



Heacham Parish Church



Sunday 24th October 2021 – Trinity 21

Opening music – Alison plays an arrangement of the tune *St Peter* by Alexander Reinagle. The words we know to this tune are "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds" from a poem by John Newton (1725-1807).

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord be with you **and also with you.**

Hymn: **Seek ye first (MP590)**

1 Seek ye first the kingdom of God,
and His righteousness,
and all these things shall be added unto you.
Allelu, alleluia.
Seek ye first . . .

2 Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word
that proceeds from the mouth of God.
Allelu, alleluia.
Man shall not . . .

3 Ask and it shall be given unto you,
seek and ye shall find;
knock and the door shall be opened up to you.
Allelu, alleluia.
Ask and it shall . . .

Prayer of preparation

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Prayers of Penitence

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:
The first commandment is this:
'Hear, O Israel,
the Lord our God is the only Lord.
You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.'
The second is this:
'Love your neighbour as yourself.'
There is no other commandment greater than these.
On these two commandments hang all the law and the
prophets.
Amen. Lord, have mercy.

God so loved the world
that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ
to save us from our sins,
to be our advocate in heaven,
and to bring us to eternal life.
Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,
firmly resolved to keep God's commandments
and to live in love and peace with all.

Confession

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon us,
pardon and deliver us from all our sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,
and keep us in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Collect

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Bible reading – Mark 10:46-52 read by Sue Strickland

A reflection – by Revd Dan Tansey

Mark's Gospel, "The Galloping Horse" Gospel, in which Mark strides along through the story of Jesus at quite a speed. It's the shortest of the four gospels and gives what often appears to be only the barest of details.

But much of the meaning of Mark's Gospel is found in the narrative itself: the shape of the story, the ordering of events, and their relationship and contrast between those events. So, whenever we look at a passage from Mark we need to be careful not to treat it in isolation. We need to bear in mind where it fits into the wider narrative of the gospel, where in Jesus' story does the event take place and how does it contrast with other parts of that story if we are to grasp the deeper layers of meaning.

In isolation this passage is clearly about the healing of Bartimaeus. But when we read it in context, as part of the narrative, we discover that it is also about discipleship. It is about following Jesus on his journey to the cross and to the salvation of humanity. And it's not the case that the deeper message of discipleship replaces the message of healing in the passage. Rather, it enhances it. Both messages are interwoven. For with Jesus, healing is a part of discipleship and discipleship is a part of healing, of salvation, which is the ultimate and absolute healing of our bodies and souls.

Perhaps I should explain! And this is a short enough passage for me to work through it verse by verse, without taking up the rest of the morning.

46 Then they came to Jericho.

The word "Then" reminds the reader that the arrival of Jesus and his disciples in Jericho is part of a longer journey. And chapter 10 is a distinctive part of that journey. Jesus is on the road throughout much of Mark's gospel. If you search online you will find maps illustrating Jesus' road-trip. But chapter 10 describes the part of that journey that is more specifically his journey to Jerusalem, which is his journey to the cross, and also of course, his journey to the resurrection. Now Mark didn't write his gospel in chapters. It was much later that it was broken up into the chapter and verse format that we have it in today. But the editor who defined chapter 10 seems to have decided to encapsulate this part of the journey in that chapter.

At the start of chapter 10 Mark writes that "Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan." Where else in Mark's gospel does Jesus go to the Jordan? For his baptism, in chapter 1, at the beginning of his ministry. He has returned to the place of his baptism, having established his ministry as a teacher, healer, prophet and potential messiah, and from there he begins the next phase of his journey, to Jerusalem; to the baptism he describes in verse 38 to James and John, when he asks them "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" This is the baptism of the cross, with all its suffering, but that will lead through death to the resurrection.

But Jesus didn't just go to the Jordan river. He went across the Jordan, and returned back into the Promised land, echoing the return from exile, when Joshua led the Hebrews across the Jordan and into the promised land in chapter 3 of the book of Joshua. It is not insignificant that the name Jesus has its origins in the name Joshua, which itself means "God saves".

And where was one of the first places that Joshua led the Hebrews when they crossed the River Jordan? To Jericho, a mere 5 miles away, where they went on to conquer the city. So, we can understand Mark's narrative as pointing to Jesus as the new Joshua, the one who saves, and his journey as the new Exodus, from slavery to salvation.

But... Jesus and his disciples passed straight through Jericho! No need to stop, or to conquer the city again! They pass straight through, because the road leads on to Jerusalem, 15 miles on up into the hills. Jericho was a waypoint for Hebrew pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem from Galilee and the northern regions. But Jesus swept straight through, gathering a crowd of followers on his way. His small band of disciples had followed Jesus across the Jordan, and a greater crowd had joined them in Jericho and followed him on the road out of town and towards Jerusalem. Who would join them next?

A blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging.

As soon as we hear of a blind man we might be reminded of the blind man Jesus healed not so long ago, in chapter 8, in Bethsaida. And for that healing Jesus has to rub earth onto the man's eyes, so perhaps we should expect the same here.

47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

This blind man, Bartimaeus, immediately conflates this Jesus of Nazareth with the Son of David. At the time the Hebrews believed that the Messiah would come and rescue them from the oppression of the Romans. And prophecy stated that the Messiah, the anointed one, would be a descendant of King David. Whether he's been told that people believe Jesus is the Messiah or whether this is some sort of prophetic insight, we're not told.

But this is the only place in Mark's gospel where someone refers to Jesus as "the Son of David." So, it is significant. Does the blind beggar see something that the crowd does not? How much does it matter that he cries out, from his poverty on the roadside, to the saviour, the Messiah, to the Son of David, for mercy?

