

## Study following Sunday October 24th 2021

**Prepare:** Spend time thinking about when you have felt like an outsider.

**Praise:** Give thanks to God for his acceptance of each one of us, just as we are

**Passage:** Read Mark 10.46-52

**Ponder:** The healing of Bartimaeus is a powerful passage with an amazing healing, and yet it is about so much more. The place is a significant point as the last stopping place before a journey to Jerusalem, Edwards points out 'It lies 840 feet below sea-level, some twenty tortuous miles and 3500 feet below Jerusalem'. Jesus seems to have amassed quite a crowd as he makes his way to celebrate passover in Jerusalem.

- Think about a journey you have made that could be described as a pilgrimage, perhaps to a holy site or just a place of significance to you.

We might notice a previous account of Jesus healing a blind man a few chapters earlier in Mark 8.22-26. These two healings of Jesus bookend a section of the Gospel in which Jesus tries to help the disciples come to a spiritual understanding about who he is, what will happen to him and what that means for them. Time and again the disciples show a spiritual blindness that is symbolised by Bartimaeus and the unnamed man from Bethsaida. As Bartimaeus begins to shout we may wonder how he gained such an insight into who Jesus was, no-one else has yet described Jesus as the 'Son of David'. This title links to the promise contained in 2 Samuel 7.11-14 that God would raise up an offspring of David to sit on his throne. It was a hope that the Messiah would come to rule and reign, and bring healing and wholeness.

At first Bartimaeus is rebuked, but he shouts all the louder "son of David. Have mercy on me!" and we read that 'Jesus stopped'. The cries of this outcast have been heard, and it will change his life forever. Jesus calls him and he is brought out of the crowd. The same crowd who were rebuking him are now encouraging him forward. We have seen before that Jesus' healing miracles often start with a question or challenge, and the same is true here as Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?". This phrase was used by Jesus just a few lines earlier towards James and John when they had asked for glory, here the blind man just asks to see. It is also a phrase that acknowledges the humanity of Bartimaeus, Jesus does not define the man by his blindness or disability, he gives Bartimaeus a chance to speak for himself.

- perhaps you can recall a time when you were judged, or you judged another, by appearances before yours, or their, humanity was acknowledged.

The blind man receives what he trusts Jesus for - his sight. But the next step he takes is perhaps more fascinating, because he doesn't return to his home, his family or community. No, he follows Jesus on the way. Here, Edwards points out, Mark shows us a model disciple, one who has faith and turns this faith into the beginnings of discipleship. He follows Jesus on the long physical road up to Jerusalem, and the spiritual road of understanding. I think he must have been a gift for the discipleship group, as an outsider who has been called to join the group he has a fresh experience of gaining acceptance and belonging, that he can then share with others. I picture him drawing Jesus' attention to every beggar and blind person that lay on the side of road! He has received his sight and so much more, and I imagine him wanting to share it.

- perhaps we are called to remember what we have gained by being part of Christ's church, God's family.

**Pray:** Pray that we might learn from Blind Bartimaeus the way of discipleship and the importance of listening to the 'outsider'.

S.Partridge 2021 with reference to 'The Gospel according to Mark' Edwards (2002).