

## CIRCUIT SERVICE FOR JULY 3<sup>RD</sup> 2022 – REV LESLEY MARTIN

Call to Worship: Psalm 107 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.

Gracious and Holy God we draw near to you this day; not warily but still carefully, for to follow your way brings death – death to our selfishness, death to our pride, death to our arrogance. Draw near to us God of resurrection. Beyond death is new life, a life we are called to live each day, dying to self and living to you. And this is all in your strength, for which we pray in the name of Jesus – whose cross is both dead wood and living hope. Amen

STF 440 Amazing grace <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYMLMj-SibU>

<p>1 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.</p> <p>2 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!</p> <p>3 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.</p>	<p>4 The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures; he will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.</p> <p>5 And, when this heart and flesh shall fail and mortal life shall cease, I shall possess within the veil a life of joy and peace.</p> <p>6 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.</p> <p>John Newton (1725–1807) (<i>alt.</i>)</p>
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### Mark 10 v 46 – 52

And that is the last you hear of Bartimaeus!

Poem: Red bricks, grey slate, cream road. My eyes ached, same old walls, same old houses, old churches, old ships, old railings. Everything was old, no grass or trees. I was sick for want of the countryside. I looked around me. My eyes were drawn to a solitary figure walking slowly. I saw in the figure's hand a white stick. Blindness. I imagined the eternal blackness. The figure turned into another street, tapping, feeling for the next shape, dependent of the white stick. I wanted to help him. What use was I? Just to show him the next corner.

Prayer: Creator God we thank you for all that we see of beauty in your world; for sunsets and morning skies, for flowers and animals, for smiling faces. We thank you for vision that comes not just from sight but from a soul suffused with your light. Forgive us when our souls voyage through your enchanted world with a barren stare, not seeing, not rejoicing. Not assisting those with needs. We are sorry and give thanks that through Jesus and the love of God we are forgiven. Lead us Kindly light on your way. Amen

The next hymn is usually sung at Advent but we sing it here, remembering that Jesus brings light to the world and our role is to light the way for others.

STF 174 Light a candle in a darkened place <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2saZ9kw30g>

<p>1 Light a candle in a darkened place, in its flame see hope on every face, Christ our Saviour will be born, heralding a brand new dawn, so let it burn.</p> <p>2 In the darkness, see the coming light, Word of God speaks through the darkest night, keep a watch, the time is near, time for hope and not for fear, so let it burn.</p> <p>3 Stepping through each page of history, prophets contemplate this mystery, celebrate the coming King, words of joy and hope they bring, so let it burn.</p>	<p>4 In the desert now the waiting's done, make things ready for your King, says John, see, his glory is revealed, and the hope for all is sealed, so let it burn.</p> <p>5 Mary found true favour with the Lord, yet she trembled at his strange reward, knew this was the special One, hope for many through God's Son, so let it burn.</p> <p>6 Do not fear, today I bring good cheer, Jesus Christ, the Saviour now is here, God has lit his flame of love, through his Son from Heaven above. So let it burn.</p> <p>Clare Stainsby (<i>b.</i> 1959)</p>
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## SERMON

It may seem like ages ago now but the Platinum Jubilee was only 4 weeks ago and it still sits in my memory, as it may do yours too, as a time of joyful celebration. There were so many good things about the Jubilee but one in particular was to share via Television the service of worship at Westminster Abbey, filled with a selection of people of importance – NHS workers, Service providers, royalty. Everyone was dressed in new clothes, or if their clothes were not new, they were their best clothes, or Number One uniforms, cleaned and shining, And there waiting to welcome the royalty at the door were the members of the clergy dressed in their robes of office. Nobody slouched, nobody scratched their heads, nobody wiped their nose with their sleeve. This was an important occasion and people behaved and dressed appropriately. As I deliver this sermon today I have dressed appropriately in my preaching robe, I will stand straight and not slouch, I will not scratch my head nor wipe my nose on my sleeve!

