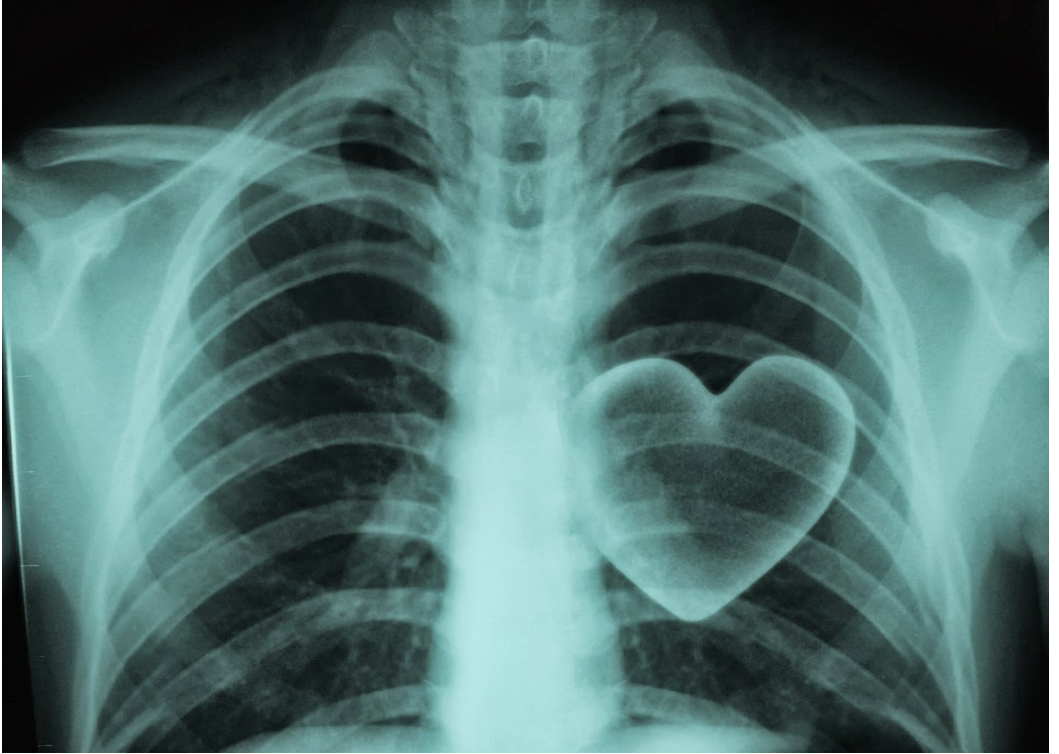


Light To See By



Canonbie United & Liddesdale 30th March 2014

Order of Service

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Call to worship	Gather In The Light
Hymn	CH4 112 God Whose Almighty Word
Approach	Blindness
Address	The Phrenologist
Address	What Do Good People Look Like?
Hymn	CH4 624 In Christ There Is No East Or West <i>(Tune "Auld Lang Syne"?)</i>
Reading(s):	1 Samuel 16:1-7 Ephesians 5:8-14 John 9:1-11
Hymn	CH4 543 Christ Be Our Light
Intercession	Light Light To The World
Offering	Eyes Opened
Hymn	CH4 601 Look Upon Us Blessed Lord
Sermon	Light To See By
Hymn	CH4 448 Shine Jesus Shine
Benediction	Walk In The Light

Call to worship Gather In The Light

What is truth and what is falsehood?

Let us gather in the light

What make life good, what makes it empty

Let us gather in the light

The Lord is truth, the Lord is goodness

Let us gather in the light

He is sight to the blind and support for the stumbling

Let us gather in the light

God, whose almighty word
Chaos and darkness heard
And took their flight:
Hear us, we humble pray,
And where the Gospel day
Sheds not its glorious ray,
Let there be light!

Saviour who came to bring,
On your redeeming wing,
Healing and sight,
Health to the sick in mind,
Sight to the inly blind:
Oh, now to humankind
Let there be light!

Spirit of truth and love,
Life giving, holy dove,
Speed forth your flight;
Move o'er the water's face,
Bearing the lamp of grace,
And in earth's darkest place
Let there be light!

