**Worship sheet for Sunday 28th February 2021 (Second Sunday in Lent)**

**Compiled by John Green of Berkley Street Methodist Church, St Neots**

**Call to Worship**

*Jesus, light of the world, shine your light into our hearts, that we may see with your clarity, your truth and with your compassion, that no one’s worth may go unacknowledged, and no one’s gifts go unused, but that all, the first and the last, the least and the greatest, may be one, as you are one, with the Father.
We pray in your name.* ***Amen.***

***HYMN: StF 59 - Shine Jesus Shine***

***https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3iB30gCqAc***

 **PRAYERS OF PRAISE, THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION**

*Praise be to you, loving God, for you lavish care on all creation, bringing order to chaos, light to darkness,
life to emptiness. Redeeming God, we thank you for the love that you lavishly, freely shower upon us. Your forgiving spirit when we have sinned for which we acknowledge our unworthiness and seek your forgiveness. The times you have helped replace our doubt with a more-sure belief in you. Inspired us with your wisdom when we have lacked certainty and clarity. Thank you too, for those times we have been inspired through your Holy spirit when we have been lethargic, dispirited and dull. Praise be to you, inspiring God, for all your gifts, the wonders of your creation, the love of family and friends your gifts are bountiful, immeasurable. Thank you, Lord. Amen.*

***HYMN: StF 397/MP 664 - The Spirit lives to set us free.***  ***https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnt4ST8HGQA***

**Sermon**

**Jesus Light of the world.**

What does Jesus mean when he says he is the light of the world?

Light as we all know can illuminate things around us and hopefully enable us to see things more clearly.

In John’s gospel it defines light as life, (John 1:4, “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men”). This “life” is a gift Jesus brought from God into a needy world, by faithfully following his example we too act as beacons of light and witnesses to his world.

Again, in John’s gospel, ([John 8:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%208.12)) while this verse does not directly say, “Walk in the light, its underlying message is to follow Jesus, who is the light of the world. John repeatedly uses the “light” metaphor in relation to the Messiah. For example, he writes that Jesus is “the true light that gives light to every man” ([John 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%201.9)) or in [1 John 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%201.7)) he says, “If we walk in the light as He [God] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and through the sacrifice of Jesus his Son we are cleansed of our sin”. John also says that God’s very nature is light. Jesus, then, is the conduit or provider of light to the world.
**Abbreviated it means** embracing life with Christlike qualities, acting correctly, living openly” in “Christlike ways”. In this context it means one’s lifestyle or way of life can be considered a “walk.” It is also a metaphor for life, happiness, righteousness, and understanding.

The Bible states that light comes from the God, the “Father of the heavenly lights” ([James 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James%201.17)). He is the opposite of evil. “Walking in the light” means “living in his power, growing in his holiness, and maturing in our faith as we follow Jesus.
In response to both Jesus and God’s love we are compelled to live in that same light. “Now you are light in the Lord”. When we “Walk in the light”, we cannot walk in darkness. It is God’s desire for us to become more Christ like, by following his precepts and growing in his grace.

The examples chosen below may appear to be random, but they have been selected to bring out different aspects of Jesus providing light or enlightenment for the individual or group on a physical level often leading to a spiritual awakening. Sometimes it was not always welcomed because it has perhaps either touched a nerve or revealed a home truth for some of his hearers which left them feeling uncomfortable, in some cases even reeling.

When Jesus said 'I am the light of the world' he was and is aware of our potential and desires that we too become more Christlike. But he is also aware that we are capable of stumbling in the dark or half-light. Perhaps, we don’t always see our own faults or shortcomings and that we need to see more clearly if we are to follow in his footsteps on our Christian pilgrimage.

At the end of the service sheet, I have given the passages of scripture for you to refer too, and prayerfully consider with the guidance of the holy spirit what light or insights it reveals to you. I wouldn’t wish that it leaves you reeling!

The following examples of Jesus’s ministry will give a clearer understanding of his light active in the lives of individuals or groups. In some cases, it physically restored their sight often leading to a spiritual awakening. Conversely for others it was a rebuke thereby paving the way to spiritual enlightening in the hope it would enable them to review their thinking and to change direction.

In the two accounts at the end of Marks gospel we find contrasting stories the first is about James and John asking to be placed either side of Jesus in the final days. Both had missed the point of remaining humble and maintaining the position of servant.

In contrast, the second account of Bartimaeus recognised his unworthiness and although blind had the faith that Jesus could heal him. More importantly, by calling Jesus Son of David he recognised that Jesus was possibly the Messiah. There was also his persistence that he was not going to be dissuaded by the crowds to stop calling out for Jesus. It also raises the question regarding their lack of support for Bartimaeus. Jesus readily acknowledges his faith, heals him, so that he could now see physically and received Jesus’s gift of salvation; such was his commitment he immediately followed Jesus.