So, wearing my preaching robe, the text I am preaching on that you heard earlier is about Blind Bartimaeus. Mark tells us that he is a beggar. We can only guess, but he is presumably slouched as he sits by the roadside begging, he presumably has scratched a fair bit and has wiped his nose on his sleeve. As was usual for beggars at that time his cloak had more than likely been spread out on the floor in front of him for passers-by to throw coins into. So you can imagine how stained and filthy it would have been.

Jesus was leaving Jericho and had a large crowd with him, some of them probably citizens of Jericho itself. The passage immediately following this incident with Bartimaeus tells of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey which highlights this incident on the edge of Jericho.

I like the order in which this meeting between Jesus and Bartimaeus happens. It is kick-started by Bartimaeus who shouts "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!". Jesus on his way to Jerusalem is therefore identified, by this blind beggar, as Son of David, identified as the Messiah in the prologue to the Passion narrative in Jerusalem. After he shouts out the crowd sternly ordered him to be quiet. Typical perhaps? Don't make a scene. The crowd weren't happy with the beggar's behaviour, it's outrageous. Mark tells us "many rebuked him and told him to be quiet". Fairly typical I suppose then and now, nobody likes the status quo being disturbed. What happens next is that Bartimaeus shouted even louder "Son of David, have mercy on me". It's at that point that Jesus stood still.... Not unlike the situation of the woman who had been bleeding 12 years who touched the hem of his cloak and Jesus stops and says "who touched me". That's the second time he is in a crowd and ignoring the crowd Jesus actually stops for ONE person. Good man! But I wonder how the crowd felt when Jesus stopped this huge entourage and started a personal conversation with this beggar...annoyed?

Jesus tells them "Call him here". Jesus didn't shout back. He gave instructions to those around him to bring Bartimaeus to him... and of course we can read into the text that as followers of Christ we are all called to bring people to him, whatever their situation or need. Those who were initially insulting the beggar are ordered to escort him to Jesus for an 'audience'...nice touch that. The blind man responds to them by throwing his robe aside; he doesn't need it any more, he won't have to beg any more, a new life is on offer. Jesus asks him "What do you want me to do for you?". That could perhaps appear to be a tasteless or heartless question if we weren't so used to hearing this gospel passage. I mean, fancy asking a blind man what he wants from the renowned healer! Is it not evident to everyone what the blind man wants? Well, Bartimaeus has no hesitation: "let me see again". And Jesus heals him saying "Go, your faith has made you well". What faith? Well, faith that Jesus has the power of God to heal. Faith that Jesus has compassion on the poor, which included him. Faith and confidence that Jesus is the Son of David, a messianic title, and he accepts Jesus as Lord.

And so this incidence concludes with Bartimaeus regaining his sight and following Jesus on the way....'the way' meaning not just the actual journey to Jerusalem but the way of this new religion.

And I want to talk about robes: The royal robe of Jesus which the Romans cast lots for at the foot of the cross, made so perfectly that they did not want to cut it up. The robe of Jesus that healed a woman by just its touch..though of course it was not the robe that healed.. In the next chapter of Mark the robes of the disciples were thrown over the donkey, others' robes were strewn in front of him on His way. And then there was this robe spoken of in a parable by Jesus in regard to the coming Kingdom being like a wedding celebration:

Matthew 22 v 11 'But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, <sup>12</sup>and he said to him, "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?" And he was

speechless. <sup>13</sup> Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." <sup>14</sup> For many are called, but few are chosen.'

This parable was not like turning up to Westminster Abbey in your old jeans and t-shirt. Jesus is referring to the Jewish tradition of the host of the wedding giving people new robes to wear. The parable suggests that, not only was the man not wearing the host's wedding robe, but he did so intentionally. He decides against clothing himself properly, even though the appropriate clothing is available. His presence at the wedding is a sign of his rebellion against the king's authority and majesty. And the meaning behind the parable is that we should be willing to throw off our old cloaks, that is our old sinful ways... selfishness, self-centredness, self-interested ways....not unlike Bartimaeus ... and wear the robe/cloak that God provides, a royal robe, fit for the celebration of the Kingdom. That is partly the meaning of this parable, it will of course go much deeper than I have spoken of here.

