



The Free North Church Inverness
a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland

A GUIDE TO SUNDAY WORSHIP

11 am – Sunday 10th January 2021

*Sunday services today at 11 am and at 6 pm are **ONLINE ONLY**
and conducted by Mr Donnie Macleod and Rev Wes Strebeck
Our minister is on holiday this weekend. (Rev Angus MacRae. Tel: (01463)
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We have been forced to suspend all live in-person Sunday worship at the Free North Church for the month of January, and possibly for a longer period. This is to comply with public health restrictions announced by the Scottish Government driven by very understandable concern over a new and highly transmissible strain of Covid-19. While we are sad we cannot meet in-person, we are thankful for technology that allows us to share in worship and fellowship online and in our homes. You will find Morning and Evening services on our YouTube channel at 11 am and 6 pm each Sunday, available afterwards for catch up (www.youtube.com/c/FreeNorthChurchInverness).

Services today:

11 am – Mr Donnie Macleod – John 9

6 pm – Rev Wes Strebeck – Psalm 124

MORNING SERVICE OUTLINE

PRAISE: PSALM 95: 1-6

1 O come, let us sing to the LORD:
come, let us ev'ry one
A joyful noise make to the Rock
of our salvation.

2 Let us before his presence come
with praise and thankful voice;
Let us sing psalms to him with grace,
and make a joyful noise.

3 For GOD, a great God, and great King,
above all gods he is.

4 Depths of the earth are in his hand,
the strength of hills is his

5 To him the spacious sea belongs,
for he the same did make;
The dry land also from his hands
its form at first did take.

6 O come, and let us worship him,
let us bow down withal,
And on our knees before the LORD
our Maker let us fall.

*Psalm 95 Scottish Psalter Dundee Festival of Psalms 2005
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PRAYER

BIBLE READING: John 9: 1

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

9 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. **2** His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" **3** "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. **4** As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. **5** While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

6 After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. **7** "Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. **8** His neighbours and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?" **9** Some claimed that he was. Others said, "No, he only looks like him." But he himself insisted, "I am the man." **10** "How then were your eyes opened?" they asked. **11** He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." **12** "Where is this man?" they asked him. "I don't know," he said.

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. **14** Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. **15** Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see."

16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner perform such signs?" So they were divided. **17** Then they turned again to the blind man, "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened." The man replied, "He is a prophet." **18** They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. **19** "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?" **20** "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. **21** But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." **22** His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. **23** That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

24 A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." **25** He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

26 Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" **27** He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?" **28** Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! **29** We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

30 The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. **31** We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will.

32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. **33** If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." **34** To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

Spiritual Blindness

35 Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

36 "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."

37 Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

38 Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

PRAISE: O FOR A CLOSER WALK WITH GOD

O for a closer walk with God
a calm and heav'nly frame
a light to shine upon the road
that leads me to the Lamb.

Where is the blessedness I knew
when first I sought the Lord
where is the soul-refreshing view
of Jesus and his Word.

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed
how sweet their mem'ry still
but they have left an aching void
the world can never fill.

Return, o Holy Dove, return
sweet messenger of rest
I hate the sins that made thee mourn
and drove thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known
whate'er that idol be
help me to tear it from thy throne
and worship only thee.

Then shall my walk be close with God
calm and serene my frame
so purer light shall mark the road
that leads me to the Lamb.

O For A Closer Walk With God - Keswick
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SERMON: From Begging to Believing

Joh 9:25 He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, **that though I was blind, now I see.**"

Here we have a fascinating account in John chapter 9 of a man blind from birth.

Joh 9:1 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.

At the end of chapter 8 we read that the Jews picked up stones to stone him but Jesus went out of the Temple. It seems probable he met this blind man as he left, as begging was often done near to the Temple. Notice Jesus does not pass by the man but stops to act on his needy condition. He was both physically blind and much worse, he was spiritually blind.

This was the work Jesus came to do **v4** **"We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work."** Perhaps many people had already walked past this man and did not stop to offer help but Jesus is so different, He stopped. That should be a great encouragement to someone today who thinks Jesus is not interested in them. The Blind man could not see Jesus but Jesus saw the man.

1. The Cure

v6 Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud **v7** and said to him, **"Go, wash in the pool of Siloam"** (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

There are different ideas as to why Jesus used this method that would seem strange to many of us. There are things that we do not fully understand that can become a hindrance. However, it is good to follow the example of this man who did what Jesus said without questioning.

The result of the man's simple obedience was that he came back seeing **v7**. Of course, it was not the mud or the water in the pool that caused this to happen but it was by the miraculous power of Jesus. The power of Jesus has not changed. That should be an encouragement to anyone longing to find an answer to their deep spiritual need. Siloam means sent. Jesus is the One who was sent for this purpose, to bring light into the darkness and to save people from their sin.

