**6th April 2014**

**Mark 10:46-52  -  Lord, I Want to See**

**Something different:**

We are going to do something a bit different this morning. I do have a few comments to make bout this story of the healing of blind Bartimaeus, but the story lend s itself particularly well to slow thoughtful meditation. So I’m going to split you up into three sections. One part of the church - I want you to imagine you are in the crowd that day in Jericho. Another part I want you to get in the role of the blind man – Bartimaeus. The last part of the church I want you to think through this story from the point of view of Jesus – you have the real challenge!

Read the story again.

Take some time to imagine you are there that day in Jericho. It’s going to be hot, dry and dusty (it almost always is there). How do you feel? If you are part of the crowd, Jesus, the begger?

Jesus is in town. Are you excited, nervous, worried about what he will do next? You’re going up to Jerusalem – sense of things coming to a head – something big is going to happen. Jesus how do you feel at this moment – mind on other things maybe?

Then there is shouting from the roadside. Blind man why are you shouting? What are you hoping for?

Crowd what is your reaction to this beggar shouting out? Is this a nuisance; a distraction; are you concerned or irritated?

You make out what the person is saying: ‘Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me’

How does the blind man say that?

Now that title ‘Son of David’ is possibly dangerous, even revolutionary – if enough people start calling him ‘Son of David’ someone in authority may get alarmed. How do you feel about this cry, ‘Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me – as the crowd, as the blind man, as Jesus?

Then Jesus, who never seems put out by what annoys his followers (remember how he let the children come to him when his followers try to prevent their interruption) turns to speak to the blind man. How do you feel about that? As crowd, blind man, as Jesus

Crowd: How do you feel about having this beggar in the party?

Jesus says these words: ‘Call Him’. The followers of Jesus say ‘Take heart, get up he is calling you’. What tone of voice is all that said in?

The Imagine Jesus meeting the blind man and then saying ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ How do you imagine Jesus saying that and the response of the blind man? Crowd: has Jesus ever spoken to you like that?

The blind man replies: Rabbi I want my sight back’. How does he say that? How do you all react?

Jesus replies by saying ‘Go your faith has healed you’.

The man sees again – imagine the scene – what is happening. How does Jesus react?

Now Jesus moves on – the bind man follows – picture the scene. Do you follow too?

**1. Sheer persistence and determination of Bartimeus:**

Pester Power – what do you pester parents for – parents what are you pestered for?

They say that if you want anything in life, if you want to achieve, make it, become something, have a successful career, business – you have to be determined.

To have the full benefit of being a Christian – to know the real joy of following Christ you have to be determined – not half hearted, lukewarm – it doesn’t really work. Lord I will love you a bit. Lord I will follow you a bit.

Bartimaeus grabbed his Opportunity

William Barclay once said there are three things which cannot come back: the spent arrow, the spoken word, and the lost opportunity. Bartimaeus could not know what lay just ahead for Jesus in Jerusalem. He could not know that the Master would be crucified there and that this opportunity would never come again. He did know, however, that the opportunity was here, now, and he wasn't going to allow it to pass him by.

He pestered Jesus to have pity on him.

If something is not right – are you going to pester Jesus? Really be open to the work of Christ in your life?

Are you going to make the most of your opportunities?

Particularly your opportunities to grow in your faith and to love God?

**2. Jesus hears Bartimaeus – and hears us when we sincerely come before him in prayer. Why? Because he loves us.**

Some years ago in a small village in America, a little twelve-year old girl named Tina was babysitting her little brother. Tina walked outside to check the mail. As she turned back from the mailbox, she couldn't believe her eyes. The house was on fire. So very quickly the little house was enveloped in flames.    
  
Tina ran as fast as she could into the flaming house only to find her baby brother trapped by a burning rafter which had fallen and pinned him to the floor. Hurriedly, Tina worked to free her brother. She had trouble getting him loose as the flames were dancing around their heads. Finally, she freed him. She picked him up and quickly took him outside and revived him just as the roof of the house caved in.    
  
By this time, firemen were on the scene and the neighbors had gathered outside the smoldering remains of the house. The neighbors had been too frightened to go inside or to do anything to help, and they were tremendously impressed with the courage of the twelve-year old girl. They congratulated her for her heroic efforts and said, "Tina, you are so very brave. Weren't you scared? What were you thinking about when you ran into the burning house?" I love Tina's answer. She said, "I wasn't thinking about anything. I just heard my little brother crying."

Jesus stops and hears the cries of Bartimeus. He’s not in such a rush that he can’t hear a cry for help.

Sometimes in life we can get caught up in our plans and our agendas, our work, our own happiness, that we ignore the cries of others. It is a spiritual gift to be attentive to the nudging of the Spirit of Christ – to what maybe going on around us.

Let me ask you something? How long has it been? How long has it been since you heard your brother or sister crying? How long has it been since you stopped and did something about it?

**3. Jesus asks the question ‘what do you want me to do for you?  
   
Define the Problem**

Thousands of years ago a young Chinese emperor called upon his family's most trusted advisor. "Oh, learned counselor," said the emperor, "you have advised my father and grandfather. What is the single most important advice you can give me to rule my country?" And Confucius replied, "The first thing you must do is to define the problem."   
  
