

Welcome to Christchurch online, it is great to have you join us, why not say hi in the comments.

I'm Kieran Murphy and I'll be leading you through this morning's worship. I am the director of a great organisation called Phase working here in Hitchin building the wellbeing and resilience of young lives.

Perhaps you're a member or regular attender of Christchurch or perhaps you're a visitor today, just like me, we just want to say you're welcome here, it is great to have you hear and we hope and pray that through today's service you are encouraged, that you have an encounter with this amazing God we worship and that it is a blessing to you.

Before we get into this morning, I would like to introduce and thank a few people for this morning.

Firstly, Tony who is running all the tech today. Andy for all the music, Annette who will be reading later and Katherine who will be leading the Christchurch community moments.

Call to worship Luke 4: 18-19

I just want to start this morning by reading two verses from Luke 4 – and it is when Jesus stood up and read in the synagogue and he said this:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”

Jesus came to turn the known world on its head, to bring life and hope to all, to restore what was broken.

Perhaps you've joined us this morning having had a good week, perhaps it has actually been a really tough week.

Whatever it has been, God wants to bring life and freedom, He wants to give you and I hope.

So, as we go through this morning, I want to encourage you to be expectant to what God wants to do or say to you.

We are going to have a time of sung worship now:

Empty, broken here I stand STF 421

Empty, broken here I stand – Kyrie eleison
Touch me with your healing hand – Kyrie eleison
Take my arrogance and pride – Kyrie eleison
Wash me in your mercies tide – Kyrie eleison

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison

When my faith has all but gone – Kyrie eleison
Give me strength to carry on – Kyrie eleison
When my dreams have turned to dust – Kyrie eleison
In you, Oh Lord, I put my trust – Kyrie eleison

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison

When my heart is cold as ice – Kyrie eleison
Your love speaks of sacrifice – Kyrie eleison
Love that sets the captives free – Kyrie eleison
Oh pour compassion down on me – Kyrie eleison

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison

You're the voice that calms my fears – Kyrie eleison
You're the laughter dries my tears – Kyrie eleison
You're my music, my refrain – Kyrie eleison
Help me sing your song again – Kyrie eleison

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison

Humble heart of holiness – Kyrie eleison
Kiss me with your tenderness – Kyrie eleison
Jesus faithful friend and true – Kyrie eleison
All I am, I give to you – Kyrie eleison

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison
Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison



The Lord's Prayer

Let's say the Lord's prayer together:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. **Amen**

Reading

Thank you, Annette, for reading the scripture to us.

It feels like the world has been turned upside down. In this passage this morning we hear of the world being turned upside down for those that were there.

Luke 5: 17-26

Jesus forgives and heals a paralysed man

One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal those who were ill. Some men came carrying a paralysed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven.'

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, 'Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'

Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, 'Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk"? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.' So he said to the paralysed man, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, 'We have seen remarkable things today.'

I am sure that many of you would have read this passage many times before, I pray that as we look at it in the time, we have this morning, that it will bring something fresh to you and I.

Some context to the passage to help us understand: the poor, the lame, those that were different were looked down upon, their status was less, no one wanted to associate with them.

The first point I want us to think about is:

Removing obstacles:

I love the picture this passage creates of these people not letting anything get in the way of their friend in need getting close to Jesus.



It was their commitment, their perseverance, their ingenuity that got him front and centre of the saviour because they **believed** that Jesus could heal him. No guarantees. But they wouldn't let anything get in the way – they removed the obstacles.

They would have heard about Jesus mandate (Luke 4 18)

Often in life we can let obstacles get in the way of us, in lockdown, this can be even more difficult with the physical restraints, not being able to meet together, to hug loved ones, rhythms and routines changed and out of our control, it can feel like some big obstacles.

A question we often ask young people when we are mentoring them is 'what are you doing that is helping you or hinder you?'

Ask yourself that question in relation to connecting with Jesus.

What obstacles do you need to remove to get closer to Jesus?

Perhaps, you're sitting in front of your screen thinking I need to connect with people, or improve my daily habits and routines.

Maybe with all the change and disruption that we have been through your touch points with God have changed and you are not sure how to get them back.

Maybe you have missed key moments in the lives of those you love and are not sure how to get beyond them.

Whatever your situation, whatever the obstacle, God is close, your church family are here.

Often one of the things we have to do to remove obstacles is call them out and share with someone what we need, to share how we are doing.

Perhaps during this time you feel distant from God, you are not alone.

With the huge changes we are all going through, it can be easy to feel disconnected from God.

Allow your church family to carry you to Jesus, just like these men did for their friend – ask for prayer, let them know how you are doing, don't live behind the phrase 'I'm fine' – feeling inside not expressed.

Just as it was in this passage, the friends carried him to Jesus.

What obstacles do you need removed?

Faith is powerful:

Now we don't know the lead to this event we read about Luke, did the beg his friends, one of them talk others into it, were they all pumped for it,



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don't know. What we do know is that their willingness to act, to get over obstacles, to step out in faith changed their friend's life forever. It was the faith of those that carried him that stood out to Jesus. V19.

