



Sunday 12th July 2020

Welcome to our Sunday Service

Prepared by Kathryn Bedford

Light in the darkness!

Welcome to Croftlands Community Church. Thank you for joining us. We pray that you will experience your life being touched by the love of God.

I love the symbolism that living and working beneath the auspices of this lighthouse evokes. It speaks to me of a solid, reliable landmark that is a source of light, particularly in the darkness when this light house is flood-lit. Now this is not a working light house but a monument erected in memory of Sir John Barrow, someone whose life itself was a light to many people and as a follower of Jesus Christ was a reflection of the true source of light; reminding me that as we receive Jesus the light of the world into our lives, we become a reflection of that light into our communities.



Shine Jesus Shine Graham Kendrick

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 on fire
Flow, river, flow
Flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth your word
Lord, and let there be light

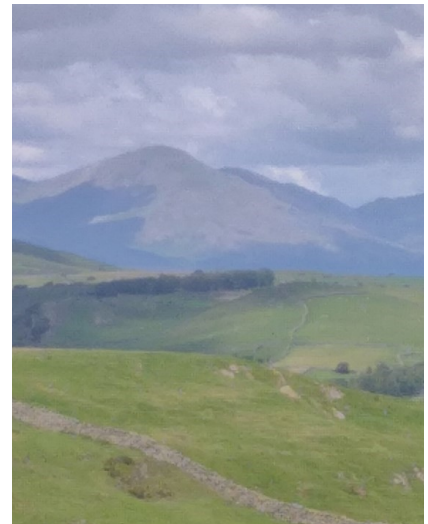
Lord, I come to your awesome presence
From the shadows into your radiance
By the blood I may enter your brightness
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness
Shine on me, shine on me

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

**"I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me
will not walk in darkness, but
will have the light of life."**

John 8:12

There is a glorious view from the top of Hoad over the **Town**, across **Morecambe Bay** and to the **Lake District Fells**, It's a great vantage point from which to pray!



We pray for our town and all the people who live here; that the light of Jesus may shine in this community. Please mend broken relationships and families, broken hearts and lives and comfort those who are lonely and sad.

We pray for all the thousands of visitors who come to the town each year. As they visit this lighthouse, may they experience the light of the gospel of Jesus penetrating their lives .

We pray for all the businesses in our town, for those who have recently re-opened their doors and those who are struggling to do so. Would you prosper our town, so that meaningful work can be found by all who need it.

We pray for the schools. Help the teachers as they face difficulty and challenge; for the children who have missed so many lessons and particularly those children who may be at risk or in danger; for the students whose exams have been cancelled. Guide each child and young person and shine your light on your pathway for their lives and future.

We pray for the churches as they shine the light and love of Jesus into this town and their immediate communities. Bless each church individually and all the churches together as we seek to grow in love and friendship with each other.

For our own church and the specific needs we have going forward. Our urgent need for a venue in which to meet and expand our shared life of Kingdom ministry together on the Croftlands Estate. We look to you in faith, believing that you are able to provide abundantly more than we can ask or imagine.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen

During this period of lock down, we as a church, along with many other churches have had to adapt very quickly to a very different kind of church experience - church on-line. In many ways that has been a really positive thing. It has made church accessible to those who are not always able to access a church service at 10.30am on a Sunday morning, whether that be because of work patterns, poor health, disability or perhaps having moved into a care home or some other reason.

It also enables people within our community to dip in and explore what church meeting together looks like without having to walk into a strange place, fearful of being pressurised or judged. We hope that will never be the case!

And so, church on-line at Croftlands Community Church very much needs to continue in order for us to be out there where the people are. In today's world most of our community are on – line and on social media, so that is absolutely where our church needs to be in order to be a light and a beacon of hope in a world that is otherwise very dark and tempestuous without any real and lasting hope.

As lock down eases and we begin to make plans to meet again there will be exciting opportunities which God is preparing for us, BUT there are also challenges to overcome as a church and for each one of us on a personal level. Whilst we have just described some positive and really great aspects of doing **church on-line**, there are great dangers if we begin to think of ourselves as an **on-line church**, because to be truly church, we need to be physically present.

It's in physically being together, worshipping together, praying together, encouraging each other, serving each other, loving each other and reaching out to our community together 'sacrificially' that we shine the light of Jesus that changes the spiritual atmosphere, drives back the darkness and demonstrates the unfailing, unconditional love of God to those whose lives are bathed in that light as together we shine!



Over recent weeks the internet has become our community, our place of fellowship and our church and as we've already thought about, that has made our services more inclusive, but in the future, for those of us who **CAN** physically get to church, the internet service should never replace being in church in person, playing your part and using your gifts to serve the body of Christ and the community, adding your voice to the worship even though it might mean re-jigging schedules and priorities.

If we want to be serious about being a lens through which Jesus the light of the world shines, then we need to recognise that internet church is not an option which replaces actually being present. Virtual church is not a real, full church experience and avoids being community which is the whole point.

