**Sunday October 24th, 2021**

**Mark 10 46-52**

This man begging on the side of the road just outside Jericho is different. He’s not just a blind man, probably sitting in his usual place, listening to the sounds of the world pass him by. We get an inkling right away that he is different because he is named for us…blind Bartimaeus. He’s not just a nameless, faceless person…like so many Jesus has both helped or walked past. When he hears it is Jesus going past, he shouts out for mercy…he must have heard the stories about this man from Galilee, because he uses the term ‘Son of David’, one that the crowd would know made reference to the Messiah…the one who would come to save them from their oppressors. Bartimaeus has nothing to lose by drawing attention to himself and asking for Jesus to help him.

The crowd reacts as we might…they try to silence him. After all, he’s just a beggar, and this teacher would surely have more important things to do than engage with a dirty, blind beggar. Perhaps the bystanders were concerned with drawing too much attention from the authorities, since this turns out in Mark’s gospel to be the point at which Jesus turns toward Jerusalem and the cross. But Jesus hears Bartimaeus’ voice over the noises around him and stops, and asks for him to be sent forward. The tone of the crowd changes, as Bartimaeus is encouraged to take heart and go…and he does. Jesus gets right to the point by asking, ‘what do you want me to do for you?’ I wonder what thoughts dashed through Bartimaeus’ head, before he states simply ‘let me see again.’

What does that kind of faith…the kind that makes you well… look like? It begins with the courage to throw off the cloak that is probably your only possession, and walk through a crowd toward a voice that promises to change your life. It’s the kind of faith that speaks out with boldness, even though everyone around you is trying to stifle your voice. It’s the kind of faith that literally leaves your present behind, and walks into the future with no guarantees. It’s the kind of faith that asks what we really want…and for Bartimaeus, his heart’s desire was to have his sight returned. His life is forever changed, and instead of ‘going’ as Jesus commands, Bartimaeus follows Jesus into Jerusalem to be a witness to his own healing to the crowd, and be a witness to the cross and resurrection. Jesus asks what Bartimaeus wants, not making any assumptions, and Bartimaeus knows what he wants and answers…and he receives.

That question, ‘what do you want me to do for you?’ has been rolling around in my mind for the last few days, at all hours of the day…and night! What would your answer be, if Jesus was walking by and you were brave enough to shout out to him? What is your heart’s deepest desire? As we sit here in church, we might be tempted to ask for rejuvenation of the community…more kids, more people to serve and help…more money to meet our expenses. We might ask for the end of any conflict or disharmony in our lives and world, for the end of poverty, hunger and disease in God’s world. These days I’m sure many of us would ask for the end of COVID and the return to the way the world was just two short years ago. And those would all be worthwhile, noble things to ask Jesus for. But what if you and I were to ask Jesus to help us see again?

What if we were to ask Jesus to help us see what love for him, for God, for one another can do to help change our lives? The commitment to follow and serve our Lord, includes throwing off the ‘cloaks’ that protect us, but can also hold us back. Loving our neighbour as ourselves, and serving them so that mercy and justice, kindness and compassion are not the exception, but are part of the rule of our life as followers of Jesus. What if God’s peace enfolded and held our lives, and from that peace and love, we were able to see what God is doing…and what we can be part of. Everything comes out of the foundation of God’s peace and love.

Jesus calls out to every one of us…sometimes repeatedly…if we are able to boldly answer, walk through the crowd, and from the heart share with him what we really want. The story of Bartimaeus that begins with a blind man begging on the side of the road and ends with him joyfully following Jesus into Jerusalem can have a parallel in our lives today, if only we ‘see’. We too, can be touched and changed by the power of God through our personal encounter with Jesus and the gospel. When Jesus calls and we spring up to answer, God can do amazing, life changing things for each of us, in God’s time.

I invite you to think about your personal answer might be, if Jesus was to sit down beside you over a cup of coffee, and ask ‘what do you want me to do for you?’ The answer might just help you see with different eyes. AMEN