**Worship Sheet for Sunday 20th June 2021**

**Compiled by Pauline Zahner of Hilton Methodist Church**

**Seeing in Stages**

**Call to Worship**: Our God is a God of love, peace and power. We trust him with our big questions.

**Hymn**: StF 351 - In Christ alone my hope is found <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C77pE9-V0vU>

or H&P 10/StF 57 - Let all the world in every corner sing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n849IC_Jdko>

**Prayers** **of praise, confession and thanksgiving** (the first two adapted from Roots)

Eternal God,
We praise and adore you for your strength, your power and your peace. We praise and adore you for being in control and yet not controlling; We praise and adore you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Faithful God, we are often afraid. When we lack the confidence that you will bring us safely through,
When we are afraid to take the risk of trusting you, God, forgive us; and help us to know that you are with us

and to know that those who are truly sorry can be assured of your forgiveness. **Amen.**

Loving God, we thank you for all those who have loved us as you do and shown us such care and support during our lives. We bring you our gratitude for those who have nurtured us when we were young, nursed us when we were ill, taught us when we needed to learn something and helped us see what we needed to see. **Amen.**

**Hymn**: Choose from these

Open my eyes[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OU9sNkhWbDk**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OU9sNkhWbDk)

**StF 451 -** Open the eyes of my heart Lord[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViBNqNukgzE**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViBNqNukgzE)(from 1.45 secs)

**H&P 767/StF 661** - Give me the faith which can remove

**Think about seeing**

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| **A picture containing text, indoor, person, computer  Description automatically generated****(Picture from Roots)** | 1. Name one thing you have observed this week?
2. What have you understood for the first time in life?
3. What have you grasped about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit this week?
4. How will that help you share God’s love with others?
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**Prayers about seeing**

Lord, we thank you for the gift of sight, be that physical, mental or spiritual sight. We pray that we may learn from what we have seen, recognised and taken in this week. May those with hindsight, foresight or insight use these gifts, with your help, to serve the needs of others. May we see how to pray for those trapped in what is broken – a bombsight, violence hidden from sight or horror shocking to see - and if at all possible help relieve their pain in some way. May those who cannot see you, be helped in some way by those who can, to become aware of your presence and love. May we be granted vision of how to get closer to you and love you more. Amen

**Readings: Ezekiel 37 verses 7-10 and Mark 8 verses 22-26**

**Reflection**

Those who have experienced successful cataract operations will probably have had one eye treated first and the other sometime later. What joy after the first operation that you can, see with one eye, so much better than before the operation and you are simply grateful that some of the former darkness is removed. You can see more. But when the second eye is treated you can’t believe it. You can now see better than ever before in your life. You can see the wrinkles on people’s faces, the tiny strips of colour on insects and recognise in detail the elegant red kite in flight. You have experienced a two stage restoration of sight. After the first you could see better and after the second you can see extremely well.

In both our readings today, we have two stage healings or restorations. Ezekiel surrendered himself to God, submitted to his will and obeyed him and, putting aside any doubts he or anyone else might have had about the strange prophecy, he reported faithfully the message he had from God. In the first prophecy, the bones, initially without skin, muscle and tissue, clattered as they fitted together into the shape of a skeleton and they slot together exactly as it should be so that no bone was left over nor any missing. When God restores, he does so perfectly and without blemish. Skin, muscle and tissue then covered the bones so that people appeared who were active and yet their bodies were still dead. In a second prophecy, the spirit of life was breathed into the bones and they came so powerfully alive.

God subsequently explained to Ezekiel that both Judah and Israel were to be brought back together, restored and healed. The dispirited were being given hope for a better future.

In Mark’s gospel, we have a two stage healing of a blind man. After the first miracle or healing, the man can only see a little but after the second he can see clearly. Within Mark’s gospel, we can pick out that the first stage is equivalent to the disciples’ partial understanding of who Jesus is. We’ll take Peter as our example. Peter has a wow moment of realisation in verse 29 and confesses that Jesus is the Messiah and even though he understands who Jesus is cannot yet grasp what that means for Jesus nor for himself. He has reached, as it were, stage 1 but not yet stage 2. Proof of this is seen a bit further on when even though Peter can see Christ he cannot yet see the cross and rejects any reference to the future as portrayed by Jesus. Stage 2 will be reached only after the crucifixion and resurrection.

How might this apply to us ? In our own discipleship, when we first encounter Jesus, we see partially and as our faith grows we see more. We must avoid assuming that because we can understand a little that we can grasp everything . William Barclay in his commentary puts it like this no-one “sees all God’s truth at once”. We need to be patient and learn to wait for spiritual development whilst we pray, read and study our Scriptures, worship with others and discuss what challenges us in the Bible.

In practical ways, too, we must be careful to ensure that we don’t work out our spirituality only on a Sunday, only to lapse in the week, and that we lead our whole life is focussed on God. Becoming a member of the church is not the end of the journey but a staging post along the way. Throughout our entire lives, we keep growing spiritually and in grace and we will find that the more we encounter Jesus in the pages of our Bibles and in loving relationships in life, the more we will learn to be Christlike. Not only patience but also humility is required of us as disciples in order for us to develop further.

**Hymn**: **H&S 378/ StF 545** - Be thou my vision <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e29wmfues9o>

**Prayers for others** (adapted from Roots)

Compassionate God, whose care holds us, we pray for all who face huge difficulties in life, overwhelmed by pain, disability, loss or grief,  anxious and fearful about the future, for all those who are under pressure at work, those facing redundancy or unemployment, those who feel they have no say in their workplace, those who must make difficult decisions affecting others; for those who are threatened by risk and danger, facing the loss of homes, livelihood, friends and family in war, those at risk of violence and abuse in the home; for those who are in despair. We pray that they may that their fears may be allayed, that they may find love in practical ways shown to them by those near them and that we will do all we can to help and support those near us. Amen.

**Hymn:** By the grace of God : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8YbYm5eqMI>

or **H&P 9/StF 55 -** Immortal, invisible

**Sending out prayer**

May we go in peace to see the beauty of creation,

To observe the joy of those who love the Lord,

To gain insight into how we may love and serve God’s world

And understand the role to which God has called us to share his gospel.
**Amen.**