**Mark 10:46-52 The healing of Blind Bartimeus**

Faith! It’s the defining mark of the Christian life.

Faith is how it starts. Faith is how it continues, and faith is how we gain eternity in heaven.

Our Gospel reading this morning is the story of the healing of the blind man by the side of the road. It is a story of faith, and if we look past just the event, we find reflected in the story something of our own walk with Jesus.

Let’s look at the event first. It took place as Jesus and his disciples walked with the great throng of people that surged on foot along the dusty roads towards Jerusalem. It was the time of the Passover. Any Jew that was fit & able made the pilgrimage to the temple at Jerusalem for this great festival. Though for Jesus, it would have been a sobering time, as he contemplated what lay before him on the cross.

Of course there were always those who could not go; women with young children, the frail, the disabled and the unclean - so these people would line the streets where they lived and watch as the throng passed by.

Bartimeus was amongst those who longingly watched the crowd from the sidelines. He was blind, and therefore a beggar, so he could never make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

But that day, at that particular time, Bartimeus noticed a change in the crowd. They weren’t just walking & chatting noisily as they had been all day – now they were suddenly much more animated. There was a buzz amongst the people, a tingle of something different. Voices were raised in excited chatter. There was jostling and pushing as people vied for a position closer to a particular traveller. Something was up! When Bartimeus asked what was going on, he was told that Jesus and his followers were passing.

Then Bartimeus also got excited. He’d heard the stories about Jesus. Throwing caution to the wind, he started to call out to him – even though he risked being cuffed and pushed away. A grating voice, carrying above the cacophony of the crowd, Bartimeus called out, “Jesus – SON OF DAVID – have mercy on me!”

Interesting! For the first time, Jesus is publicly called the Son of David. Whether Bartimeus knew it or not, with those words, he introduced Jesus to Jerusalem and sounded the keynote for the triumphal entry. Jews in Jerusalem claimed David as their father and his son as their Messiah. “Jesus, son of David….” cried Bartimeus.

No doubt Bartimeus *was* cuffed and pushed away. That was the story of his life. But the more those around him told him to be quiet, the more excited he became and the louder he cried out!

**Then** Mark tells us ‘Jesus stood still.’ Can you see it? Jesus, in the midst of conversation with his disciples, amongst the hum and bustle of the crowd, moving forward in a great mass, heard this plaintive cry in the distance. He stopped dead in his tracks, craning to hear. There it was again, “Jesus, Son of David – have mercy on me.”

Jesus told someone near him to call the man over to him – he was probably hemmed in by the crowd. The message rippled through till it reached Bartimeus.

“Cheer up mate,” said someone, “get up – he’s calling you!”

Bartimeus staggered to his feet, flung his begging cloak to one side, and was no doubt guided by the crowd till he stood in front of Jesus.

I can just see the foot traffic backing up - Jesus and his followers, stopped dead in the middle of the road, while those further back were trying to surge forward. There must have been a real air of anticipation in the space around Jesus; perhaps even a hush as people strained to hear what was going on.

The story continues, ‘then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again."

Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

What a great story.

As always, we can read Scripture at face value, taking in the facts and the history, and learn much, but we can also read Scripture reflectively, noticing nuances that the Holy Spirit can use to encourage us in our Christian walk. This story has much that speaks to us on a deeper level.

As I said at the beginning, faith is the defining mark of our Christian walk. It’s how it begins, how it continues, and how it concludes, on this earth at least.

Bartimeus’s interaction with Jesus has much to say to us about how to walk in faith.

First of all, Bartimeus *responded to Jesus’* ***call to faith****.* We’ve all done that at some point, or I doubt we would be here this morning. If we had a conversion experience, we can remember the first time we responded; if we have walked with Jesus as long as we can remember, then we have been *responding to Jesus’ call* throughout our lives.

All of us, as we continue on our Christian walk, respond to Jesus’ call on a daily basis. Every time we are tempted, and choose to do right, we have responded to Jesus call. Every time we follow a nudge from the Spirit, we have responded to God’s call. Every time we act in obedience to the Word of God, we have responded to his call.

Sometimes, we’ll experience a call from Jesus to move in a specific direction, and we need to take a deep breath and step out in faith.

In my youth fellowship days, we had a very on fire curate who taught us well. We were encouraged to listen to the voice of the Spirit, and to respond. The lives of many in our group were completely changed through that challenge.

One was such person was working as a receptionist. She was a fairly timid lass, not given to putting herself forward. She began to feel God calling her into nursing – something that had never occurred to her before, and a thought, I might add, that terrified her. She responded though, went back into study, and a few years later, qualified as a nurse. God kept calling, and she kept responding, until finally she had gained a master’s degree, and began lecturing other nurses at University. She is still doing that today. She would never have reached her potential had she not said “Okay Lord – I trust you” and stepped out in faith.

If we’re honest, living as a Christian is not always so exciting, though. Sometimes we get bogged down in the everyday dramas of life, and sometimes our faith even cools off a little. If we ever find ourselves in such a place, and are looking for renewal in our walk with God, Bartimeus has more to tell us.

Bartimeus evidenced a ***show of faith.*** *He threw off his cloak.* Why did he do that? I imagine because it would get in the way as he moved towards Jesus. It would have held his few coins that his begging that day had yielded; it was also the badge of his life as a beggar. He got up and went to Jesus just as he was, unencumbered, leaving his past behind him.

There is some encouragement there for us. Often when we bog down in our faith, it’s because we’ve allowed the cares of this life to simply get in the way. We become entangled in the day to day busyness that makes up our life – trips to the doctor, friends, family, leisure, even our service to the church. Jesus simply says, *come to me.*

If we’re looking for refreshment in our spiritual walk, then we should do as Bartimeus did – let go of those things that entangle us and prevent us from finding Jesus, and simply go to him. As the writer of Hebrews exhorts us, “…let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” Is there something we need to disentangle ourselves from today? Something we need to throw aside? Then do it.

But be prepared. If we are attentive to God, and willing to answer his call, whatever that may be, we may just find there is something more ahead of us, which is nothing like we ever imagined.

Lastly this morning as we look at Bartimeus, we see ***the result of faith*.**  Responding to a call to faith in Jesus will always result in transformation. For Bartimeus, it meant healing, both physical and spiritual. His physical healing that day raised him from poverty and squalor, and allowed him to become a useful and valued member of his community. He also became a child of God that day, his faith paving the way not only to a life restored in the here and now, but to a life with Jesus in eternity.

Each time we respond to God’s call in faith – whether that’s to follow him in the first instance, or to move in a new direction in life, or to simply to meet the challenge of each day as his faithful servant – we will be transformed. We can’t walk closely with Jesus and NOT be transformed.

In every aspect of our Christian walk, FAITH plays a crucial part. We need to listen and respond, as Baritmeaus did – in faith.

We need to throw off all that would entangle us and slow us down – in faith.

And we will then show evidence of a life transformed, and transforming into Jesus own image – as we continue in faith.

Lastly of course, as we continue living our life of faith, we will finally see Jesus in his kingdom.

Let’s pray…

Lord heighten our sensitivity that we might hear your voice; strengthen our faith that we might obey, and transform us into the image of your Son, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**