

24 October 2021

Sentence

The redeemed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. Isaiah 51.11

Prayer of the Day

O God, you give light to the blind and comfort to the sorrowing,
and in your Son you have given us a High Priest
who has offered the true sacrifice for us
and yet can sympathise with us in our weakness:
hear the cry of your people
and lead us home to our true country,
where with your Son and the Holy Spirit
you live and reign, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

Job 42.1-6, 42.10-17

¹ Then Job replied to the Lord : ² 'I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ³ You asked, "Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?" Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.

⁴ 'You said, "Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me." ⁵ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶ Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.'

¹⁰ After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. ¹¹ All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

¹² The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. ¹³ And he also had seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴ The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch.

¹⁵ Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers. ¹⁶ After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. ¹⁷ And so Job died, an old man and full of years.

Psalm 34.1-8

¹ I will bless the Lord continually: his praise shall be always in my mouth.

² Let my soul boast of the Lord: the humble shall hear it and rejoice.

³ O praise the Lord with me: let us exalt his name together.

⁴ For I sought the Lord's help and he answered: and he freed me from all my fears.

⁵ Look towards him and be bright with joy: your faces shall not be ashamed.

⁶ Here is a wretch who cried, and the Lord heard me: and saved me from all my troubles.

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps round those who fear him: and delivers them in their need.

⁸ O taste and see that the Lord is good: happy are they that hide in him!

Hebrews 7.21-28

²¹ but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest for ever."' "

²² Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant. ²³ Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; ²⁴ but because Jesus lives for ever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

²⁶ Such a high priest truly meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests, men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect for ever.

Mark 10.46-52

⁴⁶ Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means 'son of Timaeus'), was sitting by the roadside begging.

⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' ⁴⁸ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.' So they called to the blind man, 'Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you.'

⁵⁰ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ 'What do you want me to do for you?' Jesus asked him. The blind man said, 'Rabbi, I want to see.'

⁵² 'Go,' said Jesus, 'your faith has healed you.' Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.



Jesus and his disciples are almost at Jerusalem with all that that will entail: the very next passage is the entry into Jerusalem, which we usually read on Palm Sunday which leads to the complete passion story which we will skip for now and read when it occurs in the church calendar.

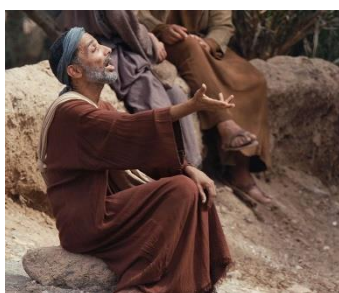
You would think a story in this position would be significant in some way. We often read it as just a separate incident and don't realise where it comes in the overall narrative. When reading the story of blind Bartimaeus it would be easy to think that this is just a lovely healing story and leave it at that. Well, it is certainly a lovely healing story, but it also has hidden depths that are very enlightening.



Bartimaeus is sitting by the road begging as usual when he realises that Jesus is passing by and he begins to yell out 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' No-one has ever called Jesus 'Son of David' before: now that Jesus is coming to his destiny he can finally be recognised as the anointed king in the line of David. He is Zion's king coming to Jerusalem and when Bartimaeus is healed at

the end of the story he joins the throng praising Jesus as he enters Jerusalem. This is a man of faith, unlike the disciples who are spiritually blind this man can understand and see who Jesus really is.

The crowd regard Bartimaeus as a nobody, disabled people were regarded as sinners and not allowed into the temple, so the crowd considered him and his needs to be of no account, they are busy preparing to welcome Jesus into



Jerusalem, surely that's much more important than some blind beggar. They try to shut him up, but he just yells the louder.

Sometimes in our lives we know that God wants to do something, and he gives us the faith and courage to step out, people around us try to dissuade us but we know, but we can trust our Lord and keep pushing on.

Last week when James and John, came to him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask.' Jesus replied, 'What do you want me to do for you?' Their answer was a request for status and glory.



But in our story today when Bartimaeus gets to Jesus and is asked the same question: 'What do you want me to do for you?' Jesus asked him. The blind man said, 'Rabbi, I want to see.'

Have you ever known someone with a disability or chronic condition who makes that disability part of who they are? I think that is part of what disabled people are trying to tell us these days, that they are people who have a disability rather than a disability embodied in a person. People with disabilities still have lots of abilities and should be identified by these not their disabilities.

