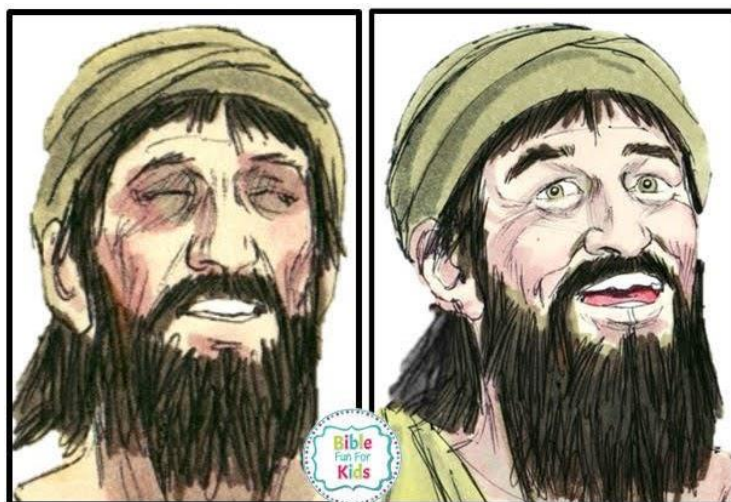
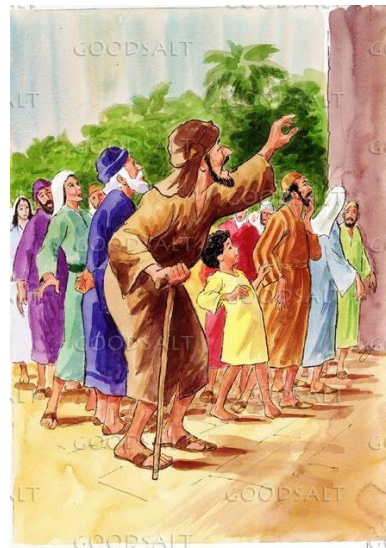
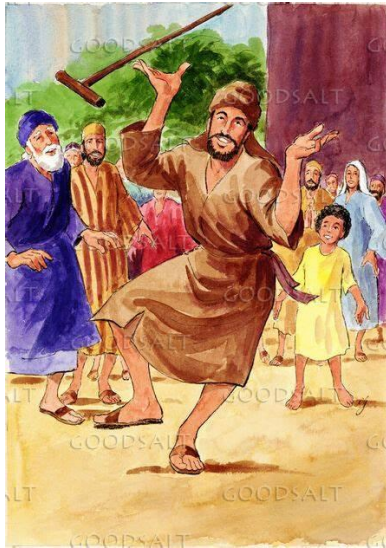


ORMOND UNITING CHURCH



27 OCTOBER 2024

PENTECOST 23



WORSHIP AT HOME

This time is an opportunity to be still, seeking to be aware of the presence of God within.

Set aside a time for this practice; prepare yourself, as you might for a usual Sunday morning and remember that there are others from the congregation gathering at the same time as you. There are also many from the church around the globe who are gathering to seek the presence of God as we are. We join with them all.

Prepare a space in the house; find a comfortable chair, light a candle, turn off distracting noises and close the door if that will help you to be still. This is something that does not need to be hurried.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:

Recently, I had an appointment with my audiologist – at Melbourne University Audiology – and there were two students in attendance for my appointment. In the course of the appointment, we discussed the relative worth of hearing as against sight – ie, which would you find most difficult to lose! It was quite a discussion. I comment on that discussion briefly later in the service. But have a think - just how important are these two senses - sight and hearing in our lives?

Today, we have just one reading – from the Gospel of Mark: the encounter between Blind Bartimaeus and Jesus. It raises the question about how we see! Well I can hear you saying something like ‘You just open your eyes!’ OK! Or is there more to it than that? Let’s see (no pun intended) where we go with this in the rest of the service.

CALL TO WORSHIP:

With our lips and with our hearts:

we bless God in every moment of our lives.

With our ears, with our eyes and with our hearts:

**we will hear and see the cries of our sisters and brothers,
in every painful moment, in every broken place.**

With every gift and with our hearts:

**we will serve God and all of God's children,
with every moment of our lives.**

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HYMN TIS 52: Let us Sing (V 1, 3 & 4) *Richard Thomas Bewes 1934-*

PRAYER OF ADORATION / CONFESSION / DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS:

Our gracious, eternal God,

we give thanks that we see about us a world created full of colour, interest and excitement.

We give thanks that we see all about us people of beauty, wonder and creativity.

We give thanks and praise for this new day and for the profound gift of life.

We give thanks most of all for being able to see in and through Jesus your wondrous love and grace.

CONFESSION

Lord Jesus, challenge our spiritual blindness.

