

WORSHIP 24/10/21

WELCOME & OPENING PRAYER

Lord, open our eyes to your presence. Grant us a vision to see what we can achieve: as your love touches us may we reach out to others. Lord, stretch our capabilities, extend our vision and increase our sense of purpose, that we may grow in our service of you: through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

HYMN: BE THOU MY VISION

Available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6AdBkEJurR4>

BIBLE READING

MARK 10 :46-END

The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, [g] let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

REFLECTION

Bartimaeus has much to teach us about Jesus, what Jesus is about and the methods he uses to touch people with his love and healing.

First of all, we see in this passage that Jesus does not ask if we subscribe to a certain dogma, or that we can recite some correct form of confession, before he will meet us and our needs.

Nevertheless, Bartimaeus has an idea of who Jesus is. Being a Jew, he would know all about King David and by calling Jesus Son of David he is recognising

Jesus as a man who is a designated agent of God and also introducing the idea that Jesus is somehow a royal figure.

Notice he does not have a full understanding of Jesus and the ones he understands come from his own faith background as a Jew.

Bartimaeus also grasps the idea that Jesus has the ability to show mercy and heal. He may be physically blind but certainly is not spiritually blind!

Despite being hindered in coming to Jesus by people who “sternly ordered him to be quiet” Bartimaeus persisted and shouted louder! Why these people tried to shut Bartimaeus up could be because there was a belief that if you were born with some kind of disability it was because of sin so maybe they thought he was past help! At the very least he was at the bottom of the social ladder.

If someone called out in church we may think they are being disruptive and ask them to be quiet – that would be interesting I think. How would we, myself as a leader respond? I hope we would recognise God at work, but who really knows? So if this happens in church watch this space!

Jesus shows us that he has concern for all people, and I would say most often those at the bottom of the social ladder. I think of the times I have been in a city like Newcastle and been approached by rough sleepers or beggars, especially when I am wearing my clerical collar. Perhaps they also recognise something, or at least someone who represents God to them and so reach out. Let me stress not to the woman Annie Gray but to the God I represent.

It is interesting also that Jesus, doesn't go to Bartimaeus, but calls him to come to him, and this means the crowd who had been trying to shut the blind man up, now have to assist him in getting to Jesus.

As I am sure you are aware, there are many forms of blindness and not all of them have to do with our physical eye sight. There are those we find difficult, who seem to have no sensitivity to the needs of those around them. It's so easy even if only mentally to think. “O please shut up, you are driving me crazy”. Perhaps these are the very people we should be helping to find Jesus and a deeper understanding of who he is and the love, healing and compassion he wants to give.

There is a small detail in this story that shows how much faith Bartimaeus has in the ability of Jesus to heal him. He throws away his cloak as he springs towards Jesus. He must have been so excited that he didn't even think how difficult it would be for him as a blind man to find that cloak again. In that moment I believe Bartimaeus was convicted that he would be healed and nothing else mattered!! There was no hesitancy in him at all. He was going for it – this was his moment, his chance.

Of course, Jesus does heal Bartimaeus, not only of his physical blindness, but of the social stigma attached to his disability. This healing places Bartimaeus to a place of wholeness that will demand his belonging within society. When Bartimaeus casts off his cloak, he confidently prefigures that he will no longer sit on his garment dependent upon handouts from passersby.

Notice Bartimaeus asks for the right thing. When Jesus asks Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" his reply is a simple request voiced with the confidence that Jesus can deliver. "That I would see again," declares resolutely that Jesus can bring the wholeness and deliverance that people seek.

Notice Jesus literally says, "Your faith has saved you". Bartimaeus begins the story alongside the road. He ends the story as a follower.

So, friends let us take note, blindness comes in many forms and not all of them are physical. People with little understanding of Christianity are attracted to Jesus, and can recognise him as a man of God, who can heal. We don't need to insist they know all the right prayers or scriptures (though teaching may come later). We just need to help these people to receive an encounter with Jesus as a person, a person who can make all our broken places whole. And then, then they will become followers!

PRAYERS

Heavenly Father, we thank you for all men and women of vision. Especially at this time of climate emergency we thank you for those who seek to make this world a better place, with a future finding a way to work with nature and become more sustainable. We thank you for our eco champions, like John Gardener and others who are working away to make our church eco-friendly. We thank you for their work developing a bee friendly garden and all the other plans they have.

Lord open our eyes

That we may behold your glory.

We thank you for all who through their goodness have provided for us, our schools, NHS, care workers, our pastoral care team and telephone befrienders, and our prayer team. We pray for all our friends and loved ones and bring before you all who are ill and those who grieve.

Lord open our eyes

That we may behold your glory.

We bring before you all who are facing financial worries, with the dropping of the £20 uplift to Universal Credit, all who are anxious about the rising costs of fuel bills, and all those who because of inequalities in this world have little access to food and clean water, housing or jobs. Open our eyes to the inequalities in this world and show us how we may help if even in a small way. Open the eyes of world leaders that they may unite in finding solutions that bring equality, peace and flourishing to your world and peoples.

Lord open our eyes
That we may behold your glory.

We pray for all who have lost vision, all for whom the future looks bleak, all who have lost their way, all through lack of insight are in trouble. We pray for all who's sight is impaired and all who are blind and all those who provide help for the blind.

Lord open our eyes
That we may behold your glory.

THE LORD'S 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 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.**

HYMN: AMAZING GRACE

Available on YouTube here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MZgXXUW08Q>

PEACE & BLESSING

Come, taste and see that the Lord is good, happy are they that trust in him. The peace of the Lord be always with you: **and also with you.**

May the Lord bless you and keep you and make his face to shine upon you and give you his peace. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen**