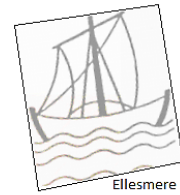


**Northwest Christchurch, Hororata and
Ellesmere Parishes**

**Church@Home Service
19 March 2023
4th Sunday Lent**



Today's Church@Home service has some song options – feel free to make your own choice. (or play them all as you feel led.)

This is the day that the Lord has made -
Let us be glad and rejoice in it!

Today our theme is **A BRAVE NEW WORLD**

Take a moment or two to be still and ask God to be present with you as you worship.

Opening Song Praise my soul the King of Heaven

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyRIVbdsi4c>

Or Open the eyes of my heart Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fm-zb-AH8Xc>

Song of Praise – John 1:1-5,10-14,16 (with Glory) (NZPB P. 67)

In the beginning was the Word
And the Word was with God;
And the Word was God:
He was in the beginning with God.

**All things were made through Him:
And without Him
was not anything made that was made.**

In Him was life
And the life was the light of the human race.
The light shines in the darkness:
And the darkness has never overcome it.

**He was in the world,
And the world was made through Him:
Yet the world knew Him not.
He came to His own home:
And His own people would not receive Him.**

But to all who received Him,
Who believed in his name:
He has given power to become children of God.

**They were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh:
Nor of any human will, but of God.**

And the Word became flesh:
And dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

**We have seen His glory:
Glory as of the only Son from the Father.
And from His fulness we have all received:
Even grace upon grace.**

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
And to the Holy Spirit
As it was in the beginning is now
And shall be forever. Amen**

[A time of confession](#)

Happy are those whose sins are forgiven,
whose wrongs are pardoned.
I will confess my sins to the Lord
I will not conceal my wrong doings.

A time of silence as we bring our sins and the sins of the world to the Lord.

God forgives and heals us:
**We need your healing, merciful God: Give us true repentance.
Some sins are plain to us; Some escape us, Some we cannot face.
Forgive us;
Set us free to hear your word to us; Set us free to serve you.**

God forgives us. Forgive others, forgive yourself.
Through Christ God has put away our sin; approach our God in peace.

Almighty God, who pardons all who truly repent, Forgive us our sins,
Strengthen us by the Holy Spirit, and keep us in life eternal,
Through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

Sentence and Prayer for the day

"I am the light of the world", says the Lord; "those who follow me will have the light of life."

John 8:12

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, to all baptised in Your name, that we may turn to good whatever lies ahead. Give us passion, give us fire; make us transform the world from what it is, to what You have created it to be. This we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1st Reading – Ephesians 5:8-14

⁸ For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— ⁹ for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰ Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; ¹³ but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴ for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

'Sleeper, awake!
Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.'

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel John 9:1-38

¹ 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^[a] must work the works of him who sent me^[b] 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. He will speak for himself.' ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus^[c] to be the Messiah^[d] would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ Therefore his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'

²⁴ 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.' ²⁵ He answered, 'I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.' ²⁶ They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' ²⁷ 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?' ²⁸ Then they reviled him, saying, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' ³⁰ The man answered, 'Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.' ³⁴ They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'^[e] ³⁶ He answered, 'And who is he, sir?^[f] Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' ³⁷ Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' ³⁸ He said, 'Lord,^[g] I believe.' And he worshipped him.

This is the Gospel of Christ.

Praise to Christ, the Word.

Reflection for SUNDAY 19 March 2023

Ephesians 5:8-41, John 9:1-38

A BRAVE NEW WORLD

(An audio recording of this sermon is available at the following link:

<https://www.northwestchchparish.org.nz/sound>)

Moya

The phrase, "A Brave New World" comes from Shakespeare's play "The Tempest": 'Oh brave new world that has such people in it!' on arrival at an unknown island after a storm. But what is the Biblical equivalent of a brave new world? We are in it! 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ – new creation!" That sounds something good.

I am going to talk of three pictures in the Bible of this new creation, this brave new world, and then focus on the Ephesians reading: 5:8-14.