Holy and blessed three,
Glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, love, might!
Boundless as ocean's tide,
Rolling in fullest pride,
Through the earth, far and wide,
Let there be light!

Approach

Blindness

Lord God

As we gather here to praise you, you are watching us
As you watch countless others around the world
As you watch the fiery birth of stars halfway across the galaxy
Nothing is too small or too distant to escape your unblinking eyes
Nothing is too huge or complex for you to understand
All of time, all of space is laid out before your gaze
Our hearts, our minds our souls are transparent before you
Our thoughts and our feelings are plain and clear to you
We cannot hide from you; for you see everything
We, though, are so often blind
We often do not see our neighbours when they need us
Or avert our eyes from suffering and injustice
Or allow our limited vision to be an excuse for inaction
We often do not see you at work in the world
And allow ourselves to become cynical
Or to behave as if you just weren't there
So often we lack vision
A clear vision of the world you want this to be
Of the lives you want us to lead
Because we forget the love and guidance you have offered us
Forgive us, Father
Forgive our blindness and obstinacy
Forgive the faults we name in silence
Be light in our darkness
Fill our hearts, minds and souls with light
So that we may reflect your light into the world
And banish the shadows this world knows too well
Until all the world can see that you love them
With the love made visible in our Lord Jesus Christ
Who taught us to share these words

Address

The Phrenologist

There was a man who read my bumps and told me I was clever
But probably dishonest 'cause my eyes are close together
The wrinkles in my forehead speak of intellectual rigour
Though I'd be a lot less lazy were my cranial ridges bigger
He said my breadth of shoulder spoke of dignity and pride
But the weakness of my jaw betrays a cowardice inside
Then on through cheekbone, brow and skin, through gait and length of carriage
He gauged propensity to sin and whom I'd take in marriage
There was a man who read my bumps, but I'm sceptic to my toes
Due to my narrowness of eye and roundness of my nose

Address

What Do Good People Look Like?

Show some pictures of people's faces. Are they blonde? Are they dark haired? Are they dark-skinned? Are they blue-eyed? Are they good people? Are they kind people. These are things you can't tell about people just by looking at them. You have to get to know them. God, though, knows each and every one of us better than we know ourselves

In Christ there is no East or West,
In Him no South or North;
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.

In Him shall true hearts everywhere
Their high communion find;
His service is the golden cord,
Close binding humankind.

Come, brothers sisters of the faith,
Whate'er your race may be!
Whoever does my Father's will
Is surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both East and West,
In Him meet North and South;
All Christ-like souls are one in Him
Throughout the whole wide earth.

Reading(s):

1 Samuel 16:1-7

The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.”

Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” And the LORD said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.”

Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, “Do you come peaceably?” He said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is now before the LORD.” But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

Ephesians 5:8-14

For once you were darkness, but now you are light. Live as children of light - for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

John 9:1-11

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so

that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight."

Longing for light, we wait in darkness
Longing for truth, we turn to you
Make us your own , your holy people
Light for the world to see
Christ be our light!
Shine in our hearts
Shine through the darkness
Christ be our light!
Shine in your Church, gathered today

Longing for peace, our world is troubled
Longing for hope, many despair
Your word alone has power to save us
Make us your living voice

Longing for food, many are hungry
Longing for water, many still thirst
Make us your bread, broken for others
Shared until all are fed

Longing for shelter, many are homeless
Longing for warmth, many are cold
Make us your building, sheltering others
Walls made of living stone

Many the gifts, many the people
Many the hearts that yearn to belong
Let us be servants to one another
Making your kingdom come

Lord who sees everything

Open our eyes

You know us so well, Father

It can sometimes seem strange to pray

After all, you know our needs and the needs of others better than we do.

You see those in pain or in hunger more clearly than we do.

But you know us well enough to remind us to remember the needs of others

And we remember them now before you.

We ask that you make use of us as part of your answer to the world's pain.

Lord who sees everything

We remember those who are missing loved ones

Perhaps they are bereaved or abandoned

Perhaps someone they care for is hospitalised, or missing, or in prison

Whatever the reason we ask you to lay your loving arm around their shoulders
and to let us see their need clearly and respond.

