise that same person. Clearly the man, now able to see, is completely unrecognizable. How often do we define people because of the challenges they face? We often do the same to ourselves, allowing our past setbacks, disappointments or failures to shape how we see ourselves. It seems easier to define ourselves and others by their problems or our problems, rather than the possibilities of **what they could be**.

Although the transformation of this Blind man into one who can see, is a very real miracle performed by Jesus, it is also clear as the passage goes on, that Blindness is a Metaphor. Some blindness is physical, but we can also be blind intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. The man has a new zest and zeal in life, once crouching on the street corner, begging for money, now he is up and active, out across his context proclaiming his new physical, emotional and spiritual freedom. Because he believed, Christ revealed, healed. Jesus is able to turn our mess, our hurts, our deficiencies – to make us whole and fit to work for his kingdom, opening our eyes to his love, through the nature of our caring, loving community and through prayer, discipleship and worship. Paul writing to the Ephesians reminds us that we are often blind, to the darkness that surrounds us in life, and in the world that we inhabit. Christ is the light and call us to be that light for all people. The Gospel writer, draws a sharp contrast between the blind man who now sees, and the Pharisees who will never see. Because the cured man sees through the eyes of faith – a true faith that the Pharisees will never grasp. How true is your faith? How blinded to the truth of Christ's life, death and resurrection are you? Do we need the cataracts of our pride removed, that we might see the truth more fully?

So where does this leave us, here today, on Mothering Sunday, in 2025? If we, like the Pharisees, are blind to the truth, Christ calls us out. However, if we open our hearts to God's healing grace, making us aware of our blindness, open to Christ's Healing, and responsive to the Spirit's call to proclaim, then the vale can be lifted and we can be freed. Freed to be the people that God calls us to be, Wants us to be,

The people that God declares we must become. Lent draws the faithful, sometimes kicking and screaming – to a spiritual period of preparation and renewal, in anticipation of the coming jubilation of Easter.

So today **How is your vision?** Jesus has a cure for all our vision problems. But he doesn't want to give us glasses – he knows we'll put them down somewhere and we'll forget where we've put them. He wants to transform us, that we might see the world in the way that he sees the world! Nurtured, cared for and loved by God and our community here. And what a glorious vision that is. A place where we become the **people God called you to be...** Where hearts are open. Where eyes see the Christ, the light, the crucified and the risen. Saviour, Redeemer, Friend. That the Blind may see. **Amen.**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Lord Jesus Christ, light of the world, you give sight to the blind and to those who think they see but do not. Open the eyes of our hearts to see and believe that we may worship you as Lord.

Lord we pray for a clear vision for our Church . . . Lord hear our prayer . . . **Graciously hear our prayer.**

Lord we pray for a clear vision for our world . . . Lord hear our prayer . . . **Graciously hear our prayer.**  
Lord we pray for a clear vision for those who are ill, and poorly at this time . . . lifting to you those who are close to our hearts and minds this day.

O Lord, comforter of the sorrowing and strength of the weak, hear our prayers for all who suffer illness and distress that, whatever their needs, they may receive and know your help and comfort. And that we and all the world, may see truly your clear vision of love, nature and care. In Jesus name we pray. **Amen.**

### **Lords Prayer**

*We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:*

Our father in heaven, Hallowed be your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done,  
On earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive our sins, As we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, Now and forever. **Amen.**

### **Blessing**

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. May the Blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

Rest, remain and abide with you all, With those you love, And those you are called to love, now, in the name of Christ. **Amen.**