

Dorset South and West Circuit

Service for Sunday 30th August 2020 by David Ninnim, Local Preacher

AN OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and all-loving God we come to bring you our praise; we come to offer you our worship; we come to open to you with our hearts; we come to tell you of all you mean to us and we come to proclaim your name in a way that does justice to your greatness.

Amen

HYMN

All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice:
Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell; come ye before him and rejoice.

The Lord, ye know, is God indeed; without our aid he did us make:
We are his folk, he doth us feed; and for his sheep he doth us take.

O enter then his gates with praise; approach with joy his courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless his name always, for it is seemly so to do.

For why, the Lord our God is good; his mercy is for ever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood, and shall from age to age endure.

William Kethe

A PRAYER OF PRAISE, CONFESSION AND THANKSGIVING

Father, we praise you that whoever we are, and wherever we go, you are there. We cannot hide and we cannot run. You are always ahead of us preparing the way. Lord, you are ever near, ever approachable. In the midst of our anxiety and fear you are always understanding; coming into our turmoil, our doubts, our weakness and despair and you come with peace. You stand guard over our hearts and minds so that we dare to speak your name and serve your kingdom. Great and wonderful God, always loving, we praise and honour you. We praise you here and we will praise you everywhere.

Father, we confess that, despite your love for us, we allow our neighbours' needs to be sacrificed on the altar of our convenience. We permit the hungry to go away empty-handed at the cost of our possessiveness. We turn our backs on the lonely and the broken, the empty and the lost; and those far from you. The price of our time, and energies in helping others, is a cost we are often not willing to pay. Father, forgive us, touch our hearts and change us; cleanse our minds and make us new.

And Father, we thank you that you are so ready to forgive us whenever we turn to you and honestly acknowledge your power and our own failings. We praise you for the joy of knowing that whatever we have done, or failed to do, we can experience the joy of forgiveness and the joy of beginning again. We thank you for every person whose offer of forgiveness has set us free to begin again and has been a sign to us of

your love; a love which is always reaching out to us in Christ.

We bring our prayers in the name of Christ, the true source of all thankfulness.
Amen

BIBLE READING

Mark 10: 46-52 (NIV)

⁴⁶Then 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 ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." ⁵⁰Throwing 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.

REFLECTION

I spent some of this year's lockdown reminding myself of the stories of a few of the lesser-known characters in the New Testament and I would like to share one of those stories with you this morning. It is the lovely little story of when Jesus healed Bartimaeus in the town of Jericho at the foot of the Judean Mountains; though I was surprised to discover this is the only reference to Bartimaeus in the New Testament.

So let's try to imagine the scene on that day. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem for the Passover and as he enters Jericho, some 17 miles from Jerusalem, he is surrounded by a crowd of people eagerly listening to his teaching. There at the roadside sits a blind beggar by the name of Bartimaeus. Because of his blindness Bartimaeus is unable to work and he has little choice but to rely on the goodwill of others to help with his day-to-day needs. Then suddenly Bartimaeus senses something out of the ordinary is happening and he becomes aware of people jostling and talking excitedly. "What's going on?" he asks. "It's that man Jesus" someone tells him "and he's got a large crowd of people swarming around him. "

"Take me to him" says Bartimaeus. It wouldn't be too surprising if people ignored Bartimaeus or even told him get out of the way because there was something important going on. Bartimaeus calls to Jesus for help and it is interesting to hear him using the title Son of David. It was known that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David indicating that Bartimaeus recognised Jesus as the Messiah. "Son of David" he cries "for pity's sake help me." His voice is almost lost in the din of the crowd, but Jesus hears it. To everyone's astonishment Jesus stops. Everyone falls silent and Jesus calls for the man to come to him. Bartimaeus jumps to his feet, throws off his beggar's cloak and he feels his way through the crowd towards Jesus' caring voice. And through his persistence and his faith, he is healed.

