**Sermon: Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost 10 Oct 2021**

**Job 42:1-6, 10-17. Ps 34:1-8 Hebrews 7:21-28, Mark 10:46-52.**

On the way to Jerusalem. This is the context in which we find today’s Gospel reading. Jesus, his disciples and a crowd of followers are on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus has for some time now foretold what would happen to him in Jerusalem, that he must suffer and die and rise again. This ‘way to Jerusalem’ begins in Mark’s gospel from chapter 8 and continues all the way through to the beginning of chapter 11.

But why this small story about blind Bartimaeus? What significance does it hold for us? If we go back to chapter 8 in Mark we find a similar even. A blind man is bought to Jesus after a significant event, the feeding of four thousand people and on their way across the lake, Jesus speaks to the disciples of them not seeing nor understanding what had taken place. In this healing event, Jesus took the man aside privately. At first the man sees dimly after Jesus put saliva on his eyes. The man declares, ‘I can see people, but they look like trees walking’. Jesus places his hands on him a second time, and the man’s sight is fully restored.

Jesus goes onto to teach the disciples that he must suffer and die and will rise again on the third day. The disciples do not see, in fact Peter is rebuked by Jesus, telling him to ‘*Get behind me, Satan!’*

The disciples still do not see nor understand what Jesus has told them about what would happen in Jerusalem.

As their journey continues. Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James and John, and again these disciples do not understand the significance. For a second time Jesus foretells his betrayal and death as they pass through Galilee. The disciples response as they walk along the road- to argue about who will be the greatest in the kingdom of God!

Finally, we arrive in Chapter 10 of Marks gospel and Jesus foretells his betrayal, death and resurrection. ‘See we are going to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; they will mock him and spit upon him, and flog, and kill him; and after three days, he will rise again’ (Mk10:32-34). And still the disciples **still** do not understand, James and John want to know if they can be granted to sit at Jesus left and right hands in the kingdom of God. Jesus makes it plain to them what kind of people they are to be, to serve one another.

And now we come to our Gospel reading today right before Jesus enters Jerusalem, he is leaving Jericho with the disciples and a group following him. And on their way out, they encounter a man sitting by the side of the road. A blind man, a man with an identity, Barimaeus, son of Timaeus. This is significant because even the rich man who came to Jesus requesting to follow him is not named. This blind man with no riches, with no obvious income, is sitting beside the road, begging. And upon hearing the commotion of Jesus passing by calls out, ‘*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me*.’ Many of those around the man, those in the crowd and including the disciples try to make the man stop from calling on Jesus. But the man begins to call out all the more. Jesus stands still. Stops proceeding onward to Jerusalem. It seems there is still more for the disciples to learn along the way.

Jesus tells the disciples to call the man to him. The change of tone is significant. From berating the man, ‘sternly ordering him to be quiet’ the disciples say, ‘Take heart, get up, he is calling you’. This transformation is striking.

At the beginning of this section of Mark, in chapter 8 , Jesus privately took the blind man to the side, in private. This time, when Bartimaeus is called to Jesus, he jumps up in front of all those gathered, throws off his cloak and came to Jesus. A very public calling.

Jesus asks the man what he wants. That may seem strange to us. Clearly the man wants to be healed of his blindness. But there is something deeper going on here. The disciples have been chastised by Jesus a number of times by now of their spiritual blindness and their failure to understand what would take place in Jerusalem. It seems Jesus is making a statement here, paired with the first healing of blindness back in chapter 8. Bartimaeus says to Jesus, ‘My teacher (ραββουνι) or Rabbi, let me see again’. Let me see again! If I cannot see, if I cannot understand, if I am unsure of what I do see, Teacher, let me see again!

Jesus says to Bartimaeus, ‘God, your faith has made you well’. What is at work here? Faith. Jesus healed Bartimaeus and in fact many others in the New Testament because of their faith. They believed what Jesus could do for them. Their faith was always followed by action. In Bartimaeus case, he leapt up, discarded his old cloak of bondage to begging, and came to Jesus expecting by faith to be healed.

Jesus journey to Jerusalem was filled with pointers to the disciples that Jerusalem would be the place where his betrayal, suffering and death would take place. The disciples could not see how this could be possible. Their conception of Messiah did not meet with Jesus. They had eyes that could not see, ears that would not hear.

How often when change is announced, whether it is good news or not, it is common for people to react as the disciples did, with disbelief. As we begin to move toward our Annual Meeting and nominating people for Parish Council and the various roles around the Parish, have faith, that God will meet all our needs. Pray for all those who are nominating that they will assist with the mission and ministry of St Katherine’s and All Saints. Pray with faith, believing that God will provide all the gifts, and abilities needed to fulfill our calling here in our Parish.