

Parish of Central Exeter

21st Sunday after Trinity 24th October 2021

Take heart, He's calling you!

Welcome everyone.

Introduction

We are using a Psalm and two NT readings today:

- Psalm 34 (selected parts)
- Hebrews 7:23-28 Christ's priesthood continues for ever
- Mark 10: 46-52 Blind Bartimaeus

Today's reflections on these texts and hymn choice are by Sheila. Intercessions and adaptations are from Keith. The opening prayers are themed on the Bartimaeus story, and you may find it helpful to check out the gospel reading first.

Opening thought

Bartimaeus, the blind man of Jericho.
Why did he cry out?
Why interrupt the journey?

There is too much to do, too far to go.
Jesus is someone special on a mission,
a mission to the holy city.
God is waiting for him.
There will be triumph and glory.
They will hail him king, Son of David!

There is no time to stop.
In a moment we will pass him by;
he will be gone like a fleeting image
and we will move on,
gathering branches for the celebration.
Let him fade from memory;
leave him by the side of the road.
let the Samaritans help him.

Jesus was ahead of us,
Not to be seen.



I rushed on looking among the pilgrims.
Where was he? Not to be found in Bethany,
had he already found that secret room?

Then suddenly I saw this Bartimaeus
coming up behind us and Jesus with him.
Jesus must have lost his way.

(written by William Loader.)

Call to Worship

Like your meeting with Bartimaeus
you meet us where we are:
here and now,
which may not always where we ought to be
but that does not worry you.
Despite all the other demands on your time
you will spend time with us
in this act of worship.
You call us
and we throw off our cloak and come to you
to help us find
what we have lost.

(Developed from the call to worship on the previous service sheet)

Gathering Hymn

Through all the changing scenes of life, sung for us (with some pace) by the virtual choir of All Hallows church, Gedling, Nottingham. Words are on the screen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8ZY2mwYUTI>

Prayers of Penitence

Merciful God,
our thoughts and deeds too often
do not reflect the grace you show us.
Our speech and actions too often
do not proclaim your salvation.

Forgive us, Lord, for the sins that we bear
both as individuals and as your Church.
Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us.

Our teacher, let us see again!

Give us the courage to take heart in your grace.
Give us the strength to get up.
Give us the wisdom to hear your calling.
Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us.

(written by Stephen Fearing and posted on Wild and Precious Life.)

Words of Assurance

Hear then the good news
that in and through Jesus Christ we are forgiven.
Thanks be to God!

Collect

Almighty God,
in whose service lies perfect freedom:
teach us to obey you
with loving hearts and steadfast wills;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Psalm 34:1-8, 19-22

I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall ever be in my mouth.
2 My soul shall glory in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad.
3 O magnify the Lord with me;
let us exalt his name together.
4 I sought the Lord and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.
5 Look upon him and be radiant
and your faces shall not be ashamed.
6 This poor soul cried, and the Lord heard me
and saved me from all my troubles.
7 The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them.
8 O taste and see that the Lord is gracious;
blessed is the one who trusts in him.

19 Many are the troubles of the righteous;
from them all will the Lord deliver them.
20 He keeps all their bones,
so that not one of them is broken.
21 But evil shall slay the wicked
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
22 The Lord ransoms the life of his servants
and will condemn none who seek refuge in him.

New Testament Reading

Hebrews 7:23-28

²³ Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; ²⁴ but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. ²⁵ Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

²⁶ For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever.

Gospel

Mark 10:46-52

⁴⁶ They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. ⁴⁷ When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' ⁴⁸ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' ⁴⁹ Jesus stood still and said, 'Call him here.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; get up, he is calling you.' ⁵⁰ So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ 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.' ⁵² Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has made you well.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.



Julia Stankova (Bulgarian, born 1954), Christ and Bartimaeus, 2017. Painting on wooden panel,

Reflection

Lord may we read these words with understanding, receive with faith and respond with courage. Amen.

This was the prayer from Bishop Bob's farewell sermon in Exeter Cathedral in October 12. I remembered it and some phrases and noted them down afterwards. These I will use today and begin with the encouraging words from the crowd to the beggar Bartimaeus 'Take heart, get up, he is calling you'.

In the midst of a noisy, bustling crowd Jesus gives time to a beggar. He is leaving Jericho for his final journey to Jerusalem when this encounter takes place. He has heard a man crying out to him 'Son of David, have mercy on me'. The man, though blind and uneducated, on hearing that the miracle-worker from Nazareth called Jesus is passing by, takes a chance and shouts out the messianic title 'Son of David, have mercy on me.' When he is rebuked by some in the crowd he shouts even louder until he hears the words 'Take heart, get up, he is calling you'.