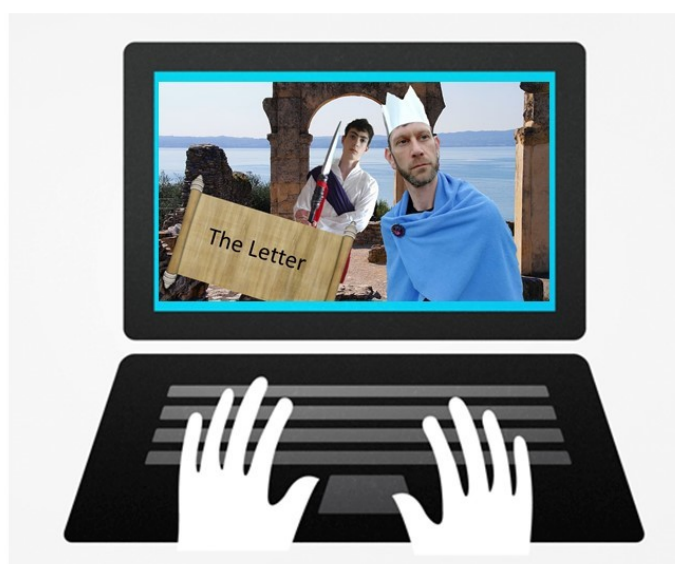
So what might that mean for us on a personal level?

Lets admit it. It's so much easier to watch a church service online with a cup of tea in bed on a Sunday morning! It doesn't matter if we're running late - we can slot the service in after supper if that's more convenient or the next day. Church online fits so well around our life styles when we don't have to fit in an actual Sunday morning visit.

Tuning in to church in your pyjamas becomes a changed behaviour that changes our way of life if we're not careful and aware of it. We need to ensure that there is a bounce back - that's a popular word at the moment - a bounce back into the personal, physical participation in the Body of Christ .

Just doing church online makes it possible just to be a consumer and walk away without serving or giving or using your giftings or participating in any sacrificial way.

Just doing church online makes it possible for church to be all about me!



We will be there



if you can't be here!

We're going to very briefly look at someone whose personal encounter with Jesus, the Light caused him to literally experience light in place of darkness.

His story is recorded in **Mark 10 v 46- 52**

Blind Bartimaeus Receives His Sight

⁴⁶ Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus") , was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." ⁵⁰ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

⁵² "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Here's a man whose life is in darkness, a very real and physical darkness; he is blind! His name is Bartimaeus; because of his condition he is known as blind Bartemaeus.

He's aware that Jesus is coming along the road with his disciples and a large crowd and he begins to cry out and shout in desperation, hoping to catch the attention of Jesus. 'Jesus, I believe you can make things better'

The people around him, dissing him and telling him to shut up. Their attitudes gave a clear message, 'Jesus is much too busy and important to be bothered by someone as insignificant as you'

Jesus says, 'Let him come' and he asks Bartemaeus 'What do you want me to do for you?' Bartemaeus just has to name it, 'Lord, I want to see'. Jesus healed his blindness and gave him a new life.



I was
blind and
now I see!

We can hop from one online service to another cherry-picking according to our preferences. It becomes all too easy to think of church as , 'What can it do for me?' instead of a body of believers to be a part of and bringing my contribution. We're part of something that is awesome with a mandate to change the world through being 'the church together'. Church is not just me and my lap-top!

***' By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,
if you love one another' John 13:35***

When we are tempted to think we can do church in isolation, we lose some of the greatest aspect of our witness. God calls us to be filled with his Holy Spirit in order to minister in love to other believers and to the world. Much of what God calls us to as his people requires us to live sacrificially within community.

Where two or three gather together in my name, there am I with them. Matt 18:20

Community is good for us. We learnt from James Gregory a couple of weeks ago that as Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwell in joyful community and reach out to draw us into that vortex of love, so we as triune beings, body, soul and spirit need to reach out in love to others in order to function within the potential we were created for.

That is the light that we manifest and reflect when we meet together going deeper into his word and growing stronger as a church that hears from God and steps out into the darkness in the name and authority of Jesus Christ.

And so in a nutshell, although church online has been wonderful, has been a real life-line during this season, and will continue in some capacity, here's the challenge. Don't become too comfortable to the point where for you it replaces physical church and reflecting the light of Jesus together!

Together our witness as a group of people who love each other can advance the Kingdom of God here on earth as it is in Heaven, flooding our communities with light and hope as Jesus shines through us , His Church.



If you will call out to Jesus from your dark place, he will hear you and give you a new life. No matter what people may have told you in the past that made you feel insignificant. What ever impression you may have formed that God has written you off, that is a lie.

You have God's attention and unconditional love as much as anyone else. You are not too unworthy or too messed up. You do not need to shut up before God, because other people have dissed you.

God is not too busy to hear your heart cry and there is nothing too messed up in your life that He cannot sort it, and give you a new life. What ever has happened to you and however dark your life is right now, YOU matter to God. You matter to him so very much.

He doesn't just bless others - He's wanting to bless you!

I'm reminded of an old hymn based on this story.

**Reach out and touch the Lord as he passes by,
You'll find he's not too busy to hear YOUR hearts cry,
He's passing by this moment, YOUR needs to supply,
Reach out and touch The Lord as He passes by.**

There's a message from this passage for us as a church and it's the same as the words spoken to the disciples by Jesus. When they were trying to ensure Bartemaeus didn't have access to Jesus or distract them from their agenda, Jesus says, 'Let him come'.

Jesus says to us as a church, 'Let the people come'. Do not be so busy that the person crying out is a nuisance. Don't diss anyone or judge them or write them off as time wasters. Every single person crying out from the darkness has the attention of God. He says, 'Let them come'.

**Jesus says to every individual person hearing this today,
whoever and wherever you are.**

'What do you want me to do for you?'



What ever it is you want him to do for you in order to bring light into your darkness, name it, splurge it, confess it, sob your heart out, express your pain through screaming and wailing if that's what it takes, but whatever it is you want him to do for you, tell him. He's not too busy and He will journey with you bringing light, healing, hope and joyful purpose into your life.