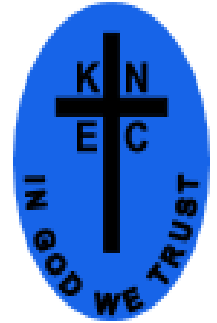




Kirknewton and East Calder Parish Church of Scotland

Scottish Charity No. SC006973

www.knec4jesus.org.uk



Reading Mark 10 : 46-52

Sermon: 25 October 2009

The text for the sermon this morning comes from verse 51 & 52 where I prefer the more literal version of the New King James translation:

*⁵¹ So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?"
The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."
⁵² Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road."*

This is a remarkable story for several reasons. It is the last healing miracle in Mark and it is the only place in all the Gospels where the person that is healed is mentioned by name in this case Bartimeus, the Aramaic for Son of Timeus! Scholars argue that his name is mentioned because he became a disciple of Jesus and had prominence in the early Church. In the same story in Luke and Matthew the name is omitted and there is not one blind beggar but two in the account of Matthew.

It is also the only place in Marks Gospel where Jesus is explicitly called the "Son of David" in comparison to Matthew where it is mentioned nine times. This is significant because it says that this title did not appeal much to Mark or his listeners which were Gentiles who converted to Christianity. The same is also true of Luke who also wrote to Gentiles that converted to Christianity, who used it only twice. Jesus was more to them than *only* the Son of David. To them the title "Son of David" was a messianic term indicating that Jesus was not *only* a descendant of David but the one who is to inherit and fulfill the promises made to David.

Mark tells us that Jesus came to Jericho. In order for Jesus to do that he had to cross the Jordan river 5 miles to the west which brought him into the region of Judea. The city Jericho was situated six miles north of the Dead Sea, and twenty-one miles northeast of Jerusalem. Jesus was now nearing the completion of his journey to Jerusalem. The Jericho of New Testament times was about two miles south of the one of the Old Testament period and before. The former had been built by Herod the Great (37–4 B.C.) as a winter palace. Then as Jesus and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving the city a blind man Bartimeus calls out to Jesus. It is remarkable that Mark makes a distinction between Jesus and his disciples and the crowd. Maybe it is an indication that they were not traveling together and that the crowd was merely pilgrims to Jerusalem to celebrate the yearly Passover.

The blind, the lame and others who could not engage in the traditional occupations of the day could support themselves only by begging, normally on a busy roadside. Judaism considered it righteous to help them. Jericho was a prosperous town with a good climate, and Bartimeus no doubt received adequate support there. We must remember that in those days blind people were illiterate and could only know what they have heard. Obviously there must have been quite a number of talking going about of Jesus of Nazareth to convince the blind Bartimeus that Jesus was indeed the expected Messiah. We must also remember that the blind had no honor and

status and were socially powerless. This comes to the fore when the crowd rebukes Bartimeus to be quiet and contempt. He must surely know his place!

But after the second time of him crying out Jesus heard him and said that they must bring Bartimeus closer to him. On hearing this, the blind beggar does a remarkable thing. He throws away his cloak, or outer garment got unto his feet and came to Jesus. His outer garment was actually his most valuable possession because it protected him from freezing in the cold nights and might have been spread before him for use in his daytime begging if he had no pouch. Maybe this was an indication of his attitude to forsake everything that is valuable to him and trusting only in Jesus.

Then Jesus ask him what He can do for him. When Bartimeus answers he uses the stronger Aramaic word of addressing Jesus as “Rabboeni” meaning my Lord or my master! And again this form only occurs once more in the New Testament in Johns Gospel chapter 21. “Rabboeni” is a much stronger word than Rabbi and in this context it is obvious that Bartimeus expected much more of a religious teacher. He wanted to see again. And then without explaining the process of healing Jesus says to him: “Go your faith has healed you”.