Are you questioning or doubting? Follow what the Bible says, seek the Lord while he may be found. Anyone who is blind will want to see of course. Yet so many people who are spiritually blind are reluctant to come to the One who can make them see? The blind man came back seeing having met with Jesus and so could you. **Joh 8:12** **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."**

2. The Opposition

v16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them.

v24 So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner."

The Pharisees the religious leaders refused to accept Jesus for who he was. They implied **v24** "He is a sinner" and instead claimed to be disciples of Moses

Whenever anyone shows a genuine interest in the things of God there will be opposition. Expect opposition from the enemy the Devil. He will do all in his power to divert anyone from getting too serious about having a right relationship with God through trust in Jesus. What could that look like?

He is the master at sowing seeds of doubt, telling you Jesus is not able. "He does not have what it takes to save you and it's all in your imagination. How can you believe that nonsense? Just keep going as you are. Another time would be better." He is the master of delay. He will make you concerned about what your friends will think and that your life will be dull and restricted.

The Religious leaders put pressure on the blind man and they actually threw him out of the temple. You might say it's not worth it look at the hassle he had.

Yes but look finally at..

3. The response

v25 He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, **that though I was blind, now I see.**"

I don't know about all the things you say but I'm clear about one thing, I was blind, now I see.

That could not be denied. He is living proof.

He was amazed that the Pharisees could not accept that this was Jesus.

v30 The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. **v32** Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. **v33** If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

Who else could do such a thing he asked, but the Pharisees still refuse to accept all this was from Jesus.

They cast him out of the synagogue but how much more did he now have? He could see physically but also spiritually although not clearly yet.

Later in the passage we read

v35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "**Do you believe in the Son of Man?**" **v36** He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" **v37** Jesus said to him, "**You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.**" **v38** He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him

A wonderful response! We learn from this that we may not understand everything right away but a seeking heart will find Jesus.

When asked if he believed in Jesus it's like he was saying yes but I'm not getting the full picture. At that point Jesus made himself known to the blind man... **v37** Jesus said to him, "**You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.**"

He knew then and confessed "Lord I believe"

Some weeks ago, for the first time, we had a walk up Craig Phadrig in Inverness and followed a path that led us to a beautiful view. The view was looking down the Cromarty Firth but it was restricted by trees. We could partly see the beautiful view but not as good as we would have liked. We returned more recently and took a different path which led us higher up on to the top of the hill and we saw this amazing view! We just stood and looked and thought "this is stunning." Actually, it was the same view as we had seen the last time only from a different viewpoint. We were higher up and not restricted by trees. What was not clear before was clear now.

This, in a very simple way is what the blind man discovered. Although all along he was looking at Jesus the view had suddenly become clear. Jesus had revealed Himself to him **v37** and his heart warming response was "Lord I believe" The most important issue in this man's life was solved...the sin that separated him from God was forgiven.

One commentator put it like this "he lost the synagogue but found heaven"

He is now walking in the light with Jesus as his Saviour and able to see the wonder of God's creation with his physical eyes. Even more wonderful he is able to see the amazing beauty of the Creator Himself. Jesus said in v37 "You have seen Him"

In Psalm **27:4** we read: "One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple."

What is your response?

Not to the Free North Church or any other Church. Not to any person or religious form.

But to Jesus the one sent by God as Saviour.

Would you like to know this Saviour Jesus and to be able to see him like the blind man?

If this is your longing, turn your eyes to Him.

Admit you have sinned against God

Genuinely ask for forgiveness.

The Tax collector prayed "Lord have mercy on me a sinner" just a simple prayer.

Remember how...

Jesus saw the blind man begging

Jesus found the man when he was thrown out of the synagogue

Jesus spoke to the man to assure him of who He was

Jesus showed himself to the man so he could see clearly

...and the blind man's response was..."Lord I believe and he worshiped."

Can you say this?

PRAYER

PRAISE: TURN YOUR EYES UPON JESUS

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace

Turn your eyes to the hillside
Where justice and mercy embraced
There the Son of God gave His life for us
And our measureless debt was erased

Jesus, to You we lift our eyes
Jesus, our glory and our prize
We adore You, behold You, our Saviour ever true
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You

Turn your eyes to the morning
And see Christ the lion awake
What a glorious dawn, fear of death is gone
For we carry His life in our veins

Jesus, to You we lift our eyes
Jesus, our glory and our prize

We adore You, behold You, our Saviour ever true
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You

Turn your eyes to the heavens
Our King will return for His own
every knee will bow, every tongue will shout
All glory to Jesus alone

Jesus, to You we lift our eyes
Jesus, our glory and our prize
We adore You, behold You, our Saviour ever true
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You

O Jesus, to You we lift our eyes
Jesus, our glory and our prize
We adore You, behold You, our Saviour ever true
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You
Oh Jesus, we turn our eyes to You

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus-Sovereign Grace Music.
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BENEDICTION: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**SUNDAY AT SIX – Rev Wes Strebeck PSALM 124 “The Relief of Gratitude”
on our YOUTUBE CHANNEL at 6 PM tonight.**

Rev Wesley Strebeck is the interim-pastor of Christ the King PCA, in Wilmington, North Carolina. Wes hopes to join the Merkinch church planting team in the late summer of 2021.
(No Sunday night fellowship on Zoom tonight).

