**Last Sunday after Trinity**

Mark 10:46-52

**The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus**

**46**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. **47**When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” **48**Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” **49**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.” **50**So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. **51**Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher,[a] let me see again.” **52**Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

May I speak in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Please sit down.

Shortly we will be singing a hymn, I love. The first verse goes:

* Take my life and let it be
* Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
* Take my moments and my days,
* Let them flow in endless praise.

It seems many years ago now, when I was called by God, and was exploring what it was He wanted me to do.

It must have been a long time ago as I have been a trained, licensed Reader for 14 years now, but then it was all new and I went on a Seeking the Way course, run by the Diocese which helps you to discern your vocation, whatever that might be.

As part of that course, I thought that I may have had a specific calling to support the underdog and those with disabilities. And so, my first foray into exploring this further was enrolling on a journey on the Jubilee Sailing Trust tallship -the STS Lord Nelson. I joined as a buddy to assist someone but ended up, following a bad horse-riding accident, affecting my leg and hand, actually being temporarily mobility impaired myself and, as a result, seeing at firsthand and able to start to appreciate the difficulties faced by those in wheelchairs, and those with restricted mobility.

I later took part in a special day run by the Torch Trust, the Torch Trust cares for those who are sight impaired.

The first part of the day involved wearing a barrier so that everything I saw was distorted and fuzzy. In the afternoon we wore a completely dark blindfold and, although, I’m sure it was not the same as being born blind or going blind over a period of time, it certainly gave me some appreciation of the challenges and difficulties faced.

In our reading today we read of Bartimaeus. We don’t know if he was born blind or whether he went blind gradually. What we do know is that he was a blind beggar who spent his days on the side of the road in Jericho, and whose life changed when Jesus walked past.

I have been to Jericho; the name Jericho means fragrant town and it certainly is. When I went, the smells of the town were beautiful, stirred by the warm breeze, the air smelt of roses, herbs, orange blossom & honeysuckle, and bees were buzzing busily. I imagine, as a blind person living there, the sense of smell must have been heightened. This is especially amazing as, so I understand, when one sense fails the others naturally increase.

And so, we come to the story we have just heard

Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. When He arrives there, He will be rejected by the Jews, betrayed, convicted, and crucified on a Roman cross, like a common criminal.

As He moves steadily towards the city, He is surrounded by people, the Jews, and his disciples, on the whole, are blind to who He is, though He has tried to tell them and show them on many occasions.

Those around Him would not recognize just who Jesus was until after He had died on the cross and then rose again.

And, as Jesus makes His way to Jerusalem, He passes through Jericho, which is about 15 miles away.

On this particular day, the roads of the town were busy with pilgrims. It probably seemed like all of Israel was on their way to Jerusalem for a festival, and the road through Jericho was one of the main routes to the Temple. People crowded along the roads to see Jesus as He passed through. The people might not have known exactly who He was, but they knew He was someone special and they turned out to see Him as He passed by.

As I said earlier, most people were blind to just who Jesus was. Only a very few people in that great throng recognized the Son of God as He moved through the town,

Bartimaeus may have been blind, but he saw some things about Jesus that others with sight did not see.

Bartimaeus was able to see, to understand that Jesus was the Messiah. That is why he called Him the “***son of David***”. Somehow, Bartimaeus had taken the things he had heard about Jesus, and it all came together in his mind. He realised that Jesus was the Messiah! Since he believed that, he believed that Jesus could heal his blindness.

Why? Why did he think that?

Because one of the signs of the Messiah would be that He would open the eyes of the blind, the prophet Isaiah wrote in chapter 35:4-6;

“Then will the eyes of the blind be opened”

and the psalmist writes in

Psalm 146: verse 8” The Lord opens the eyes of the blind”.

I was interested to note two other things from this passage, firstly, that Jesus called him to come forward and secondly that Bartimaeus threw off his cloak.

Jesus didn’t fight his way through the crowd to reach Bartimaeus, he waited for Bartimaeus to come to him, and this is true for us today, Jesus is waiting but it’s up to us whether we accept his call and come to Him.

And we read, Bartimaeus got up and threw off his cloak.

Now as a beggar he didn’t have a lot of possessions, his cloak was possibly his most important item, it kept him dry, and warm whilst he sat on the side of the road begging. That he threw it off was almost acknowledging that his old life was done, and his new life was about to begin.

He no longer needed to be encumbered by his cloak, just as he knew, somehow, that he would be healed and would no longer be a beggar.

I wonder what happened to Bartimaeus, after he went to Jesus and received his sight?

We read ‘Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way’. I wonder if he found the bright sunlight, vivid flowers, and unfamiliar faces around him mesmerising or was he focused purely on following Jesus, and did he follow Jesus all the way to Jerusalem, maybe he was there when He was crucified.

I suppose that we will never know….

So, to finish, the challenge to us for this week is to think of Bartimaeus, and as we remember this encounter between him and Jesus, I want us, you, and me, to look into our own hearts.

Let’s ask God to speak to us, to each one of us, and help us to see that if we call to Jesus, He will welcome us with open arms.

I started with a verse from a hymn, and it’s apt that I end with one too:

Lord Jesus, I pray that you will:

* Take my will and make it thine;
* it shall be no longer mine.
* take my heart, it is thine own;
* it shall be thy royal throne.

Amen

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