



# Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2021, Bible Month Week 3 "Eyes Opened"**

These written worship sheets are provided for you to use as we gather as one, in our homes and in our church buildings to worship God. My hope is that for all of us, those who attend the in-person worship and for those who don't, that these sheets can accompany us as we go through the week. To pray, read and reflect on this time of worship together and nurture us in the days ahead, not just on Sunday. This week we are in the third part of the Bible Month series using Mark's Gospel, with the subtitle of "Eyes Opened" using Mark 8 11-26.

## Opening words:

I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you wisdom to see clearly and really understand who Christ is and all that he has done for you. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can see something of the future he has called you to share. Ephesians 1:17,18 Living Bible (TLB)

**We sing:** Open the eyes of my heart Lord StF451  
Sing/read/pray/proclaim words.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwqpKD-gBt4&ab\\_channel=Maranatha%21Music](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwqpKD-gBt4&ab_channel=Maranatha%21Music)

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord  
Open the eyes of my heart  
I want to see You  
I want to see You.

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord  
Open the eyes of my heart  
I want to see You  
I want to see You

To see You high and lifted up  
Shining in the light of Your glory  
Pour out Your power and love  
As we sing holy, holy, holy.



Open the eyes of my heart, Lord  
Open the eyes of my heart  
I want to see You  
I want to see You.

To see You high and lifted up  
Shining in the light of Your glory  
Pour out Your power and love  
As we sing holy, holy, holy.

Holy, holy, holy  
Holy, holy, holy  
Holy, holy, holy,  
I want to see you. I want to see you. Paul Baloche

**Opening Prayer:** Father when we come to you, it is like walking out of darkness and into the light. There are so many things, so many experiences, that crowd in and try to damage and spoil our lives each day. There are so many things that prevent us from being the kind of person you meant us to be. It would be so easy to come simply to be held gently in your healing, re-creating love. Father, by your Holy Spirit enable us to be made whole by placing all of our focus on you this morning and allowing our praise of you to be at the centre of all we say and do today. In the name of Christ, who opens the eyes of the blind and makes all things new. **Amen** From 500 Prayers by David Clowes.

**Prayer of Confession:** Father forgive our narrow mindedness and our blindness. Forgive us for accepting only that which we can see and understand. Forgive us for our all too easy rejection of other people, their styles, their ways, hopes and fears. Forgive our unwillingness to be enriched by each other's insights and experiences, each other's prayers and each other's praise. Forgive and warm our cold hearts, awaken our closed minds and help us to perceive what we see. Set our lives ablaze with your holy and supernatural love so that we may love, serve, see and hear all that you would have us be and do. For your glory. **Amen**

*A time of quiet to hear what God may be saying to us.*

Father God, forgive our sins and renew us in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

God is slow to anger and full of compassion. He forgives all who humbly repent and trust in his Son as Saviour and Lord.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. . **Amen.** Prayer of Confession from 500 Prayers, David Clowes. Absolution based on Exodus 34:6-7 and Romans 8:1.

**Our Lord's Prayer (the Christian family prayer):**

Our Father in Heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.  
Your Kingdom come,  
Your will be done,  
on earth as it is in Heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For Yours is the Kingdom and the power  
and the glory forever. **Amen.**

**A Poem:** A photograph in a local paper of a six year old child who had been born blind but through an operation was now able to see.

They've given me my sight, Lord,  
Did you see, Lord, in the paper?  
My photograph is there on the front page.

I saw it for myself  
And I've never seen anything before.  
My fellow men did this for me.  
Lord, where were you .....?

I am the laws by which the doctors work.  
I am the will that seeks to heal.  
I am the caring the nurses showed to you.  
I am the joy you share with those you love.  
I am he who binds all this together in love,  
Seeking to express the fullness of God  
for the fullness of man. Contributed by Rosemary Wells

**Prayer:** Gracious God, speak to us today through your Word and pour upon us the gifts of your grace. May your Spirit open our eyes, unblock our ears and soften our hearts so that we may learn your will and obey your call. **Amen**

**Scripture Reading: Mark 8: 11-26**

<sup>11</sup>The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. <sup>12</sup>He sighed deeply and said, 'Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.' <sup>13</sup>Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

<sup>14</sup>The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. <sup>15</sup>'Be careful,' Jesus warned them. 'Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.'

<sup>16</sup>They discussed this with one another and said, 'It is because we have no bread.'

<sup>17</sup>Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: 'Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?' <sup>18</sup>Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? <sup>19</sup>When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?'

'Twelve,' they replied.

<sup>20</sup>'And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?'

They answered, 'Seven.'

<sup>21</sup> He said to them, 'Do you still not understand?'

<sup>22</sup> They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. <sup>23</sup> He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spat on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, 'Do you see anything?'

<sup>24</sup> He looked up and said, 'I see people; they look like trees walking around.'

<sup>25</sup> Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. <sup>26</sup> Jesus sent him home, saying, 'Don't even go into the village.' New International Edition UK (NIVUK).

### **A time to pause, read again, pray, and reflect.**

**Preaching Notes:** The religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees, have come to Jesus to argue and demand a sign from heaven. With the miracles that have already taken place, often in the presence of the Pharisees themselves, why do they ask for a sign in this specific way? And, given all that Jesus has already done why does he not just give them what they ask for?

