

Blind or Seeing?

A sermon by the Rev. Frances Savill

Sunday October 24, 2021

Mark 10:46-52

The Apostle Paul says that all of us see poorly – our spiritual eye sight is poor at best – he describes it as seeing through a mirror dimly. But one day we will see clearly, we will see face to face and know completely even as we are completely known.

Chapter 10 of Mark's gospel shows people with all kinds of different eyesight.

All kinds of people came to Jesus, all looking for different things...

Pharisees came to him to test him- Jesus gave them a most orthodox answer and sent them on their way.

I'm not sure how clearly they saw Jesus, but Jesus clearly recognized and saw what they were up to.

Children came to Jesus, they recognized him, ran to him, and received a warm welcome and his blessing.

A rich man came, he recognized Jesus as a religious expert, asked him a great question, and walked away from Jesus sadly.

I think he saw only too clearly that Jesus wanted his whole life.

James and John were the next to approach Jesus, they came asking a favour – "grant us a request" they asked.

They wanted to sit at Jesus' right- and left-hand side in his glory.

They claimed that they could be baptized with the same baptism as Jesus and could drink from the same cup he would drink from.

In the end they just made all the other disciples angry at their trying to get the seats of honour.

I don't think that at that moment they had any idea of what they were asking, or what they were claiming, I think they were as blind as bats regarding their whole exchange with Jesus.

Jesus, ever the teacher used their blindness and nerviness as an opportunity to teach, saying; that the greatest would be the servant, and as he came to serve, so the disciples must learn to serve one another.

Then we have the story of Bartimaeus – a man who was blind, but who could also clearly see more than most folks.

He was an outcast – he was on the edge of the road – he was not in Jericho – but begging outside the protection of the town – on its outskirts – an outcast of outcasts.

Jesus is surrounded by a large crowd, and by his disciples, and Bartimaeus hears that it is Jesus passing by.

It seems that he was a man of unusual sight.

Bartimaeus, suffering, blind, a beggar, was nevertheless, a man of faith.

He, an outcast, knew more than the insiders did,

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me."

"Son of David" – when will we hear cries similar to this, and when will people throw off cloaks and lay them at Jesus' feet? (Palm Sunday)

The first to make these claims for Jesus, is a blind beggar, who knew in faith who Jesus was.

The crowd tried to silence Bartimaeus.

How could this blind beggar presume to bother the teacher?

Silence the outcast.

His poverty, his blindness, his brokenness and suffering we push aside as quickly as we can.

But Bartimaeus would not be silenced.

He cried out all the more to Jesus.

Jesus isn't appalled by this man.

Jesus doesn't hurry past the man afraid of brokenness.

Jesus stops.

He has Bartimaeus brought to him through the crowd.

“What do you want me to do for you?”

That’s the same question Jesus asked James and John, their answer was to sit in glory.

But Bartimaeus, when he was asked by Jesus; what *do you* want me to do for you, gave the answer of faith and life, and gospel;

“I want to see.”

The one who was blind, a beggar, had already seen much, knew much, and had great faith.

He is the example of faithfulness.

Jesus performs no ritual.

He doesn’t even lay hands on him.

Jesus simply states the truth; “your faith has saved you, healed you, go on your way.”

Bartimaeus’ way, was Jesus’ way.

Bartimaeus followed Jesus on his way towards Jerusalem.

Bartimaeus, in his suffering, knew he needed the healing Jesus could bring. He wouldn’t be silenced, but called out to Jesus, until he responded to his need.

Jesus responded with compassion, not diminishing his suffering, not being a fixer, but honouring him, asking him the question; what do you want me to do for you?

I want to be healed.

Only one who admits their suffering, their brokenness, their need, can be healed and saved.

Jean Vanier said;

"Our brokenness is the wound through which the full power of God can penetrate our being and transfigure us in him.

Brokenness is not something from which we must flee but the place from where we can cry out to God, where God will find us, and we can find him."

(The Broken body)

Bartimaeus is the example of discipleship.

He knew he was blind – he knew he needed healing – and in his need he called out to Jesus to save him and to heal him.

Not many of us are able to recognize our blindness – the hurts of the past colour and cloud our perceptions of today.

Our wounds and biases blind us to the truth of God, the truth about ourselves, the truth about the world around us.

We need to come into Jesus' holy presence – that he might reveal to us the truth of our blindness – that he might remake us - transform our attitudes, open our eyes to see the truth – and be saved and healed.

One last comment from the passage – who would have thought that blind Bartimaeus would be a man of vision – a leader and example of faith?

Maybe we are blind to the people of faith around us – who could lead us to the Lord – maybe God is revealing himself in unexpected places – and our prayer should be to have our eyes opened afresh.

Let us pray:

Holy God, in you O Lord we see truth, in the light of your presence we are revealed in our brokenness, in our need, in our blindness. Lord, we want to see, we want to be healed, we want to be saved. You alone O Lord are able. And grant Lord, that we would have eyes to see clearly those who you love, those who you are revealing yourself to. Heal all our seeing we pray – we look for the day when we will see face to face, and we will know fully even as we are fully known. We follow you, Lord. Amen.