48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet,

Between Bartimaeus and his saviour was the crowd, and they told him to shut up! The crowd, the followers of Jesus, came between the poorest and most needy and his saviour, and they shunned him, and tried to quiet his voice.

But he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Bartimaeus would not be silenced and cried out louder, so that...

49 Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

Jesus instructs the same crowd that sought to silence the needy Bartimaeus to turn to him and to call him to Jesus. Jesus, with two words, tells the crowd of followers to repent, and to call the poorest outcast to 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.

Throwing his cloak aside... Bartimaeus' cloak was likely his most treasured possession. Living beside the road his cloak was his warmth, his shelter and what little status he had was contained in that one possession. And he throws it aside to run to Jesus. How does this contrast with the rich young man for a few verses earlier? He had so much, and he couldn't set it aside. And here is the poorest outcast throwing aside his meagre shelter and status to run to Jesus.

And Jesus asks him... **51 "What do you want me to do for you?"**

Jesus can see who the man is, can see that he is a blind beggar, so it should be obvious? But maybe Jesus' question is deeper than what is obvious and what is visible.

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

No longer does Bartimaeus call Jesus the Son of David. Now he calls him Rabbi. Teacher. "Teacher, I want to see."

Obviously Bartimaeus wants his actual physical sight back! But is there more that he wants to see? The return of his sight is his healing. He wants to be healed. But is there a deeper and more complete healing that Bartimaeus is asking for?

I want to see.

I want to see the light.

I want to know the truth.

I want to know the truth that you bring.

52 "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you."

"Go" said Jesus, not sending him away but setting him free.

"Your faith has healed you" he says. No need for spit and earth to be rubbed onto this blind man's eyes. His faith has healed him, because now Jesus has been revealed to him as the Messiah, the Son of David, the saviour. The blind man had seen who he was, had believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the one, and had cried out to him for mercy. And his sight was restored.

But this wasn't the end of Bartimaeus' healing. It was the beginning.

Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

With his physical sight restored Bartimaeus doesn't return to the roadside or go back into Jericho. He follows Jesus "along the road". The NRSV gives a more accurate translation here than the NIV. The NRSV translation says, "Immediately he

received his sight and followed Jesus along the way." Not the road but "the way". After the resurrection, early disciples of the risen Christ were described as followers of "The Way". They became known as Christians later, but first they were followers of the way of Jesus Christ. They were the ones who followed on in his path. And Jesus described himself as "the way and the truth and the life."

For Bartimaeus and the others on that day they followed Jesus on his way to Jerusalem, to the cross and to the resurrection. In doing so they followed him into their salvation, into the healing not just of their sight but of their whole bodies, minds, and souls. Such is the destination of the followers, the disciples of Jesus Christ, the Son of David and the Son of God, who has the power of the creator God in his hands and in his voice, as the word of God, and who with the power of God's love leads all his people, from the richest to the poorest outcast, past the suffering of the cross and into the wholeness and glory of salvation.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,
Our teacher, our healer and our saviour,
Help us to see.
Heal us from our blindness,
Enable us to see you through the crowd,
turn our heads to the outcasts, for we are all outcasts,
and give us the faith and courage to cry out to you for mercy.
For we know that your love never fails,
and we know that you always hear us.

And as we are healed and restored by you,
lead us on your way,
the way that leads past suffering and death
to salvation and wholeness
in the glory of your eternal kingdom. Amen.

The Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from
heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the
Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at
the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the
dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with
the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who
has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of
sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the
life of the world to come.**

Amen

Prayers of Intercession - Led by Gordon Taylor

Heavenly Father thank you that you know our prayers before we even speak them out loud. We give thanks for our Day of Prayer yesterday and how you have answered our prayers and spoken to us. Help us Father to be more open to your leading in our lives and give us open ears to hear you through your Word.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Creator God we give you praise for your wonderful creation, and we bring before you the Climate crisis. We pray for the COP 26 meeting happening soon and the day of action on 7th November. We ask you to give all leaders and delegates wisdom and good decision-making abilities. Help us to be mindful of how we can be good stewards of the resources you have given us too.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Comforter God we ask you to be close to those suffering in the world, for refugees, those who are suffering from hunger or violence. We ask you to provide peace in places where there would not be peace, for food where little is available and for all those agencies working to provide aid to those most in need.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Healing God we pray for those we know who are suffering from all kinds of illness in body, mind, or spirit. Pour your healing balm on those who are struggling at this time. We pray too for those who care for the sick at home, in care homes, hospitals and hospices. Lord give them strength and resilience at this time.

We pray for our doctors and nurses and for all those who work within our NHS, and particularly for staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. With Covid infection numbers high, and winter fast approaching, there is concern that our health service will be overwhelmed. We ask that you will give to those in Government wisdom, so that action may be taken in order to save lives and protect the NHS.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Heavenly Father we pray for those who are bereaved both recently and those who still miss loved ones. Bring them your peace and comfort at this time. We ask for your blessing on our service of remembrance next week and our Bereavement group and their ongoing work.

Lord in your mercy Hear our prayer

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Hear us Father now as we pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us.

The Lord's Prayer

Blessing

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Hymn: Be still and know(MP48)

- 1 Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.

- 2 I am the Lord that healeth thee.
I am the Lord that healeth thee.
I am the Lord that healeth thee.

- 3 In Thee, O Lord, I put my trust.
In Thee, O Lord, I put my trust.
In Thee, O Lord, I put my trust.

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen

Closing music – *Alison plays Presto from Sonata in C minor, by Giovanni Pescetti (1704-66)*

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