

HELPING THOSE IN NEED

John 9:1-41 // Jesus and a Blind Man

This service centers on the story in John 9 when Jesus meets and heals a blind man. This Gospel reading corresponds with the fourth Sunday in Lent. Here are some materials to help you create your own worship service.

MAIN THEME: *Where do we look to find those in need, and how can we help them?*

CHOOSING MUSIC // FOR SINGING

- 🎵 **All the Poor and Powerless** [Key of A]
Text and Music: David Leonard and Leslie Jordan
© 2011 Integrity's Praise! Music / Integrity's Aleluia! Music (admin. By EMI Christian Music Publishing)
- 🎵 **Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone)**[Key of G]
Text: John Newton, Chris Tomlin, and Louie Giglio
Music: NEW BRITAIN; refrain: Chris Tomlin and Louie Giglio
© 2006 sixsteps Music, Vamos Publishing, worshiptogether.com songs
- 🎵 **As It Is in Heaven** [Key of G]
Text and Music: Matt Maher and Ed Cash
© 2010, Thankyou Music
- 🎵 **I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light** [Key of D]
Text and Music: Kathleen Thomerson
© 1970 Celebration (Admin. The Copyright Company)
- 🎵 **We Cannot Measure How You Heal** [Key of F]
Words: John L. Bell
Music: Scottish melody; arr. John L. Bell
© 1989 WGRG The Iona Community (Admin. GIA Publications)
- 🎵 **We Will Run** [Key of E]
Text and Music: Lisa Gungor
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CREATING DRAMA // FOR HEARING

If you read Psalm 23 in this service, consider inserting this version of Psalm 23, from an unknown source, in between two readings of Psalm 23. Ask the person who reads it to sound frustrated. You might even play a soundtrack of a clock in the background.

The clock is my dictator, I shall not rest. It makes me lie down only when exhausted. It leads me into deep depression. It hounds my soul. It leads me in circles of frenzy, for activities sake. Even though I run frantically from task to task, I will never get it all done, for my ideal is with me. Deadlines and my need for approval, they

drive me. They demand performance from me, beyond the limits of my schedule. They anoint my head with migraines, my in-basket overflows. Surely fatigue and time pressures shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the bonds of frustration forever.

Consider asking a friend or community member who is without sight briefly share their story in worship. Ask this person to mention challenges they face that people with sight may not think about. And, ask what kinds of things can your faith community can do to help them.

FINDING ART // FOR SEEING

Create your own art. When the blind man was trying to explain his miraculous healing he exclaimed, “I was blind but now I see.” Remind worshippers of the blind life by displaying a large ornate frame, inside of which is nothing but a black canvas. During the service, replace the black canvas with a beautiful painting, as a symbol of sight that is offered by Christ.

Many congregations will pair Psalm 23 with the Gospel story about the blind man. Check out John August Swanson’s painting based on the Psalm. If you like it, purchase it, download it, and use it as a visual reflection during worship.

LIVING WORSHIP // FOR DOING

At some point in the service, place sand on the ground, and invite worshippers to scribble the name(s) of individuals they know need special help. This could be the elderly, someone at school who is challenged in physical ways, or other individuals or communities. Remind the worshippers that just like Jesus used ordinary sand to heal the eyes of the blind man, he often uses normal, everyday people to carry out his purpose in our world.

If you have time, ask worshippers to share whose name they wrote and why. Ask them to share one way they might help that person this week. You might even give them a small glass container to put sand in. They can carry this in their pocket through the week as a reminder to be on the lookout for those in need they should help.

MAKING SPACE // FOR WORSHIPPING

In John 9, Jesus heals the blind man in a very peculiar kind of way—he spits into sand to make mud, and rubs the mud into the man’s eyes. Although we can only speculate why Jesus did this, some have suggested that the mixing of sand (a symbol of humanity) with that which came from the mouth (a symbol of divinity) is a picture of the humanity and divinity of Christ. This week, place large pails of sand in worship, reminding worshippers that, like Jesus, we should not be afraid to get our hands dirty to help those in need.

