



# Weekly worship resource for Gladsmuir and Longniddry

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[www.longniddrychurch.org.uk](http://www.longniddrychurch.org.uk)  
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[www.weethought.com](http://www.weethought.com)

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## Today's readings

### Psalm 126 (“A prayer for deliverance”)

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream.  
Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then it was said among the nations, ‘The Lord has done great things for them.’  
The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoiced.

Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like the watercourses in the Negeb.  
May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.  
Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves. Amen.

### Mark 10: 46–52 (“Jesus heals blind Bartimaeus”)

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Jesus stood still and said, ‘Call him here.’ And they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Take heart; get up, he is calling you.’ So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ The blind man said to him, ‘My teacher, let me see again.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your faith has made you well.’ Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way. Amen.

## Today's hymns

Hymns and psalms can inspire us when we need a lift, so enjoy taking a look at these:

*Christ is our light! the bright and morning star* (CH4: 336)

*God gave me eyes so I could see the wonders of the world* (CH4: 164)

*Only on God do thou, my soul, still patiently attend* (CH4: 42)

*The great love of God is revealed in the Son* (CH4: 358)

*What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!* (CH4: 547)

# *In the Name of the Father and of*

**W**ith blind Bartimaeus we arrive at Mark's second "bookend". If this means nothing to you, fear not. A few weeks ago in church I told everyone about the gospel writer's knack for taking one story on a theme and setting it against another on a similar topic. And so we went from chapter 8's first bookend, a stage-by-stage healing of a blind man, to today's second bookend, with Bartimaeus in chapter 10. And the bits in between the two? These are stories of Jesus used by Mark to point us away from our own spiritual blindness. We are led towards "seeing" for ourselves the true meaning of discipleship as "viewed" in the clear light of Jesus' teaching and example. So it is that two bookends about blindness point us to new "vision", and all just in time for Holy Week.

He's some guy, Mark. Although he was writing nearly 20 centuries ago, he doesn't just jot down his material in chronological order, going from Christ's Baptism to Christ's Resurrection. No, for Mark the task of presenting the Good News of Jesus is much more to do with crafting a tiny little book into a work of depth and splendour.

So what's Mark giving us today? It's a story about Jesus at the edge. He's come a long way, and now at Jericho he finds himself at the edge of Jerusalem, at the edge of the ultimate drama he will face. We might also say that he is approaching the very edge of life, with the descent into death drawing very close.

If you recall, the writer has been very keen to show us the ignorance and self-centredness of Jesus' friends, who have been bickering about importance, power, greatness and the rest. We might say that they don't "see" Jesus for who he is. Here, however, in chapter 10, Mark gives his readers a clear and unmistakable example of someone "at the edge" of society who cannot look at Jesus, yet still sees him with crystal clarity. How ironic. And how very powerful.

I only know a couple of tales of my Scottish Australian grandfather, Sandy Watt, but each one is a cracker. For today let's focus on an incident during the Second World War when Sandy (now back in Scotland along with his family) was pacing the blacked-out streets of downtown Dundee, Communion cards in his pocket. With no street lights to guide him from home to home, he was well and truly lost, without a clue which way to turn. Just then he heard confident footsteps and hailed the passer-by for some assistance. His new companion asked where he wanted to go and, on hearing the address, stepped out boldly, leading the way. In moments the pair had got from A to B, safe and sound, much to the church elder's amazement.

"How did you do that???" asked a highly impressed Sandy.

"Oh, that's nothing at all," came the reply. "You see, I'm blind."

In one sense, Bartimaeus shares that same uncanny ability. Though his eyes fail him, he has remarkable vision far beyond that of the disciples. We find this most clearly perhaps in the way in which the blind man addresses Jesus. While others might link his name to his birthplace ("Jesus of Nazareth") Bartimaeus uses three words to show how he regards the visitor: "Son of David". Through the use of this title an easily-ignored man, sitting as he does on the edge of society, tells everyone how he sees Christ. For him, Jesus is the descendant of Israel's most heroic leader: the heir to his greatness. Effectively, Bartimaeus's words point to the arrival on the edge of the capital city of the long-expected Messiah.

## ***the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .***

And it appears that Bartimaeus may not be alone, for the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem will see crowds of adoring fans gathering together to shout as with one voice: “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! *Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!* Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

But who exactly are they expecting? A Son of David who will rid the Holy City of the hated Romans? A reforming Jewish leader who will blot out the corruption of the Temple? Or maybe a superhero with magical powers whose glory will span the earth?