With no hesitation he leaves his cloak and rushes to Jesus. In response to Jesus' question 'what do you want?' Bartimaeus says clearly 'My teacher, let me see again.' The footnote shows that the Aramaic *Rabbouni* is used which is an intimate way to address Jesus. Mary Magdalene speaking to the risen Jesus in John 20:16 is the only other occurrence in the gospels. Jesus commends his faith, and his sight is restored. Mark tells us that Bartimaeus then follows Jesus on the way -the phrase Mark uses to describe the way of discipleship. Contrast this with the earlier healing of an unnamed blind beggar in Mark 8:22-26 who simply returns to his village.

The next two phrases from Bishop Bob's sermon that I wrote down were '*look to God and look out*' and '*respond to people's search.*' Though blind, Bartimaeus was very aware of what was going on both in his immediate surrounds and in society. Thus, when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was nearby, he responded. He was looking out and looking to God. At the same time Jesus responded to his search. Both these phrases challenge me as I can find myself so pre-occupied with things to do or to think about that I am not looking to God or looking out to see where God may be working. Similarly, I may not be aware when someone is seeking to know more about the Christian faith as this may not be with direct questions. Instead, anxiety around the future of the world or concern about forgiveness or coping with sickness may be the immediate issues. How I respond to these will determine whether further searching takes place.

This leads to the next phrase '*closer to God – respond with generosity*'. I can't remember what Bishop Bob meant by this but reading it now, I think that if I grow closer to God then I will be able to respond with generosity to all whom I meet day by day. The final phrase I wrote was this '*grace – breeze of God's love – smell of holiness.*' Bartimaeus caught the breeze of God's love in Jesus, he called out for mercy and received grace. As followers of Jesus, the body of Christ today, can we share the breeze of God's love and offer the smell of holiness. That is a challenge but by God's Holy Spirit we can be changed. We begin where Bartimaeus did by remembering the call of the crowd 'Take heart, get up, he is calling you'.

Affirmation of Faith

We believe that Jesus knows us through and through.
He knows everything about us.
The very hairs of our head he has numbered.

Nothing in our life is unimportant to him,
He has followed us through the years,
and has always loved us – even in our wanderings.

He knows every one of our problems.
He knows our needs and our worries.
And he knows all our sins.
The Gospels show us again and again
that he loves us –
not for what we have or haven't done –
but for being ourselves,
in the beauty and dignity the Father gave us
by creating us in his own image.

(Adapted from words of Mother Theresa)

Hymn

'I heard the voice of Jesus say.'

This version is at a much slower pace than our first hymn. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74kyfROS4q8>

Reflective prayer

'Many ordered him to be quiet.'

There are many people still in the world who want others to be quiet
To not speak out against wrongs being committed
To not change the way things are,
To not make us feel uncomfortable about our lifestyle
To not make us come to terms with a problematic past.

Take some time to consider where you stand. Are there some voices you encourage, but not others? What voices do you want to silence?

Bartimaeus was not crying out to the world, but to Jesus. We cry out to Jesus a lot in the prayers we call intercessions. We have a lengthy list. All of them we consider deserving of God's full attention: climate change, covid, terrorism, low incomes, lack of opportunities. The subject matter might have been only slightly different for the good people of Jericho,

but for them equally as pressing. Why didn't Jesus deal with those, and listened instead to Bartimaeus?

Why doesn't he deal with ours? And gave instead to a few a new vision where it was least expected?

Perhaps he expects humankind to solve the problems of their own making. But he does offer us a new vision and a new creativity if that is what we desire.

The Peace

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.



Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

An offertory prayer

We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.

We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of silence or conversation to enjoy this, and make it a sacramental moment.

As we prepare for communion you might like to listen to or join in the Taizé chant. 'In the Lord I'll be ever thankful'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hbH6kznJeA>



Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Collect

Father of light,
in whom is no change or shadow of turning,
you give us every good and perfect gift
and have brought us to birth
by your word of truth:
may we be a living sign of that Kingdom
where your whole creation will be made perfect
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn

'Ye servants of God your master proclaim', sung for us by Victoria Methodist Church, Bristol.
Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YlkufB03P5I>

Commission

Ever-calling God,
You have gathered us into the many expressions of your church
With a history that is ancient and also still developing,

We are part of Jesus' vision and dream
to bring ever more joy and justice to the world.

Teach us to be attentive
to the voices others ignore,
that we might respond
through the power of the Spirit
to heal the afflicted
and to welcome the abandoned
for your sake and the sake of the gospel. Amen

Blessing

Love wholeheartedly.
Live as you were created.
Be God's people in our fragmented world. Amen.

(by Tim Graves and posted on LiturgyBits.)