WRITING POETRY// FOR PRAYING

We like this prayer from the Vanderbilt Library. Consider praying it as a group during your worship gathering.

Discerner of hearts, you look beneath our outward appearance and see your image in each of us. Banish in us the blindness that prevents us from recognizing truth, so we may see the world through your eyes and with the compassion of Jesus Christ who redeems us. Amen.

Use this responsive prayer of confession that centers on disability awareness. It is adapted from “A Resolution on Disabilities” adopted by the Christian Reformed Church Synod.

One: The Lord calls us as his covenant people to care for each other.

All: **We who belong to Christ must answer this call to serve each other in Christ’s name.**

One: Remarkable examples in the Bible teach us how God uses each member of the community in surprising ways to enrich and enlarge the church.

All: **Our Lord is our supreme example. He wanted and welcomed people with disabilities whom society rejected as useless.**

One: We have not always made it possible for people with disabilities to participate fully in this community. We have often isolated them and their families.

All: **We pledge ourselves to be the caring church we should be, paying special attention to the needs and gifts of all people.**

One: We pledge ourselves to remove the barriers which keep these people from being fully included in our fellowship:

All: **The barrier raised by attitudes we hold which make those with disabilities feel unwanted among us; the barrier raised by communication we carry on which ignores those who don’t hear, see or learn like us; the barrier raised by architecture we tolerate which makes it hard for some people to join us.**

One: Lord, alert us to barriers. Teach us to eliminate them; and show us that in serving we will be served. Amen.

SAMPLE WORSHIP SERVICE

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WELCOME

Say hi to other worshipers and welcome them in the name of Christ

LENT // JOURNEY TO THE CROSS

If Lent isn't common to your tradition, you might explain it as the end of the welcome and the beginning of worship.

SONGS OF PRAISE

As It is in Heaven

Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone)

PRAYER OF PRAISE

SONG OF GRACE

All the Poor and Powerless

SCRIPTURE READING

John 9:1-41

MESSAGE

Instead of a traditional "message," invite a blind person, the family of a blind person, or perhaps both, to visit your community. Ask them to share their story, and invite questions, if appropriate.

SONG AND PRAYER ACTIVITY

We Cannot Measure How You Heal

Have someone sing this song as a solo. As it is sung, invite worshipers to scribble in sand the name(s) of individuals they know who need special help. This could be the elderly, someone at school who is challenged in physical ways, or other individuals or communities. Remind the worshippers that just like Jesus used ordinary sand to heal the eyes of the blind man, he often uses normal, everyday people to carry out his purpose in our world.

If you have time, ask worshipers to share whose name they wrote and why. Ask them to share one way they might help that person this week.

CLOSING PRAYER

One: The Lord calls us as his covenant people to care for each other.

All: **We who belong to Christ must answer his call to serve each other in his name.**

One: Remarkable examples in scripture teach us how God uses each member of the community in surprising ways to enrich and enlarge the church.

All: **Our Lord is our supreme example. Christ wanted and welcomed people whom society rejected as useless.**

One: We have not always made it possible for people to participate fully in this community. We have often isolated them and their families.

All: **We pledge ourselves to be the caring church we should be, paying special attention to the needs and gifts of people, especially those with physical, sensory, mental, and emotional impairments.**

One: We pledge ourselves to remove the barriers which keep these people from being fully included in our fellowship:

All: **The barrier raised by attitudes we hold which make some feel unwanted among us; the barrier raised by communication we carry on which ignores those who don't hear, see or learn like us; the barrier raised by architecture we tolerate which makes it hard for some people to join us.**

One: Lord, alert us to barriers. Teach us to eliminate them; and show us that in serving we will be served.

All: **Discerner of hearts, you look beneath our outward appearance and see your image in each of us. Banish in us the blindness that prevents us from recognizing truth, so we may see the world through your eyes and with the compassion of Jesus Christ who redeems us. Amen.**

CLOSING SONG

As It is in Heaven

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BENEDICTION

One: Go in peace to love and serve.

All: **With God's help, we will.**