

Julie's sermon on Mark 10: 46-52 - Blind Bartimaeus - 2nd August 2020

Lets Pray: Heavenly Father may I speak your words and not my own. Open our hearts to hear your word and enable us to act upon it. AMEN.

Well this morning we are continuing our series on men and women of the bible and this week we are looking at Bartimaeus – the blind beggar healed by Jesus.

Some of you may be wondering why I chose him because he is not one of the main characters in the bible. Well I chose him because I love the story – it is a story of hope. In a world where beggars were the norm and Bartimaeus would have just been one more beggar amongst many, this story shows that he was different and that he wasn't prepared to let his one hope for a better life pass him by.

Bartimaeus lived in Jericho and he was blind which meant he could not work and so the only way he could get money to eat was to beg! It was a dangerous thing to do because he would be abused both verbally and physically because in the eyes of the people he was nothing!

This particular day Jesus is travelling from Capernaum to Jerusalem for the Passover and he was passing through Jericho. He was not intending to stop he was simply passing through!

Bartimaeus hears the crowd shouting at Jesus and he realises that here was his only hope of a better future and so as the crowd passes he calls out to him. But he doesn't just call out for help or for alms he directs his call at Jesus. "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me". We don't know how Bartimaeus knew that Jesus was the Son of David maybe he had heard from others as they had passed by; but we do know that it got Jesus attention. Bartimaeus then asks for mercy – he doesn't ask for help or pity because they wouldn't get him what he wanted most – no he asks for mercy – he wants Jesus to be merciful and heal him. You see he recognises that this is probably his one and only chance to change his life for ever and so he isn't going to let a little bit of humiliation stand in his way he is going to shout for all he is worth until he gets noticed.

Sadly the disciples are dismissive of him, they don't want to be embarrassed by yet another mad man demanding Jesus' time. They want him to be quiet and just disappear.

But Bartimaeus has spent his life being one of the outcasts one of the forgotten people and he isn't going to be quiet, quite the opposite he is going to be heard and so he shouts all the more. "Son of David, have mercy on me".

He could easily have kept quiet and stopped shouting when the disciples told him to and allowed Jesus to pass by. He could have continued to wallow in his abysmal lifestyle and been comfortable with his lot. But he wasn't and he didn't. He wanted more and he knew Jesus could give him hope and a better life. And his shouts paid off because as the disciples were trying to silence Bartimaeus; Jesus turns and was filled with compassion and he asks the man to come to him.

Now I don't claim to know what went on in Jesus' head but I can just imagine that having spent all those weeks and months trying to teach the disciples about who he was and them not getting it; he saw this as

a God given opportunity to teach them about faith. He knows their faith is weak and they need to learn so much more about how to trust him and this blind man was going to show them.

And so to the annoyance of the disciples Jesus beckons the man to come. Bartimaeus jumps up and he throws off his cloak the thing that might weigh him down and make him slow and he runs to Jesus. That cloak is so significant it means so many things. He not only threw off his protection against the elements but the badge of his trade. All beggars wore cloaks that were ragged and dirty. He was casting off his old life and running to Jesus to put on a new one. He no longer needed to be weighed down by the troubles of his past.

As Bartimaeus comes to Jesus, Jesus asks “What do you want me to do for you?” “Rabbi, I want to see” was the simple reply. Somehow Bartimaeus knew what Jesus could do for him – he knew that he just had to ask and it would happen. Whatever he had heard about Jesus he knew that he could ask and it would be given! What amazing faith! What an amazing story of hope for a better future!

We all need to have that kind of faith because it is that faith that gives us hope and we all need hope at them moment as we move forward in this lockdown and begin to think about opening our churches again and what it will mean. Things won't be the same but this could be the opportunity we need to find new ways to do things and be able to ask Jesus to help us with what we need – not just in church either but in our lives too!

Many of us will have a cloak just like Bartimaeus, that weighs us down. I don't mean articles of clothing but metaphorical cloaks; troubles and burdens from the past that we just can't put down or difficulties in our lives that we just can't get past. It's true to say that sometimes we just want to stay where we are, safe with the familiar things; hiding behind our own warm cloaks. But if we stay there then nothing will ever change! We will always be “not quite happy” with what we are doing and that is not what Jesus wants for us. He wants us to throw off our cloaks and run to him! He can and will help us if we just ask him for what we need!

Remember what Jesus asks Bartimaeus “What do you want me to do for you?” “Rabbi, I want to see” was the simple reply. Bartimaeus didn't beg or explain why he thought Jesus could help him he just simply answered the question.

Jesus wants us to answer him that simply too. Very often when we come to Jesus we feel the need to explain ourselves and our situation and the thing we need most gets lost in our ramblings. Jesus knows the ins and outs of our lives he just wants us to simply recognise and ask for the thing we need most.

So why did I choose Bartimaeus as one of the people in our sermon series – because his story gives us hope of a better future and that is something we desperately need right now as we work through this pandemic. We can chose to be burdened by what has and is happening around us or we can choose to trust in Jesus and ask him to help!

So go on, cast off your cloaks and be unburdened, be alive and enjoy every moment in the love of Jesus.

AMEN