It was their faith that brought about his healing physically and emotionally as well as restoring his place in the society.

Our faith affects others, what we say, share and do will have an impact on other people. We have a choice what that impact is.

One of the things Phase are doing right now is virtual mentoring for any young person who wants to talk.

We've had numerous emails from parents thanking us that we would support their child. There's no cost to them, we just want to be there to support them, at a time when all young people are at risk.

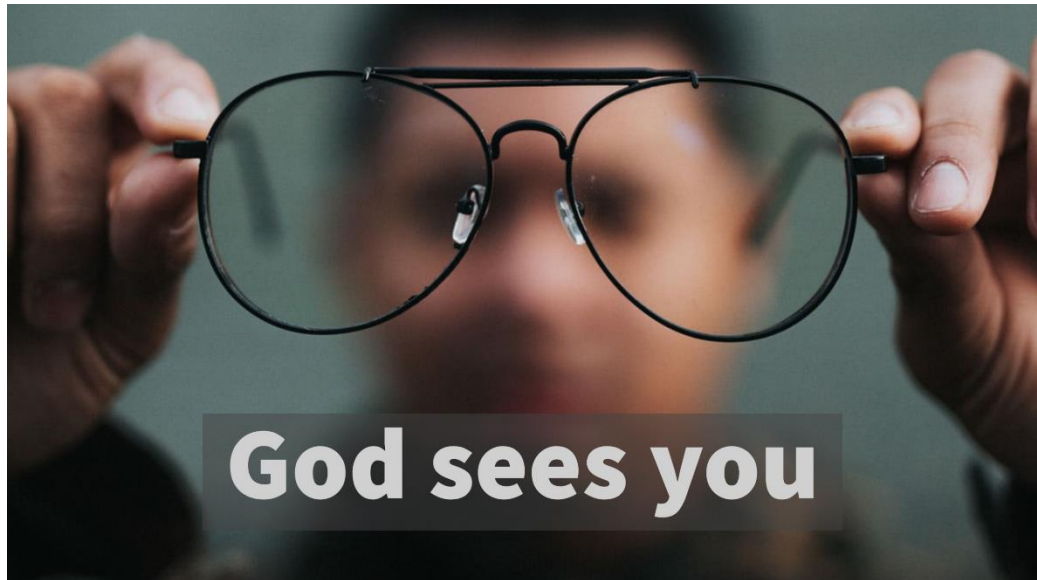
There has been a huge increase in people engaging in religious activities during lockdown, Nicky Gumble has said that the amount of people accessing Alpha and the questions they are asking are amazing – who can we carry to Jesus?

When you step out, when you are willing to act on your faith, God moves. Just as he did in this passage, it is the same God we get to worship and follow today.

Your faith is powerful.

God sees you:

We worship a God who is bigger than anything we face – he called the world and universe into existence, he created you and I, he knows you and wants you to know him more.



In this passage we read Jesus saw this man, he noticed him and his friends. He wasn't afraid to draw near to him; remember this man would have had little to no status, yet Jesus sees him.

As we struggle at this time God sees us – we are not alone, as it says in Psalm 139 – God sees our coming and our going.

Whatever you are facing today, God sees you, you do not face it alone. Reach out to those around, allow them to carry you to Jesus.

Let us be people that carrying one another in prayer, in care, in time and in love.

Let me finish with these words from John Wesley:

“Do all the good you can, By all the means you can,

In all the ways you can, In all the places you can,

At all the times you can, To all the people you can,

As long as ever you can.”

Amen

As we think about all of this, it is now time for the Christchurch community moment with Katherine Harris.

Prayers

Let us take a few moments to pray for others, to carry them to Jesus.

Father God,

As schools begin the summer holidays, usually a time for joy and excitement, but this year it is one full of anxiety and uncertainty.

We pray for school leaders as they work hard to prepare their buildings to welcome back students and staff in September safely. Grant them wisdom on how to manage this well, how to keep their communities safe in the face of growing fears of a second spike.

We pray for all those who would have been enjoying a period of rest following a busy exam season. Grant them peace as they await results to exams never taken. We pray hope and a future upon them that will not be marred by this pandemic.

We pray for families that as restrictions are eased that they will have opportunities to be refreshed, that tensions in homes will ease and that joy would overflow.

And finally, we pray for Sheralee and the family as they prepare for this new chapter ahead. We give thanks for her ministry here in Hitchin, for the lives she has impacted for you and we pray a double portion for her as she begins this new venture.

Take a moment to lift your prayers to God

We pray all of this in the name of Jesus. **Amen**

Thank you for joining with us today, thank you to all that have helped with the service this morning.

Let me finish with this prayer of blessing:

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."

Numbers 6:24-26

Come let us sing of a wonderful love - STF 443

Come let us sing of a wonderful love, tender and true;

out of the heart of the Father above, streaming to me and to you:

wonderful love dwells in the heart of the Father above.



Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell, joyfully came;
came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame;
seeking the lost, saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home! weary wanderer, home!
Wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.



Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love, come and abide,
lifting my life till it rises above envy and falsehood and pride:
seeking to be lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Robert Walmsley

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