Despite all that Jesus has done and continues to do, despite the love and generosity he has shown to those who are brought to him, there is a demand for more proof. Note in verse 37 of chapter 7 following Jesus healing the deaf man, they were astounded beyond measure saying, 'He has done everything well he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.' Jesus has healed people and overcome demons as acts of love and compassion not 'to prove a point.' God is not to be put to the test (Deuteronomy 6:16).

Jesus could be speaking to us today we he asks 'why does this generation ask for a sign?' It is a spiritual blindness that exists, a hardness of the heart. "Eyes Opened" is a revelation to the heart rather than a physical act and this exchange with the Pharisees (verses 11-13) makes the perfect starting for what comes next in this passage. The 'sighing deeply' is a point of grief, disappointment

and a realisation that the hardness of heart of the Pharisees went very deep. Those who should know who he is are blind to him. Every word or phrase is of value, notice that Jesus 'leaves them' just as today he will silently, humbly and often unnoticed depart from people and situations where hard heartedness and arguments are taking place. In a Christian context -it must not be so!

Verses 14 to 21 show that Jesus is contending not only with the unfaithfulness and unwillingness of the religious leaders to lay aside their man-made rules but also with the disciples who are faithful yet slow to understand and still with their minds on the practical and physical. The time they are spending with Jesus -in the same way as we should- is a gradual and growing awareness of who he is, like a clearing of the mist. The discussion about bread is a good example of the practical meeting the spiritual. Jesus is talking to them about yeast in the context of it being a pervading influence on people's faith in God, the yeast of the Pharisees being their teaching and attitude and the yeast of Herod being his love of power and people pleasing. The disciples meanwhile are asking, who brought the lunch? Jesus is rebuking them, as they required at that time, laying question after question on them, remember, the Lord rebukes those he loves (Proverbs 3:12).

The Pharisees and Herod are brought into an unusual alignment by Jesus. Their influence is both subtle and dangerous and can still be found in the church today. An overt religiosity, love of position, rules based rather than people loving, mixed with (as with Herod) glimmers and possibilities of interest (he liked to hear John the Baptist) but so easily drawn aside to darkness, pride and self-esteem.

'Do you still yet understand'? Jesus reminds them of previous 'no bread' situations and God's generosity and abundance (what was needed plus more). All of this leads to the actual physical healing of the blind man. Personally led out of the village and healed by Jesus. Eyes opened,

restored physically and spiritually, now 'seeing everything clearly'. A parting word from Jesus to avoid the crowds, those seeking a sensational story or further proofs/signs. Just go to your family and celebrate your restoration. **Amen.**

Written by Phillip Dixon

**Prayers of Intercession:** *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7 NIV)*

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us as we pray for others. We pray for our world, for places where there is strife, for those for whom the storms of life are overwhelming and dispiriting. We pray for places where people are caught up in war and violence and for those exploited by unjust governments. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those known to us who are going through difficult times. Be with them and comfort them, help them to know that your promises are true and you are with us all, no matter what. We pray for those known to us personally who need your healing touch. May we, by our prayers, be the friend who brings someone to you. Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Loving God, who calls us to follow you and whose grace knows no limits, fill us with your love that we might reflect your beauty in our lives. Give us the courage to step out in faith and to trust in you for our future. Open our eyes, enlarge our vision, and fill us with the power of your Spirit enabling us to bring light and hope to the world.

Accept these prayers in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. **Amen.**

**Closing song:** Love Divine all loves excelling  
StF503 Sing/read/pray/proclaim words.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sw5ZCZeS32M&ab\\_channel=philipstopford](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sw5ZCZeS32M&ab_channel=philipstopford)

Love divine, all loves excelling  
Joy of Heaven to Earth come down  
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling  
All Thy faithful mercies crown  
Jesus, Thou art all compassion

Pure, unbounded love Thou art  
Visit us with Thy salvation  
Enter every trembling heart.

Breathe, O breathe, Thy loving spirit  
Into every troubled breast  
Let us all in Thee inherit  
Let us find that second rest  
Take away the love of sinning  
Alpha and Omega be  
End of faith, as its beginning  
Sets our hearts at liberty.

Come almighty to deliver  
Let us all Thy grace receive  
Suddenly return and never  
Never more Thy temples leave  
Thee we would be always blessing  
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above  
Pray and praise Thee without ceasing  
Glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation  
Pure and sinless let us be;  
Let us see thy great salvation,  
Perfectly restored in thee,  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before thee,  
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

**Blessing:** We go into the new week, refreshed by the presence of God, with our eyes opened ready to see all that you place before us. Fill us with the love of Christ and may we be overflowing with the life of the Spirit. **Amen.**

Thank you all so much for the cards and best wishes that I have received in preparation for my ordination on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>. I am privileged to be labouring alongside you for the benefit of the kingdom. May God bless all that we do in His name. Phillip 01425 673350.

Just a reminder that on the 4<sup>th</sup> July we begin a new preaching series, "A Praying Church."

Phillip Dixon, June 2021. YouTube links are external resources and are provided to help you engage with the songs. Singing the Faith and Hymns and Psalms resources are provided under license: CCLI 178182.