If you can shut your eyes for one minute before continuing and then open them again, you have the gospel picture we have of the healing of the man born blind. Imagine forty years of darkness. No seeing a mother's smile, no recognition of body language, no colours, no flowers, unaware of sunshine and all the things we take for granted. Then Jesus comes, makes mud with his spittle, the man goes and washes his eyes (not surprisingly!) and can SEE. What an amazing experience that was for him. I love this feisty man who clings to the truth that this man Jesus is from God or he would not have been able to effect such a healing. And this in the face of serious opposition and eventual rejection by the authorities. When Jesus hears of that, he finds the man and reveals himself to him as the Son of Man, a Messianic title from the book of Daniel, and the man believes and worships. As the old hymn says, "I once was blind but now I see". This is a picture of what it means to be in the new world of faith, of being 'in Christ'.

When we come to Jesus, acknowledge the truth of our need for him and yield to his Lordship, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who is the agent of the new life. The need for the Spirit to be active is seen in the second picture that Glenda talked about a couple of weeks ago, that of being 'born anew' or 'born from above' or 'born again', all possible translations of the terms Jesus used. To be born is beyond our own ability to make it happen, it is something that happens to us. When a mother's body begins to bring the baby to birth, he or she leaves the darkness and constriction of the womb and enters into a whole new world. Baby's first breath is a miracle in itself! In 1980's when I was in hospital with broken bones that caused a temporary paralysis in my right foot, I was able to lead the elderly lady in the next bed in a prayer of repentance and faith in Jesus which she was happy to do. My brother came to visit later that day and we noticed with joy the first slight movement in my paralysed foot and he said, "There is joy in the angels of God over one sinner who repents!" What made him say that I have no idea but it confirmed to me that Stevie, the dear lady, was indeed "in Christ". She had entered the new world.

The third Biblical picture is to be "transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light by the mercy of God and the forgiveness of sins", as Paul tells us. I remember a saying, "No-one can draw a boundary between darkness and light but they are, on the whole tolerably distinguishable!" Yes indeed, we can see darkness all around us in personal lives and in the news. At present, I am grieving the birth of a dear friend's great-grandson into most unfavourable circumstances and am praying for this little boy. There are consequences to every decision and every act, whether we like it or not.

When daylight comes there is colour, freedom, warmth, and new life and we are meant to be living lives in the light.

This brings me to the Ephesians reading, where Paul says, "you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord". Notice he doesn't say, "in darkness" but "you were "darkness", it was a condition of the whole life, just as to be "light" is meant to be a condition of the whole life. He calls us, "children of light" and says its fruit is in "all goodness, righteousness and truth". Our lives are to be noticeably different from those who are darkness. Paul tells us to "find out what pleases the Lord". Living a life to please the Lord means to be living in freedom, joy, love and peace, doing what he gives us to do. Jesus said that he came to give life in abundance. So why so often do we fail to experience the "fullness of life" that he promised and the experience of real change that these Biblical pictures give us?

Paul says, "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness" which can mean the acts of non-believers, but I think can also mean deeds of darkness in our own lives. We can probably all look back on things that were said or thought or done for which we are ashamed or sad. If not, we might be like a man I once shared the gospel with, who said categorically, "I have never sinned!" But then he paused and said, "I tell a lie (!); I was once cruel to a cat!" He needed Jesus, though whether he ever came to him I don't know. The Holy Spirit was at work in him and is always at work in us who believe, but we can grieve him by holding on to unconfessed sin, which will prevent us experiencing the fullness of God's life. I am not talking about the General Confession that we say each week but thinking of specific sins, actions, words or thoughts that were not "good, righteous and truthful", and which have never been acknowledged to another. James says, "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed". It can be to one of the clergy or to a trusted believing friend. We all have the ability to pray forgiveness for another by the presence of the Holy Spirit in us.

I remember years ago, a church friend telling me she had been to see our vicar about something that was troubling her and he advised her to spend time writing down all she could remember that she had done wrong in her life and bring it to him for confession. She did write down everything she could think of but said going to our vicar with it was the hardest thing she had ever done. When she got there, he burnt the paper without reading it and pronounced absolution for her and she said it made all the difference to her spiritual life. Paul says, "Everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is the light that makes everything visible". When we bring our sins to the Lord and expose them, they are immediately cleansed and we are freed from bondage to them, free to live in the Spirit the "righteousness, peace and joy" that are the qualities of the Kingdom of God. We become open to the Spirit in new ways and can bring light to others in our everyday lives.