Sometimes this is harder for the person themselves even than for us. I knew a woman who had had a chronic condition for many years and although people tried to help her and she wanted to feel well, she was not able to give up her identity as a sick person or the comfortable lifestyle she had built around her condition and so she always relapsed.



We don't know how old Bartimaeus was or how long he had been blind but obviously he had made a life for himself, he had his begging spot and really he didn't have to work very hard, so he had a choice: he could have stayed silent; he could have asked for alms or something to make his life easier but he asked for sight, that thing which would make him a fully-fledged member of society again with many joys but also responsibility, and work to do. It is quite a challenge and Bartimaeus rises to it splendidly. He wants the new life, not only sight, but the chance to follow Jesus.

Jesus is constantly asking us '*What do you want me to do for you?*' and we need to hear that question and decide how we will answer it. If like James and John we ask for glory and worldly things we are unlikely to receive what we ask for but if like Bartimaeus we ask for sight, healing and things which will advance the Kingdom then miracles will happen.



Jesus heals Bartimaeus and says 'Go, your faith has saved you' and Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the way. The word 'saved' refers to physical healing and salvation. Throughout Jesus' ministry salvation referred to both physical healing and being saved from spiritual peril, usually in the same event. And again, we see that the key to salvation of whatever kind is faith. That is why anyone, even those excluded from polite society can be saved. Faith consists of recognising who Jesus is and trusting him to rescue us.



We all have something, not necessarily a disability, that we know is holding us back from being the person we believe God want us to be. Can you take a moment now in your own mind to imagine Jesus on the road in front of you, can you put everything aside and go to him, and hear him ask 'What do you want me to do for you? Give him your true answer and believe.

Because Jesus lives for ever, he has a permanent priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore he can save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

²⁶ Such a high priest truly meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.



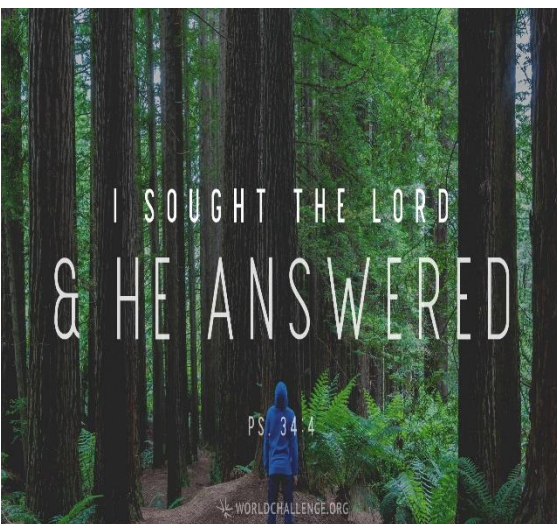
The healing of Bartimaeus is a sign that Jesus is trying to open his followers' eyes to see him not just as the Messiah but as the one who would give his life to bring salvation to all.

Our OT reading today finishes the story of Job. After God has responded to Job and asked him what he contributes to the running of the universe Job in humility says 'Surely, I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. ⁵ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.'

Job never lost his faith in God but when God meets him face to face, he is utterly overwhelmed and can only respond in worship love and praise. How do we respond to God when we see a tiny glimpse of his glory?

Bartimaeus is also a model to imitate. Unlike the disciples, he is already a man of faith, courage, and true discipleship. He recognises who Jesus is; he clearly believes Jesus can help him; he leaves his begging, (the cloak is for people to throw money on, not for warmth) and he follows Jesus on the way.

Let us join with Job, Bartimaeus and the psalmist in praise saying the Psalm again:



- ¹ I will bless the Lord continually: his praise shall be always in my mouth.
- ² Let my soul boast of the Lord: the humble shall hear it and rejoice.
- ³ O praise the Lord with me: let us exalt his name together.
- ⁴ For I sought the Lord's help and he answered: and he freed me from all my fears.
- ⁵ Look towards him and be bright with joy: our faces shall not be ashamed.
- ⁶ Here is a wretch who cried, and the Lord heard me: and saved me from all my troubles.
- ⁸ O taste and see that the Lord is good: happy are they that hide in him!