Would anyone – the disciples, Bartimaeus, the crowd – truly understand what Jesus’ kingdom is going to look like. Would we?

Commentators tell us that the Bartimaeus story is well positioned in Mark’s gospel to show us a hard and fast example of Jesus’ teaching in action. When earlier on James and John were asked what Jesus could do for them, they answered in terms of their own craving for recognition. But here we see something very different. In that same “what do you want me to do” scenario, we can identify a heartfelt, impassioned cry to Jesus to help another in their time of need. By hearing that call and by responding to it Jesus is modelling for his listeners – for us? – what his way is all about. He leads, but will others follow? Maybe not quite yet.

The preacher Kathryn Matthews puts it well:

*Instead of “Give us glory,” [James and John] could have said, “Give us hearts to see and understand and follow.” That would take a miracle, too, it seems: the miracle of Resurrection, followed by Pentecost, when they would be filled with the Spirit. In the meantime, the disciples would have to travel the road to the cross, too.*

We, of course, are Resurrection people. We view Mark’s story of Jesus from Baptism through to Easter. The disciples may have some kind of justification for their closed minds and hard hearts, but we know how the story ends and so *should* know what it means for us.

Lastly, I’d like to point out one simple little feature of this healing that is often overlooked. We find it in verse 50: “So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.”

What’s worth noting here? Well, if we cast our minds back to last week’s reading, we will recall the rich man who knew deep inside his all-too-clever head the mechanics of faith. Still, he stumbled and fell when it came to giving up his own comfort and security in the interest of his poor neighbours. While that devout and able individual could only cling on to his wealth and the many things he held so dear, movingly we find Bartimaeus flinging away what may well have been his most rare possession at the prospect of simply meeting Jesus.

More than this, if you search through all the 16 chapters of your copy of Mark’s gospel, you will find a great many miracles, but this is the only time someone who has received the life-changing gift of healing chooses to leave everything behind and follow in the way of Jesus. If you want to see discipleship in action, perhaps this is where it starts: in simple trust.

When Bartimaeus is called upon by Jesus, he is out the blocks in a flash, springing up in his keenness. Mark gives us no more healing accounts after this one. And really, does he need to? With this story, we are shown what our response of faith should be. In 2020, as we look and as we see our world in crisis, it is most certainly a timely and much needed reminder of how we need to live our lives. Amen.

# Praying for others

Loving God, you open our eyes to show us the way.

In our lives we see pressing dangers and very real threats.

These things worry us, both for ourselves and for those who mean so much to us.

Still, in you we find that we are far from helpless as we reach out to others:  
in a prayer; in a call, in a friendly word when it is so badly needed.

We pray for *[names here]* because they are on our minds and in our hearts.

May each know the presence of your love with them,  
and may we all seek to serve our neighbour as we walk in the way of Christ.

Here in Gladsmuir and Longniddry we know that many will be in need,  
and that some will be enduring terrible isolation.

Let each one know that you are near, that you care, that you will not forget.

Inspire those who are able, like Bartimaeus,  
to spring up with eagerness to live out their faith in company with you.

In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

If you would like to write a prayer of 150 words for this page,

please feel free to send it to Robin at the manse.

He can be contacted at [rhill@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:rhill@churchofscotland.org.uk) .

## And finally ...

*Longniddry's session clerk, Abigail Morrison, reflects on a big seven days for our two congregations and on what we can do together at this difficult time:*

Well, we've survived the first week of lock down. And, generally in the village, folk have been adhering to the advice about staying more than 2 metres apart and not fraternizing with anyone outside your household. Good for us. One week down, an indeterminate number to go. But we can do it together, neighbour with neighbour in new ways of neighbourliness.

Love thy neighbour, Jesus told us. To quote Elizabeth Barret Browning, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." Our folk, and folk the length and breadth of the country, have been showing their love for neighbour, friend and stranger in myriad ways. By delivering their shopping, picking up their prescriptions, saying the simplest of hellos from a distance whilst out for a walk, phoning for a chat regularly, talking to them over social media, sending letters and cards and sharing funny snippets and morale raising thoughts on social media.

Another way we can show love for our neighbour is by helping spread hope and praying for them. The Church of Scotland, jointly with many other churches, is asking people to join together in prayer at 8pm each Sunday . If you light a candle as you do so your prayers will be visible to your neighbours and act as a beacon of hope. The Church of Scotland website gives a suggested prayer for us all to say together. It's easy to find from the Home page.

I'll join you at 8pm on Sunday.