In the story of the Samaritan woman at the well here we find that Jesus cuts across barriers of race, accepts her as she is in spite of her notorious background and avoids the accepted practice of chauvinism because she was a woman.

All are valued and accepted in the eyes of God. The opportunity to change is always present but God would also wish we remain true to ourselves not what others or society deem we should be.

“Who the devil do you think you are” could be the headliner associated with the reading from John’s Gospel when Jesus was involved in a confrontation with the Jews. They were trying to catch Jesus out. Initially, they wrongly thought that Jesus was making exalted claims about himself and was out to discredit them. They also manipulated the situation by wrongly identifying him as a Samaritan who were renowned for their dubious reputation which they thought gave them credence to refute Jesus’s claims as being both unreliable and untrue. It was really about scoring points. But Jesus was not only aware but careful enough not to be drawn in whereby they could accuse him of drawing honour to himself whereas he did the exact opposite by honouring his Father and sidestepping any theological questioning, whereby they could trip him up. Here Jesus was heeding his own earlier advice by being - wise as a serpent and simple as a dove.

Sometimes there are situations where the light of Christ needs to be shone where it highlights untruths and speaking out and challenging injustices.

It is where we bring the light of Christ into those lives which have been eclipsed or overshadowed for whatever reason and who are unable to speak up for themselves.

While Jesus’s light can give us a measure of security it [can also](file:///Volumes/mac%20pc/can%20also) show up the shadows. If we think we are in for a safe ride, then we need to have a rethink. Jesus’s light can with laser precision pinpoint things or issues that need putting right. Both God and Jesus can be a disturbing presence.

Abraham was pushed out from his home; he was also tested in a most disturbing way in relation to his son Isaac. Moses was called to lead his people to the promised land which he never quite got to. Jesus and the prophets constantly called people’s ordinary simple, unquestioning religion into question so they could go deeper and become more open to God. There is nothing in the bible that suggests that either God or Jesus gathers people up into a comfort which is unquestioning. The comfort we can expect from God is the sort of strength that enables us to go through the shadow of death.

Living with Covid has tested and challenged us on many different fronts, turning people’s lives upside down, confronting us with many issues that were possibly already there which needed attention. We give thanks for the light, hope and compassion shown in so many ways. May this be a prelude for future things to come. Amen.

***Hymn: StF 175 - Light of the World***

***https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfJSOpCDgUw***

***Intercessory Prayers.***

*Living God, we pray for those people who have lost hope — in their dreams, their circumstances, or in life itself.*

*Lord of all hopefulness, hear our prayer.*

*We pray for those who have lost the hope of finding a partner or of raising a family, the hope of going to college, university, or further studies, or of finding a home or any permanent roof over their heads, of securing employment or a use for their skills.*

*Lord of all hopefulness, hear our prayer.*

*We pray for those who despair of seeing freedom, justice, peace or reconciliation; those who despair of finding adequate food and clothing; who despair of receiving help and healing.*

*Lord of all hopefulness, hear our prayer.*

*We pray for those who have given up on life — those with terminal illness who have lost the will to keep on fighting; whose spirits have been crushed so that they can no longer bounce back; those who want to take their own lives because they have lost all hope; those afflicted by starvation and disease that they cannot carry on.*

*Lord of all hopefulness, hear our prayer.*

*Living God, there is so much despair in our world, and for many there seems little reason to hope. Reach out, we pray, to all whose belief in the future has been destroyed, grant them new dreams where the old have died, a rekindled purpose where confidence has been undermined, support when there seems to be nothing left to hold on to, and hope that one day your kingdom will come and your will be done.*

*Lord of all hopefulness, hear our prayer, in the name of Christ. Amen.*

***Lord’s Prayer Amen.***

# HYMN: StF 487 - *We will go out with Joy*

***https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unWnWSgoSt0***

***Grace:****.* *lluminating God, you are the light in whom there is no darkness. In Jesus we see your radiance. We believe that no one will be turned away from this light. We believe that this light shines for everyone in the world. Light of liberation and love, shine in the darkness of debt and desperation. Light of the world, lead us where you want us to go. Lead us on the path to your kingdom. Light of the world, even when we face the unexpected, light our way with the promise that we are not alone.****Amen.***

***Bible Readings****: James & John - John Chpt 8 vs 48-59 Bartimaeus - Mark Chpt 10. Vs 46-52*

*Samaritan at the well - John Chpt 4 vs 5-14 Run in with the Jews- John Chpt 8 vs 48-59*