The word that is used for healing has a double meaning. It can also mean “to save”. So Jesus actually means two things: Go – you are physically healed and spiritually saved because of your faith in me! And then another remarkable things happens – Bartimeus follows Jesus. In the Greek text it says “he followed Jesus on the way” which was a technical term for discipleship.

I think there are several things that we can learn from this remarkable miracle. We can relate to Bartimeus in so many ways.

Just like him we also experience difficult times where we just sit next to the road of life begging for love and mercy. In Bartimeus’ case he never lost hope to see again. He was persistent to see again and when he heard Jesus was approaching, he cried out despite the attempts of the crowd to silence him. He did not give up until Jesus called him. Do we do the same? Or do we just loose hope and faith after one prayer? And when people silence us about our faith and hope, do we listen to them? I think Bartimeus is teaching us an important lesson of faith. As followers of Jesus Christ we must be persistent in our following.

We cannot allow any one to silence us when we speak about the hope love and mercy that we received in the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. We cannot allow one opportunity to go by without telling someone about Jesus’ redemption of human sin and misery.

Another important lesson is the fact that Jesus heard Bartimeus persistent calling. Sometimes when we are in difficult situations we pray and pray and wonder if God hears us. In this case Jesus did hear the cries of Bartimeus. And in the same way we must have faith and trust that God is listening to us. God will answer our prayers on the right time when He feels it is the best for us. Jesus heard Bartimeus after his second calling. We must never stop praying and hoping. God promises us in his word that He will answer our prayers – maybe not in the same way as we might expect.

When Jesus called Bartimeus he left his most valuable possession namely his outer garment and went to Jesus. He trusted wholeheartedly on Jesus to save and heal him. Today Jesus is calling us to his table and reassuring in us the faith that we received from him. Do we also put all our trust in him to help us cope with the difficulties that we encounter every day like sickness, broken relationships, depression, anxieties, constant tiredness, human frailty and old age!? Do we go out from this building with renewed hope and trust or do we just carry on with our lives as if nothing has happened to us?

Bartimeus did not carry on with his life. He decided to become a disciple of Jesus. He was in many ways not the same Bartimeus. Although he could have carried on with his life and do the things that could not do before, he chose a life in obedience to Christ. What do we do after we received the communion of the Lord?

We cannot leave this church this morning without being touched by the mercy and love of God in Jesus Christ. We cannot go from here without screaming from the rooftops that God has saved us. We cannot go from here and tell our faithless relatives and children that everything is ok without the presence of God. We must go out and tell everyone that there might be only one opportunity and that is now!

May we all throw away our outer garments, all the earthly things that hinder us to live in a living relationship with the Lord and trust in God. May we never miss one opportunity to meet the Lord in prayer!

Amen

Readings for the week.

Mark 10.46—52

There is certainly a great deal of shouting in today's Gospel lesson which describes blind Bartimaeus encounter with Jesus. He cries out for help, and people shout back to try to silence him. They want the disabled man to be invisible. Jesus will not allow Bartimaeus to be marginalised. What is more, he not only receives his sight but also his salvation, which is the theme of today's Epistle. The priestly intercession of Christ grants salvation to all who ask. After Bartimaeus' sight is restored we are told he follows Jesus 'on the way' (v. 52). It is worth recalling that the disciples of Jesus were originally known as 'followers of the Way' before they were called Christians (Acts 9.2: 18.25; 19.9). That Bartimaeus followed Jesus on the way suggests that he became a disciple. Is he named because he was known afterwards as a disciple and a continuing witness to Jesus' salvation? Bartimaeus received far more than restoration of sight; he also received redemption of soul. A twin motif of restoration and redemption underpins the Gospel. What began as a healing miracle is now, in the life of Bartimaeus, an acted-out parable.

Other readings: Job 42.1-6, 10-17; Psalm 34,1-8, (19-22); Hebrews 7.23-28

Next week's suggested readings.

Deuteronomy 6 : 1—9;

Psalm 119 : 1—8;

Hebrews 9 : 11—14;

Mark 12 : .28—34