You've got to admire Bartimaeus and give him ten out of ten for effort. From the

moment he hears Jesus is in town he has just one thing on his mind and that is to meet him and seek healing. Nothing or no one was going to stand in his way. Jesus represented his one hope of eyesight and he is so desperate to meet him. From the moment he hears Jesus calling him he is off like a shot. Neither does he beat about the bush when he speaks to Jesus. He gets straight to the point. I wonder if Bartimaeus is familiar with the Latin phrase *carpe diem* (seize the day) because that is exactly what he does. This may well be his one and only opportunity to meet Jesus and he is certainly going to seize the day. Are we good at grasping our opportunities as they arise or do we let them slip through our fingers? Do we put things off until tomorrow? Do we put off learning more about Jesus until tomorrow and then find that tomorrow never comes?

There are just two more things that Bartimaeus has in abundance – faith and gratitude. It is his faith that draws him to Jesus that day in Jericho. He knows in his heart that Jesus is able to help him. Bartimaeus may, of necessity, be a beggar but he is a man who can show gratitude. Having received his sight he could so easily and selfishly go his own way, but he chooses to show his gratitude by walking with Jesus. What a joy that must be for Bartimaeus. He may have been blind but deep inside he could see exactly what he wanted. His determination and his persistence to meet Jesus, his directness and his faith got it for him. All these qualities are important requirements of discipleship aren't they?

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. "Rabbi, I want to see" replied Bartimaeus. "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." We are told that immediately – yes immediately – after Bartimaeus received his sight he followed Jesus along the road. Bartimaeus had met Jesus in a way, and at a time, he could never have envisaged. His faith had brought healing and it was faith that would sustain him as he followed Jesus.

If we listen hard, we too will hear Jesus calling us above the noise of the crowd. Jesus is the one person who, through love, can meet our deepest need and like Bartimaeus we can walk the road with him receiving a new lease of life with new responsibilities, new risks and new challenges. Amen

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

We bring our prayers of intercession which continue our theme of faith. Sit quietly for a few moments at the end of each section of our prayer to remember those known personally to you.

We pray for those who find it hard to believe because they have too many of this world's good things and for those who find it hard to believe because they haven't enough. We pray for those for whom faith in you almost comes too easily and for those whose faith has never grown or deepened over the years.

We pray for those who find it hard to accept anything that cannot be seen, touched or proved. Help them to understand that being alive necessarily involves accepting the things we cannot see, touch or prove; things like love, peace, joy, and friendship. We pray for those who, because of their faith in you, have been led through all kinds of testing situations. We pray for those who are finding the way of the pilgrim

almost too hard to bear and for those for whom the way of faith is lonely and painful.

We pray for those who are in despair; for those who are finding that the burden of living is too great to bear; for the sick and the dying and those who wait with them. We pray for the bereaved, the lonely and the alone and all those who give their time and energy to support and comfort them.

And finally Lord we pray for ourselves as we place at the foot of the cross the things that are troubling us and the things, and decisions, we have to face in the coming days

We ask all our prayers through Jesus Christ, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

HYMN

Give me the faith which can remove and sink the mountain to a plain; Give me the childlike praying love, which longs to build thy house again; Thy love, let it my heart o'erpow'r and all my simple soul devour.

I would the precious time redeem, and longer live for this alone: To spend and to be spent for them who have not yet my Saviour known; Fully on these my mission prove, and only breathe, to breathe thy love

My talents, gifts, and graces, Lord, into thy blessed hands receive; And let me live to preach thy Word, and let me to thy glory live; My every sacred moment spend in publishing the sinner's Friend.

Enlarge, inflame, and fill my heart with boundless charity divine, So shall I all my strength exert, and love them with a zeal like thine, And lead them to thy open side, the sheep for whom the Shepherd died.

Charles Wesley

CLOSING PRAYER

To God who is always forgiving, always loving, always offering a new beginning be honour and glory, praise and thanksgiving, this day and for evermore. Amen

(All our prayers were taken from '500 Prayers for All Occasions' and '500 More Prayers for All Occasions' written by Rev David Clowes and published by David C. Cook)