DIARY, NEWS & PRAYER

We wish you all God’s grace and blessing in the coming year. Thank you for supporting the life and witness of the Free North Church family over the past year. May God be honoured and praised by all his people across our city and nation and may many find faith in Jesus Christ in the days to come. Our minister is taking some time off at the start of 2021. Carrie will also be taking some time off during the Tier-4 restrictions.

IN-PERSON WORSHIP AT THE FREE NORTH: All our Sunday and weekday meetings are **ONLINE ONLY** through the month of January (and possibly for longer) to comply with public health restrictions announced by the Scottish Government. Please contact us if you require any help during this time of lockdown.

Monday 11th – The funeral of the late **Robert (Bob) Stewart** takes place from John Fraser and Sons at 12.30 pm (available online), with burial at Kilvean at 1.30 pm. Tier-4 restrictions limiting attendance apply. We extend our deep sympathy and love to Belle and all the family.

Wednesday 13th - Wednesday Church Night at 7.30 pm is online only on Zoom and YouTube for Prayer and Bible Study. Log in with the usual details.

Thursday 14th - The ladies’ Bible study will restart this Thursday (14th January) on zoom at 10:30am and 7:45pm, running fortnightly. This term we’ll be studying 1 Peter, do take the time to read through the letter before we meet. All ladies are welcome to attend either session, get in touch with Carrie for the zoom details: carrie.marlow@freenorthchurch.org or 07583498782.

Friday 15th – Join a 30-minute time of prayer and fellowship on conducted by an elder (usual Zoom details).

Next Sunday 17th January: Services are online only at 11 am and 6 pm, both conducted by the minister.

The Record magazine: The Deacons’ Court have decided not to charge existing subscribers for their *Record* in 2021. Please advise Martin McLean at the Church Office to set up a new subscription.

Explore Daily Reading notes: Copies for January to March are now available to help with daily Bible reading. Suggested donation £3. Contact Angus or Effie if you would like a copy posted through your letterbox.

If you need help of any sort, we would love to hear from you. Contact the minister (07 506 006 459; angusmacrae1967@gmail.com), any elder or deacon, or the church office (office@freenorthchurch.org).

Year-End Finances: A letter is available from the Treasurer giving an update on our giving to the central funds of the church. Sincere thanks to all who have supported our work in this most difficult year. To donate visit our website or contact our treasurer, Barbara Macphail. (01463 794622, treasurer@freenorthchurch.org).

PRAYER GUIDE – JANUARY 2021

In January, Free Church congregations are praying for Dunfermline, Carloway, Lochbroom, Edinburgh - Buccleuch, the Inverness - Merkinch Church Plant, Arran, Dornoch, Bishopbriggs, Grace Church Montrose, Leverburgh in South Harris, and Inverness - Free North.

Thank God for helping us through the difficulties of 2020, and pray that we would fix our eyes on Christ all through this New Year. Pray that we would grow in knowledge and love for Christ, treasuring Him and putting sin to death each day.

Pray for the Health Service, our rulers and public servants as they work for the welfare of society. Pray for an end to the global pandemic.

Lift up to the Lord **John MacAulay** in his new duties as Presbytery Clerk, **Brian Cameron** our new Session Clerk, and **Stewart Vant** our new Clerk to the Deacons' Court. Pray for these men as they give leadership and serve the body of Christ.

Remember our key mission partners including **Emma De Paula** (UCCF), **Philip Amos** (International Mission to Jewish People, London; formerly CWI), **Suresh & Roja Vemulapilli** of India Village Ministries and **Patrick Jok** (of the Reformed Church in South Sudan).

Pray that as a church family we would be eager to reach out to others, sharing hospitality and support as we are able within the tier-4 restrictions.

Pray for parents in our Church family, for patience and wisdom in raising their children, that they might grow as disciples and that their lives may be shaped by the gospel. Ask the Lord to help parents prioritise Sundays and prayer with and for their children, even when worship is online.

Lift up to the Lord Belle Stewart and all bereaved families and those who have been unwell or in hospital, and those being cared for in nursing homes. Pray for Willie Murray who has been in hospital for a pacemaker and for Alasdair Morrison who has been very poorly in the Isobel Fraser Care Home.

Pray for opportunities to **read the Bible one-to-one** with others in 2021, and for outreach initiatives to open us over the coming months.