This can take a lifetime! It was forty-two years on the 7th of this month since I broke before the Lord, paralysed in sin, and received his complete acceptance but I am still dealing with barriers to the work of the Holy Spirit in me and it only ends at our death. As when Lazarus came out of the tomb, and Jesus said, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go", I am still removing grave clothes! If you want more of God or struggle to find the freedom of the new life we have been given, take some time to deal with specific sin and trust the Lord to fulfil his promise of abundant life.

Let's pray: Thank you, dear Lord, for your forgiveness of every sin and the power of your blood to cleanse us completely. Come, Holy Spirit, and fulfil in and through us the new life, described so vividly in the Scriptures, and which you promise to all who believe. Amen.

Response song: **Amazing Grace**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIYvT745alg>

OR **Create in me a clean heart**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vcMHRkINMc>

The Affirmation of Faith (or listen to: **This I believe (Hillsong)**)

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of the People

The following prayers are adapted from [Auckland Diocese Prayers](#)

Openness to God requires us to see beyond ourselves and to move out of our comfort zones. Today we have listened as Jesus heals the blindness of those who are humble and confronts the blindness of those who are proud and conceited.

Let us gather our collective prayers and enter into a time of short silence.

For the Church – that anointed as priest, prophet, and king, all may be as Christ, the Anointed One, in the world today.

(Silence) Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For openness – that government, social agencies, and all churches, may be transparent in their dealings, faithful in their service, and recognise their need for honesty when they fail the least of their brothers and sisters.

(Silence) Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For our parish communities and for all Christians; that we may always seek to grow in love for God and one another, seeking justice and reconciliation and sharing what we have with generosity.

(Silence) Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For all those affected by Cyclone Gabrielle, that they may feel comfort and safety despite the tragedy brought by this disaster. We pray for people who will be grieving the loss of loved ones as well as of homes and livelihoods. We pray for our Prime Minister and our government and for local authorities across affected regions as they respond to the tragedy and the complexity of this disaster.

(Silence) Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those affected by the earthquake in Turkey & Syria – that people of all nations may come together in solidarity & prayer to support all those who have lost their homes and loved ones. May God give them strength and hope and may they receive the practical help they need.

(Silence) We pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For all who face challenges in life – that those who are challenged by physical challenges or disabilities may be supported in their ability to live fully.

(Silence) Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For all God's faithful people, seeking to deepen their commitment to Jesus in this time of Lent – may we ponder over God's Word on our journey of conversion and renewal, reflecting on the death and resurrection of Christ.

(Silence) Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For our local community of ... (an opportunity to pray for your local parish and neighbourhood)

Concluding Prayer

Graciously look upon your Church, O God, which you have enlightened with the Christian faith and anointed with the oil of gladness. By the power of your Holy Spirit, open our eyes and deepen our faith that we may confess our faith in Jesus, the Lord, and the Light of the world, who lives and reigns forever and ever. **Amen**

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven
Holy 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
Save us from the time of trial
But deliver us from evil
For the kingdom the pow'r and the glory
Are Yours now and forever
Amen

Song: The King of Love my Shepherd is

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWfZ-8s71-k>

Final Prayer

Most loving God, creator and redeemer,

We give You thanks for the privilege of meeting in your name wherever we are and how ever we gather.

Spirit of justice, creator Spirit; help us to make and keep this country a home for all its different peoples, and grant to our government and all its representatives imagination, skill and energy that there may grow amongst us aroha and peace.

Through Christ, and with all Your saints,

We offer ourselves and our lives to Your service.

Send us out in the power of Your Spirit,

To stand with You in Your world.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, the servant,

Our friend and brother. Amen

Final Song: Shine Jesus Shine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwEWPWFI7nc>

Blessing

May Christ who out of defeat brings new hope and new alternatives, bring you new life and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you all and those you love and care for. Amen.

Dismissal

Go now to love and serve the Lord, Go in Peace

Amen. We go in the name of Christ