What are those royal robes like. **Colossians 3 v 12** Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

How do these royal robes of the Kingdom fit you... better and better as you follow in 'The Way'.

HYMN STF 331 King of Kings, Majesty <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jThlaT2Td7U>

<p>1 King of kings, majesty, God of heaven living in me. Gentle Saviour, closest Friend, Strong Deliverer, Beginning and End, all within me falls at your throne.</p> <p><i>Your majesty, I can but bow ; I lay my all before you now. In royal robes I don't deserve, I live to serve your majesty.</i></p>	<p>2 Earth and heaven worship you, Love eternal, faithful and true, who bought the nations, ransomed souls, brought this sinner near to your throne ; all within me cries out in praise.</p> <p><i>Your majesty, I can but bow ; I lay my all before you now. In royal robes I don't deserve, I live to serve your majesty, I live to serve your majesty.</i></p> <p>Jarrood Cooper</p>
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THE LORD'S PRAYER

<p>1 Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair, Lord, in your suffering world this is our prayer. Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace, sunrise to sunset, your kingdom increase !</p> <p>2 Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills, work for all people, trade for their skills ; land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak, voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>God of the poor, friend of the weak, give us compassion we pray : melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain ; come, change our love from a spark to a flame</i></p>	<p>3 Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear, cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share. Peace to the killing-fields, scorched earth to green, Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.</p> <p>4 Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams plundered and poisoned — our future, our dreams. Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed ; make us content with the things that we need. <i>Refrain</i></p> <p>5 Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame until your justice burns brightly again ; until the nations learn of your ways, seek your salvation and bring you their praise. <i>Refrain</i></p> <p>Graham Kendrick (<i>b.</i> 1950)</p>
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Prayers of Intercession: Response: As you stop and listen to every person, **hear our prayer**

Gracious and loving God, we give thanks that you are tuned to listen to all of us, never missing fragile voices or shouts of desperation, hearing the real message within our prayers and the silent sounds of our longings we bring our prayers before you today.

As you stop and listen to every person, **hear our prayer**

We pray for all world leaders and their governments; that their strength and authority will come not through force and domination but through wisdom and co-operation. We pray especially for the situation between Ukraine and Russia, for the situation in Afghanistan, Yemen and for the ongoing wars or conflicts in many countries in the Middle East, North West Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. And for the ongoing drug-war in Mexico. May all these conflicts be suffused with your Spirit of wisdom, compassion and peace.

As you stop and listen to every person, **hear our prayer**

We pray for the country we live in that its people may show compassion to all races and genders.

As you stop and listen to every person, **hear our prayer**

We pray for those who cry out for rest and relief, all who are carrying terrible burdens that weigh them down. All whose poverty denies them the chance of healing, all whose wealth denies them the chance of knowing their need of you. In a moment of silence we think of those known to us who need your grace and healing word.

*Pause:* As you stop and listen to every person, **hear our prayer**

Finally Lord we pray for ourselves. Clothe us in royal robes of your kingdom that we may grow more and more like Christ in our thinking, doing and being. **AMEN**

STF 673 Will you come and follow me <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zK6IUaIJ3sk>

<p>1 Will you come and follow me if I but call your name? Will you go where you don't know and never be the same? Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known, will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?</p> <p>2 Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name? Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same? Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare? Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?</p> <p>3 Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name? Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same? Will you kiss the leper clean, and do such as this unseen, and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?</p>	<p>4 Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call your name? Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same? Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around, through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?</p> <p>5 Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name. Let me turn and follow you and never be the same. In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show. Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.</p> <p>John L. Bell (<i>b.</i> 1949) and Graham Maule (<i>b.</i> 1958)</p>
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Blessing: Go into the road of life in kindness, and my Jesus be walking with you and stop to listen to you in your need and carry you into healing, and may the God of love and the Spirit of grace flow forth in all you do.

**AMEN**