

The Lord's Day Worship

Dear Family of God – this are trying days in God's beloved world. As Christ's church, sustained by the Holy Spirit, we have gifts and a call by which to care for one another and for our neighbors. Worship in which we encounter our living God and know ourselves connected to the body continues. We will expand our worship into our homes, knowing that as we read the same Scriptures, reflect on our pastor's telling of the gospel, and share in the same prayers, we are held together.

If you are worshiping today simply with this print order, be encouraged to prepare for a time of devotion with God that remains special on the Lord's Day. How do you make Christmas dinner or a birthday special at home? Maybe do some of the same things. Put on a favorite scarf. Light a candle, or three. If you are gathering for worship with others in your home, put a cloth on the dining table around which to gather, and take turns reading the Scriptures and prayers aloud. If you have children in the home, it might be special for them to stay in their jammies – or it might help to dress for worship. See what works best for you. Have "refreshments" or Sunday dinner in the crock pot ready. If it is just you, enjoy this intimate time with God, perhaps start a journal in which to jot your worship reflections or prayers week to week. You can also call a friend or family member and on speakerphone share in the worship order together. Grab your favorite Bible. Brew a good cup of coffee or tea, make cocoa for children. Establish some new home worship routines that will become precious to you during this season. Know that as you listen, pray, reflect, remember others, you do so in concert with our congregational family.

GATHERING:

Lighting of the Candle As you light a candle (or turn on your reading lamp), say:
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Prayer: Gracious God, our way in the wilderness, guide us by your Word, and minister to us with your Holy Spirit, so that we may be reformed, restored, renewed through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.¹

Psalm 23 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want; he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Confession: God of mercy, you sent Jesus Christ to seek and save the lost. We confess that we have strayed, or feel far from you. We are misled by the world, and place our trust in things other than you. We have failed our neighbors in justice and love. Have mercy, O God. Bring us home to you by the paths of righteousness that we might abide in your care, and reflect your love to the world. (continue to pray silently here, confiding in God your sins and needs). Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

¹ Liturgy adapted from the *Book of Common Worship*, John Knox Press, 2018.

Assurance of Pardon: Listen so that you may live: The steadfast love of the Lord never fails. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! The peace of Christ be with you.

GOD'S WORD

Gospel Lesson: John 9:1-15 (NLT)

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. ²“Rabbi,” his disciples asked him, “why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?”

³“It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. ⁴We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us.^[a] The night is coming, and then no one can work. ⁵But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man’s eyes. ⁷He told him, “Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam” (Siloam means “sent”). So the man went and washed and came back seeing! ⁸His neighbors and others who knew him as a blind beggar asked each other, “Isn’t this the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹Some said he was, and others said, “No, he just looks like him!” But the beggar kept saying, “Yes, I am the same one!” ¹⁰They asked, “Who healed you? What happened?” ¹¹He told them, “The man they call Jesus made mud and spread it over my eyes and told me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash yourself.’ So I went and washed, and now I can see!” ¹²“Where is he now?” they asked. “I don’t know,” he replied.

¹³Then they took the man who had been blind to the Pharisees, ¹⁴because it was on the Sabbath that Jesus had made the mud and healed him. ¹⁵The Pharisees asked the man all about it. So he told them, “He put the mud over my eyes, and when I washed it away, I could see!” ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, “This man Jesus is not from God, for he is working on the Sabbath.” Others said, “But how could an ordinary sinner do such miraculous signs?” So there was a deep division of opinion among them. ¹⁷Then the Pharisees again questioned the man who had been blind and demanded, “What’s your opinion about this man who healed you?” The man replied, “I think he must be a prophet.”

¹⁸The Jewish leaders still refused to believe the man had been blind and could now see, so they called in his parents. ¹⁹They asked them, “Is this your son? Was he born blind? If so, how can he now see?” ²⁰His parents replied, “We know this is our son and that he was born blind, ²¹but we don’t know how he can see or who healed him. Ask him. He is old enough to speak for himself.” ²²His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who had announced that anyone saying Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue. ²³That’s why they said, “He is old enough. Ask him.”

²⁴So for the second time they called in the man who had been blind and told him, “God should get the glory for this, because we know this man Jesus is a sinner.” ²⁵“I don’t know whether he is a sinner,” the man replied. “But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!”

Reflection

For discussion with others, or personal reflection (maybe journal, or take a brief walk):

- What are some of the ways that we feel limited or blind as humans?
- What does Jesus’ response to the blind man – especially on the Sabbath when he was not supposed to be “working” - reveal about how God feels toward us in our needs?
- What are our experiences of grace and healing that have “displayed God’s work?”

RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn: Amazing Grace *You can sing this aloud, or reflect on these cherished words, underling the lines that are most meaningful to you today.*

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.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear, the hour I first believed.

Through many dangers toils and snares, I have already come.
'Tis 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've first begun.

Offering Ourselves to God

You can still send your tithes in to the church by mail or online banking. But there are additional ways to offer our hearts to God in response to this message. Discuss or reflect – who are those blind or in need in our community right now? How can we express the compassion for them that Jesus displayed to the blind man? Take a moment now or after worship to phone one person who needs to hear encouragement that Jesus sees and loves him or her.

Prayers *If you are worshipping with others, you may take turns reading lines. If you are worshipping personally, pause after each line and remember particular related needs in your family, town, and in the news today. Please remember to contact the pastor and church if you have needs to share.*

Jesus, remember us when you come into your kingdom. Your kingdom come, your will be done.

For your church around the world this day, we ask new life.

For all who are carrying out ministries in your church, we ask wisdom and strength.

For Christians in every land, we ask new unity in your name during this time of need.

For Jews, Muslims, peoples of all faiths, we ask blessing as we care for your world together.

For those struggling with despair, doubt or worry, we ask your faithful love.

For the leaders of our country and our world, we ask your guidance.

For people who suffer and sorrow and are ill, we ask your healing peace.

For those we know who need your special care, we name them now and ask your abundant mercy: *Name aloud or in your heart those in need, and your needs.*

As we pour out our hearts in prayer, O God, lead us to pour out our lives in service to you – ever trusting in your guidance, ever following your way, all in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the glory, and the power forever. Amen.

Charge and Blessing

Place your trust in the God who sees your need and showers compassion upon you. See others through the compassionate eyes of Christ, and demonstrate God's love to them. May the steadfast love of God, the abundant grace of Jesus Christ, and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit be with you this day and always. Amen.