Lord who sees everything

We remember all those who are ill or in pain.

Perhaps it's the flu, or some long-term sickness

Perhaps it's an injury; the pains of age or mental turmoil

Whatever the cause we ask you to bring wholeness to their lives

And let us see their need clearly and respond.

Lord who sees everything

We remember those who are shut out of the benefits of society

Perhaps they are caught in the snares of addiction or poverty

Perhaps they have fled to the streets to escape abuse

Whatever drives people from the comfort of home, we ask you to shelter them

And to let us see them clearly as brothers and sisters in need, and respond

Lord who sees everything

We remember those who are oppressed

Perhaps their poverty is exploited in sweatshops or slavery

Perhaps they are imprisoned for their beliefs, or suffer torture
Whatever binds them, we ask that your justice snap their bonds
And that you let us see their need, and respond

Lord who sees everything

We remember those who are victims of violence
Perhaps they or their loved ones have been murdered, assaulted, bullied
Perhaps their growing up has taught them nothing but violence.
Whatever the source of anger we ask that you bring peace
And let us see where the voice of peace is needed and speak it

Lord who sees everything

Father, give your church vision
Let us reach out with your love to all in need
Until everyone knows that they are loved
Until everyone knows that they matter
Until everyone knows you as Father

Lord who sees everything

Offering

Eyes Opened

Lord God

You have opened our eyes to your love

We thank you

You have opened our eyes to joy

We thank you

You have opened our eyes to truth

We thank you

We thank you for the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ

The light of Heaven shining on Earth

And we thank you for the many blessings of life

Home, food, friendship, laughter

Song, starlight, sunshine and Sundays

Accept these offerings given in thanksgiving

Bless them and bless us

Rededicate them and rededicate us

To the service of your Kingdom

Look upon us, blessèd Lord,
Take our wandering thoughts and guide us;
We have come to hear Thy Word,
With Thy teaching now provide us,
That, from earth's distractions turning,
We Thy message may be learning.

For Thy Spirit's radiance bright
We, assembled here, are hoping;
If Thou shouldst withhold the light,
In the dark our souls were groping:
In each word and thought direct us:
Thou, Thou only, canst correct us.

Brightness of the Father's face,
Light of Light, from God proceeding,
Make us ready in this place;
Ear and heart await Thy leading.
Fill with life and inspiration
Every prayer and meditation.

for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” (1Sam 16:7)

In my lab at school I have one of those ceramic phrenology heads - the ones marked with areas for generosity, intelligence - that sort of thing. Back in the 19th Century there was this idea that you could analyse someone's personality by feeling the shape of their head. There was a huge pseudo-science that went with this. Folk spent years measuring the distance between people's eyes to see how that related to their honesty; or how the slope of their nose and forehead related to intelligence. A broad forehead indicated that a person was intelligent - I can run with that; I've got lots of forehead. On the other hand, if you had narrow eyes and a small mouth you were clearly mean-spirited and probably a psychopath. These days, when you go for a job interview, they don't judge you by whipping out a pair of calipers and measuring your nose. They judge you using a modern scientific basis like psychometric testing; or the colour of your tie. Or the way you sit. We've advanced a lot since the 19th Century.

All this has a long history. Jesse's son Eliab doesn't know it, but he's just arrived for a really important job interview, and Samuel's sizing him up on the basis of his appearance. The text doesn't tell us why Samuel looks at him and thinks "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord" - maybe he's wearing a particularly fine suit; or he has a big wide forehead; or he's maybe very tall. Whatever it is Samuel is impressed and immediately makes a judgement about him. God, however, has the casting vote on this particular interview panel, and God sees things by a very different light. God sees things by the light of Heaven and under that light things look rather different.

Samuel isn't stupid, but he judges Eliab without really knowing anything about him, other than his appearance. He's not exactly unique in that, is he? We all do it sometimes. Probably more often than we're really aware of. Nothing new in that. In our gospel reading we had Jesus encountering a blind man and the question that his disciples ask is "who did the sinning here that resulted in this man being blind?". Note - they know nothing about him, other than that he was born blind.

But they make a judgement based on that one thing they know about him. Jesus, though, sees things by a very different light. Jesus sees things by the light of Heaven and under that light things look rather different.