Many unhappy people cannot put their finger on what is really causing their distress. Many unfulfilled people cannot even tell you what it would take to satisfy them. Many of us have no clear idea or conception what our real needs, our real desires, and our real priorities are. And because we have never defined the problem or clarified our goals, we spend a lifetime anxiously wandering with very little to show for the pilgrimage.

Tom Wright writes about how middle aged man and his elderly mother came to him for advice. The mother was ailing and depr4essed and her son was desperate to get her into appropriate are. As long as she lived with him he couldn’t do his own work or have any private life. She swamped him with demands for help and attention. They looked at all sorts of options, sheltered accommodation, residential care, community living. The mother saw some flaw in all of them. After an hour she declared triumphantly that the vicar couldn’t do anything for us. But tom Wright writes that the truth was she didn’t want anybody to do anything for her. She wanted to go on being a victim putting moral pressure on her son (and everybody else in sight) to feel sorry for her. Jesus question to Bartimaeus addresses exactly that possibility ‘what do you want me to do for you? There is a challenge: do you want to give up begging?

**4. Bartimeus asks to see. Jesus heals him and says your faith has made you well. All healing needs faith.**

Apparently Blind people had to wear a special colored coat in those days that designated them as blind. So that if they sat down in the middle of the road, not knowing it was the middle of the road, people in their chariots would , hopefully, take pity on them and not run them over. The cloak acted as a kind of white stick.

Mark comments how when Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was calling him he go up and threw off his cloak. In other words he stepped out in faith, before Jesus even said a word to him, that he believed that Jesus would heal him.

In recent times faith has come to mean belief - primarily the beliefs in your head. But most Christian understandings of faith were not matters of the head but matters of the heart. The heart in the Bible is a metaphor for the deep level of the self – a level below our thinking and feeling and willing, our intelligence, our emotions. The heart is therefore deeper than the head. Faith is the way of the heart – a deep trust. Beloving God and to love that which God loves.

Of course you need to know what you believe – what your head assents to – the thoughts you have are vital. Some beliefs are destructive and damaging. Some are good and lead to positive living. Depending on what type of faith you have can decide whether your faith will harm you or heal you? Faith has been described as ‘seeing’. Seeing life as filled with the glory of God – that we live in grace – filled with wonder and beauty and that God sustains us. We can look at the world and be fearful – things are out to get us. The world is a dangerous place, an evil place. We can see the world as indifferent to us. We have to look after ourselves and hope for the best.

Or we can see the world as full of God’s grace and God’s generosity. How you see life shows what kind of faith you have.

‘Your faith has saved you’. The word for save carries a wide and deeper meaning. God’s rescue of people, how God saves people – may not be through physical ailments but through spiritual peril. Different aspects of being saved. Jesus saves in different ways. Your prayer may be answered in ways you don’t expect.

Mark is using Bartiameus as the model to imitate. Unlike the disciples who hadn’t really understood what Jesus was about, Bartimaeus is a man of faith, courage and true discipleship. He recognizes who Jesus is, Son of David’ he clearly believes that Jesus can help him – so asks for mercy and help. And finally:

**5. Bartimeus was changed and lived a life of deep appreciation and faith – a new way of seeing life.**

Some People Are Never Satisfied

Remember the beggar in the movie “Monty Python’s Life of Brian.” Brian and his mother are walking through town and get hit up by a beggar. “Give money for an ex-leper. Gift for an ex-leper, please.” And Brian says: “What do you mean an ex-leper?” And the leper says: “Well I was cured”

“Who cured you?” Brian says.

And the leper says: “That Jesus fellow. Now I have a hard time making a living, all I’ve ever known how to do is beg.”

And Brian says: “Well why don’t you go back and ask him to make you a leper again?” And the leper says: “Well, I might not like that. Maybe he could just make me a leper during working hours or something.”

So Brian just sighs, drops a coin into his cup and walks away. And the ex-leper looks into his cup and says: “A half a dinari! Look at this - he only gives me a half a dinari!” And Brian says: “Some people are never satisfied.” To which the leper replies: “That’s just what Jesus said!”

Now Monty Python might be on to something. Jesus may not have said exactly these words but he certainly ran into people who were unappreciative. Blind Bartimaeus was not one of them. Upon receiving his sight he immediately began to follow.

He did not selfishly go his own way. He began with need, went on to gratitude and finished with loyalty. What a summary of what Christian discipleship means.

But interestingly Jesus gives him the option of going on his way, healed and free without an obligation to follow him. Jesus say to Bartiameus ‘Go your faith has healed you: the most accurate translation of scripture has Jesus saying ‘go on your way: in other words implying don’t feel under obligation to me you can go on **your** way.

But then the next verse says that Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the Way. The Way of course was the early Christian’s word for what we now call Christianity’ – you are followers of The Way.

Bartiameus is a model of discipleship – He ask for freedom and for salvation. He turns his back on the small selfish comforts of victimhood. He responds to the love and saving grace of Jesus, freely and is then prepared to follow Jesus wherever he goes next.

May we be followers of the Way too.

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