

Application. Are there any things that get in the way of us seeing Jesus clearly? Like Samuel or the man born blind, does having God speaking through Jesus make a difference to how we see things? How do we see other people, the world, or ourselves differently because of the presence of Jesus in our lives? Do we allow the light of Jesus to so transform our lives so that whatever we do, wherever we are, whether out and about or confined to our homes, gives glory to God? There are lots of suggestions in 7/52 this week about how we can make a difference and help to shine a light into our community right now.

TIME OF PRAYER

There are lots of ideas for prayer in 7/52. Pray for the friends you won't be seeing today. Ask God to shine his light into your life and to help you shine as his light where you are, and among the people you pray for or speak to in the coming days.

SUGGESTED SONG

And Can It Be? (Stuart Townend)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu2uA6U4Fvg>

BLESSING

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, evermore. Amen.

CAFÉ CHURCH

Over the last few weeks in Café Church we have been watching a series of videos called 'Searching for a King.' Last week we started a new series called 'Following the Messiah.' It will be some time before we can see them again together, but you can watch them online on YouTube at Appian Media's channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCISFshzm0GC4N_PI1_GSydQ

www.rydebaptist.xyz

You can find this document and this week's 7/52 online at the above web address which I have called Sunday Supplement! If you look at this Sunday Service sheet on your computer or device you should be able to highlight and click on the links and go straight to the songs or suggested websites. The direct links will also be on this Sunday's page on the www.rydebaptist.xyz website.

YOUR IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

You will appreciate that I have put this sheet together at a moment's notice in order that you receive it by this Sunday. I'm sure that there are improvements that can be made with your help and assistance. Please let me have all your ideas and suggestions by Monday evening at the latest, and we'll see what develops over successive weeks. I already have several ideas of how those of us with computers (that have cameras and microphones) can join together for prayer and Bible study. More about that next week.

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

22 March 2020

Dear Friends,

Well, this Sunday is a little bit different from last week isn't it? In fact it is very different and rather strange for us all. There is not a minister or church leader who has been trained for such an eventuality. We are all having to think on our feet and be prayerfully creative. Nobody could have guessed just how quickly things have moved on in just a few days. To keep everyone in the community safe we are having to keep our distance from each other and find new ways of being Christ's church, until the time comes when we can come together again to worship and celebrate. And we really don't know how long that will be.

Strangely enough, this all relates well to some of the things we have been reflecting on over the last few weeks on Sunday mornings. We were thinking about how we gather together for worship but then we are scattered into the community to live and work on different frontlines during the week, as Christ sends us out. Well now we are all scattered and will continue to be for a lot longer than we anticipated. If you remember the picture of the red dots spreading out among the sea of black dots being like us going out into all the

world to share the good news of Jesus in our daily lives, you will realise that ironically that same image reflects exactly why we are being asked to become socially distant or if necessary isolated at this time. It is a powerful illustration that works the same for good or ill.

The other thing we have said over and over is that the church is not a building in which we meet but the people that Christ has called to be his body. Now we cannot be together in the building for a while we have to learn how to stay connected with each other in other ways, and to be good witnesses for Jesus in our new scattered frontlines. There is the telephone, social media on our computers or smartphones, and the good old-fashioned paper communications like letters, greetings cards and post cards.

If you have any particular needs that we can help address, or just need a chat, please call your pastoral group leader (who should have called you by now) or one of the deacons, one of your other church friends, or give me a call. This is just the start of how we can reimagine what church could be like in these new circumstances, and any ideas you have will be very gratefully received.

So that we can join together on a Sunday morning wherever we are, I am producing these notes. There will be suggested Bible readings, a mini-sermon outline, some ideas for prayer, and some ideas for songs that relate to the theme. You will need your own Bible (to save space here) and the songs can be found on YouTube if you have a computer, a tablet or a smartphone. I hope this will be helpful. Any suggestions to improve future sheets are welcome.

Wherever you are, and whatever you are doing, I pray that you will be truly encouraged and blessed today and throughout the weeks ahead. Kerry.

¹ “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, ³ he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake. “ Psalm 23:1-3

BIBLE READINGS

1 Samuel 16:1-13

Psalms 23

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

TO PONDER

Although 1 Samuel introduces us to the early Kings of Israel, the book is largely also about Samuel himself. He had been set apart for God’s service from an ear-

ly age and it must have been a deep disappointment to him that Saul’s kingship had turned out as it had, after the days of the Judges had ended so badly too. Human ideas of kingship and power come into conflict with God’s view. He is sovereign. He is Lord. Nevertheless Samuel is to embark on the journey of discerning who the next king will be. What in our view seems to be the least likely or at the bottom of the barrel might just be the way God wants to lead and direct his people. How might God be using the least likely and the unusual in our day and age; how might we be missing out on what God wants to say to us?

SUGGESTED SONG

The Lord’s My Shepherd (Stuart Townend) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eIQQayhpak>

TIME OF PRAYER

Give thanks to God for being with you right here and now, whether you are alone or with others in your home.

Praise God for his love for you through thick and thin, even at those times when we feel least worthy.

Confess your weakness and sinfulness and your need of his forgiveness, mercy, strength and grace.

Acknowledge that God has called you for a purpose and wants to use you and your gifts and abilities to serve him, wherever you are and whatever you do.

SUGGESTED SONG

I Will Offer Up My Life (Matt Redman) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWdpgXEWNx4>

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

Illustration. One of the lasting impressions from our news from the last few days has been of empty supermarket shelves, of long queues, and of people fighting over toilet rolls or that last pack of pasta. Times of crisis do indeed seem to bring out both the worst in people as well as the best. A crisis can shine a bright light on people’s true motives.

Bible. The Bible is full of light and darkness imagery. Light is contrasted with darkness. In the dark you cannot see clearly; you are blind. In the light you can see where you are going, you have direction and you can follow the path ahead. Those of us who know Jesus as our Lord and Saviour live a new life in the brightness of his light. We walk on the sunny side of the road.

Illustration. Both the advantage and the trouble with light is that it shows things up. When the light shines we can see that our spectacles and our windows need cleaning; when the light shines we feel more fully awake and alert than in the darkness and gloom of winter. Some people struggle when there is a lack of light, they become sad, but then they come alive when the sun comes out.

Bible. Darkness might characterise our life before we met Jesus, but now as God’s children we are called to shine like the light, to develop the fruits of goodness, righteousness and truth, and to live in ways that please God. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul emphasises that when light shines it not only exposes what is dark but also transforms it.

There is that amazing phrase, ‘everything that is illuminated becomes a light’. This is really powerful. When we stand in the presence of Jesus who is our light, we are fully transformed. The story of the healing of the man who was born blind shows this transformation in practice. Although it was the restoration of his sight that caused all the controversy it is clear that the man received a lot more than just his eyesight. We see with our eyes, but our inner eyes give us insight. Gradually, as the argument goes on between the authorities, the previous blind man and his parents, true enlightenment breaks through. The man’s blindness has nothing to do with any sin, or family sin...his healing takes place so that the glory of God might be revealed, that light might shine in the darkness; and the confession breaks out: if Jesus is not sent from God then he could do nothing. Conclusion - Jesus is sent from God, and the healed man now knows and believes as he sees clearly in his heart: ‘Lord I believe.’ Sadly, those who should know better continue in their blindness.