What Jesus sees in the light of Heaven is that this man is a child of God, like all of us. He sees that he is in need of compassion and healing, not the impulsive judgement that his disciples come up with. He sees that there is something precious and unique in this man - just as there is something precious and unique about each of us; something of such value that He will go to the Cross to preserve it. This, my friends, is what the light of Heaven reveals - that each of us is precious beyond measure to our Father in Heaven. Whatever the shape of our face, whatever race we belong to, whatever our difficulties and challenges - we are still the children of God and each one of us is made in the image of God.

These days we don't hold with the kind of pseudoscience of judging people by their appearance, do we. We wouldn't be swayed in the way we vote, for example, by the appearance of a candidate, would we? That's evident from the number of balding short hunchbacks that have made it to Prime Minister in the last 50 years. The media feeds us all the time with criteria by which we are supposed to judge each other and judge ourselves. It gives us labels that we can stick on each other that we can use to pigeonhole people and either approve of them or condemn them. "Single mother", "Benefit-claimant", "homosexual", "disabled". None of these labels is either good or bad in itself - any more than "balding" or "short" or "hunchback"; but they reduce the complex wonder of humanity to one dimension. They imply that you can understand and judge another person on the basis of just one part of who they are. They reduce the glory of God's creation of human beings in all our rich variety to one-dimensional stereotypes. They blind us to the light that dwells in each and every one of us.

If we could see with the light of Heaven, what would we see? If we could see as God sees, what would we see? We would see the hearts of those we too easily judge by labels or by their clothes or by their appearance. We would see the fear that haunts the minds of those join gangs; we would see the need for a sense of significance and recognition that so often goes hand in hand with teenage pregnancy; we would see the love that binds families that know the most serious of disadvantages.

I guess we can't see clearly by the light of Heaven. We can't see as God sees. But we can try. One of the glories of the Christian faith is the insight that we have that everyone is, ultimately, a child of God; that everyone is made in the image of God; that everyone is worth, in some way that we don't really understand, God entering his Creation in the life of Jesus and Jesus giving his life for each and every one of us on the Cross of Calvary.

If we could learn to treat each other with the dignity and respect that goes with recognising that everyone we meet is a child of God, what difference would that make in the world? If we could learn to recognise in each other the uniqueness and complexity that makes us precious in the eyes of God, what difference would that make in the world? If we could learn that those we are taught to hate are our brothers and sisters in the light of Heaven; that those we are taught to despise are worth the life of God's son in the light of Heaven; that those we are taught to forget are remembered in the light of Heaven; what difference would that make to the world?

And you know what? We can learn. By spending time with God in prayer. By spending time with each other in worship we can learn. We can learn to treat each other with dignity and respect. We can learn to care for those we are told to despise. We can learn to remember those we are taught to forget. We can talk to the world of the love of God for all his children. We can, by the way we treat others, show folk that everyone matters. We can throw away the labels that too often are used to divide us and can offer care, generosity; love and compassion to all God's children.

And maybe - just maybe - we can be the light of Heaven. We can be the light by which the love of God for all his children is revealed. We can be the light by which one man can see another as his brother. We can be the light by which the labels we stick on each other fade away and we all see each other clearly - as God sees us - as his children.

Father let us be your light - to shine compassion of the needy; to shine grace on the lost; to shine love on all we meet. Let us be your light and shine as your son shone. In his name we ask this

Lord, the light of your love is shining,
in the midst of the darkness, shining:
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us;
set us free by the truth you now bring us -
shine on me, shine on me.

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze,
set our hearts onfire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word,
Lord, and let there be light!*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
from the shadows into your radiance;
by your blood I may enter your brightness:
search me, try me, consume all my darkness,
shine on me, shine on me.

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
so our faces display your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory:
mirrored here, may our lives tell your story.
Shine on me, shine on me.

Benediction

Walk In The Light

Go now to walk in the light
For the light of God is with you wherever you go
A light to shine when things seem dark
A light to guide when things seem confused
A light to share with all you meet
Go now to walk with the light
May the breath of God the Father be ever at your backs
May the teachings of his Son be ever in your minds
May the comfort of his Spirit be ever in your hearts