

Prayers for our world, our neighbourhood and ourselves

Lord Jesus, your name brought healing and new strength to the lame man. Now I pray in your name for the places in my world where healing and new strength are needed.

For countries struggling with the effects of the pandemic, or with conflicts and poverty.....

For my own country at the end of a week of national mourning. For our communities as people emerge from lockdown and face the problems caused by the pandemic.....

For my family and friends and for all those known to me who are especially in need at this time.....

And finally, I pray for myself that I may know your presence in my life, enabling me to become the person you want me to be.

Amen

Hymn StF 317 **At the Name of Jesus**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7w-tDjlpqk>

Benediction - Go Forth

May we go forth in joy.

For we have God's kingdom in our hearts.

May we go forth in love.

To live for the Lord.

May we go with hope and forgiveness.

For the grace of God sustains us.

May we go forth in peace.

May we go forth in light.

To Love and Serve the Risen Lord

Amen

This worship sheet was created by Maureen Baker, Local Preacher

Darlington District Worship

Sunday 18th April 2021



Risen Lord Jesus, you came to your disciples in unexpected places,
Behind the locked doors of an upstairs room,
On a lonely journey down a dusty road,
By the shores of a lake in the morning light.
And still you come in the midst of our doubt, our fear, our sorrow.
May I feel your presence with me now as I seek to worship you.
Amen

Hymn StF 338 **There is a Redeemer**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldRcFz7rK7w>

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Confession

Surprising God, in the weeks after the first Easter the disciples were often surprised by your continuing power to bring new life, to change seemingly hopeless lives and situations. Touch me with your transforming power as I worship you today.

Creator God, I thank you for the amazing beauty of your creation, thinking in particular of any times in the past week when I have been surprised and cheered by the beauty of the natural world.

Loving Father God, I thank you that you care for all your creation. I thank you that, even when times may seem hard, your love can still surprise us as it shows itself in unexpected ways and in unexpected places.

Yet Father God, I come to worship aware that so often I fall short of being the person you would want me to be. I am in need of

forgiveness and your transforming power in my life. I know that sometimes I have made mistakes or fallen into the temptation of doing things I knew were wrong.

Forgive me and grant me a new start in life.

The Lord's Prayer

Bible Reading: [Acts 3: 12 - 19](#)

Surprising God

When was the last time you were pleasantly surprised? Perhaps you heard some unexpected, good news? Or received a surprise present? Or a phone-call from someone you had not heard from for a while?

In our Bible passage today the people going into the Temple in Jerusalem that afternoon were very surprised. As they walked into the Temple through what was known as the 'Beautiful Gate' they would have been used to seeing the lame beggar lying in his usual place at the side of the gate. After all, he had been there for years and years. If they were feeling generous, they would have tossed him a small coin. He had become almost part of the expected scenery. But that afternoon he was not there.

Then, when they got inside the Temple, there was the beggar, standing up on his own two feet on Solomon's Porch with his arms held by two very ordinary-looking men, Galileans, fishermen. What had happened? This was not expected. No wonder the people were surprised.

But then Peter addressed the crowd and told them not to be surprised. What had happened was not his doing, this was only possible because of Jesus. It was the power of Jesus name that had given strength to the lame man. He then went on to tell the people about Jesus, about what had happened to him and about how Jesus could now transform their lives.

Peter told the people that what had happened was not surprising. When people became followers of Jesus then wonderful things happened – the unexpected became expected. After all Jesus' resurrection was the most surprising and unexpected event ever. And the transforming power of the resurrection could now be shared by everyone.

But what about us? Do we feel surprised when God works in unexpected ways or with unexpected people? When we pray do we pray with the expectation that God will answer our prayers, though perhaps in a surprising way? When, as a church, we make plans for new ministries or outreach do we set ourselves low expectations of success? Are we prepared to be surprised by God? Are we surprised when God calls us?

But then in the Bible story Peter seized on what had happened to the lame man as an opportunity to speak to the people. He used the opportunity to draw attention to Jesus. He pointed out not just what had happened but why it had happened – that it had happened because of Jesus.

As Christians, when we see good things being done in the world, do we seize the opportunity to use them to point people towards Jesus? God is still working in our world and in the lives of Christians – but do we always make it clear that it is because of Jesus that Christians are doing these things and making a difference in the world?

Finally, with Bible stories I often wonder what happened next? In this case what happened to the ex-lame man? His life would have been totally changed. He certainly could not go back to begging at the Beautiful Gate. Now he could walk through into the Temple and worship God himself. Not only was his physical disability cured but he could have a proper relationship with God. He could fulfil his true potential as a human being and do what God intended him to do. But he could not go back.

Then what about the crowd? Did some of them become followers of Jesus? Were their lives changed and did they then go on to change other lives? We don't know.

But, for us now, as restrictions hopefully begin to ease and churches start to re-open, it is perhaps important to remember that there is no 'going back to the way things were' for us either. We have all been changed in some way by lock-down. Perhaps we have found God calling us as a church to do some surprising new things. I have even had to learn how to condense my thoughts into only sufficient words for a sheet like this. And it is certain that God will continue to surprise us with wonderful things in the new post-Covid world.

Amen