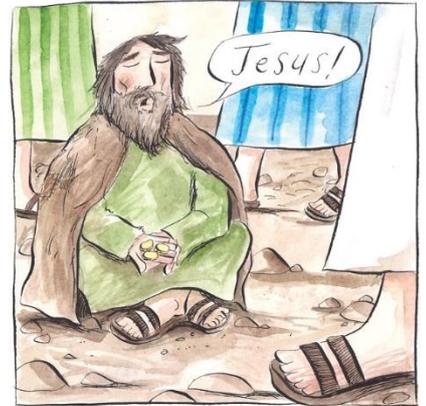




Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

Mark 10:46-52 'The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus'

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.



As you read that Gospel passage, you might well have been thinking, "Quite a familiar scenario – Jesus healing again...", except that this one is different in a number of respects. Indeed, the story of the actual healing of Bartimaeus is almost a 'backdrop' for some important ideas which Mark wants us to grasp. Notice, first, that Jesus seems to be at the height of his popularity: he is followed by his 'disciples' – and since Mark usually refers to 'the twelve', we may infer that this was a larger group. The second thing is, that despite their lack of understanding as to who Jesus is and why he has to go to Jerusalem (and Mark emphasises this time and time again in earlier chapters) they are still all there, following him.

They have not 'seen' – but blind Bartimaeus has! He calls Jesus "Son of David". To emphasise the contrast between Bartimaeus' faith and the lack of comprehension on the part of the others, Mark tells us that they rebuked him, (though the NRSV actually translates it as 'many sternly ordered him to be quiet'). But the word 'rebuke' which Mark uses, is exactly the same word which Jesus uses to cast out demons!! So it's pretty strong stuff.

There is a clear message for us here, I think. Even though we must love God with all our minds as well as our hearts, we don't have to have PhDs in theology to be followers of Jesus. There is an inevitable process of growing in our understanding of God's purposes and what discipleship means. However, we have to be willing for our eyes to be opened. Bartimaeus was once blind, but he had sufficient faith to call out to Jesus and ask for help. When we do that, and genuinely seek to be open to the leading of his Spirit, then our persistence will be rewarded. He has mercy upon us, and – even though we may not be free from every ache and pain – nevertheless, like Bartimaeus, we shall surely be healed, and made whole.

Prayer: Loving God, in your Son we see the compassion you have for all your children, and that you care for our physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Help us to be open to your Spirit, that we may be truly healed and grow ever more fully into the people you long for us to be. We ask this in the name of the one lived and died and rose again for us, that we might be one with you, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.