Seeing richness in your world and faith in people around we are nevertheless prone ‘to see but not to see,’ to move so quickly through our minutes, hours and days that we fail to see so much of what is important. We are reminded today of our spiritual blindness. We are also reminded today of how you healed so many of their infirmities. May we hear again that powerful word of Jesus, “ephphatha,” “be opened.” Touch our eyes and hearts that we may be given new and perceptive sight.

- Open our eyes and hearts to the magnificent beauty of your created world which we so often miss and abuse in our preoccupation with other concerns.
- Open our eyes and hearts to the needs and hurts of others and give us the sensitivity and compassion to love them.
- Open our eyes and hearts to those who go through life discriminated against. Enabling us to see and help the vulnerable.
- Open our eyes and hearts to those systems of our society which impede liberty and justice.
- Open our eyes and hearts to the deep recesses of evil within the human breast which creates conflict and war.
- Open our eyes and hearts to poverty. Help us to work for the day when none of your children are denied a place at the table of life.

O GRACIOUS GOD, OPEN OUR EYES.OPEN OUR HEARTS OPEN OUR LIVES
We pray in the name of the one who only ever sought to see and do the way of his Holy Father in Heaven, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour
Amen

And it is in his name that I declare to you that our sins are forgiven
THANKS BE TO GOD

HYMN TIS 748: There once was a man. (V I, 2 & 4)

Digby Hannah 1949

SCRIPTURE: Read by Mardie Townsend

Your Word, Oh Lord, is a lamp to our feet;
A light to our path

Mark 10:46-52

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaheus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” 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.” So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 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.” Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

The gospel of the Lord
Praise to you. Lord Jesus Christ

SERMON:

‘Seeing is believing’ or ‘Believing is seeing?’

Today we are looking at blind Bartimaeus, so we will be thinking about what it means to **see**

An aside - in reference to Blindness V deafness – in my opinion losing hearing is worse than losing sight. Losing hearing means connection with others becomes much harder and eventually impossible.

But today, the scripture directs us to an encounter between a blind man and Jesus

In this encounter with Jesus, Bartimaeus reveals a more profound insight into what it means to be 'blind' and what it means to 'see.'

Indeed, 'Seeing' and 'Blindness' are key elements in this whole section of Mark – Chapters 8,9 and 10 – which tell of Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem and the metaphorical blindness of most who engage with him in this critical period of his ministry. The section begins and then ends with the curing of blind persons, immediately before Jesus enters Jerusalem, on his way to calvary and the cross.

Over and over again the disciples and others 'see' but don't really 'see', 'hear' but don't really 'hear' the message of the Kingdom appearing in what Jesus says, does and is about to do in Jerusalem.

One graphic example of such blindness is that of the story of the Rich Young Ruler (10:17-22) – the gospel reading from a couple of weeks ago.

This deeply religious rich young man kneels before Jesus and asks what he must do to inherit eternal life. He demonstrates his amazing faithfulness by his absolute commitment to the law. Jesus is moved to love by his genuine faithfulness – his 'seeing', his truly faithfully seeing! But when challenged to do just one more thing.' 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven, then come follow me!', the young man 'was shocked, and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.' This young man had a real blind spot.

He's blinded by his wealth to the presence of God's Kingdom in Jesus. Jesus, the treasure of Heaven! – and the treasure of earth! To those who have eyes to see!

And what is true of the Rich Young Ruler is too often true for Jesus' modern-day follower.

Our, faith and following of Jesus, are so often conditional. 'I believe in God, and Jesus, yer, sure, but, but, but.....' Lots of buts, lots of blind spots

So, thank God for blind Bartimaeus! Bartimaeus, who sees beyond sight, sees the saviour, the King, the Messiah, the one who transforms people's lives, sees the one who gives true sight

There is so much in this story which is instructive but let's zero in on healing.

Bartimaeus is healed

How is he healed?

He was blind but now he sees.

But note, before he actually sees, he acclaims Jesus as the Son of David (the Messianic title and this is the ONLY place in the gospel where someone uses this title in reference to Jesus), he sees in him (before he sees with his eyes opened) the goodness and love of God; He sees in Jesus the wholeness of God; He sees in Jesus the saving grace of God; He

sees in Jesus the forgiveness of God; He sees in Jesus the mercy of God. He sees all that and all else pales into insignificance. He can't actually see but indeed he can truly see!

In fact, he sees so much in this one, he devotes his whole life to following him on the way. His faith has truly made him well

He raises for us the question of how we see Jesus shaping life. How he heals us and makes us whole.

Our good friend Jill in Bristol, England is a great example this faithful sight. She has gone through repeated surgeries for bowel cancer and several related problems and diseases over the last 15 years. She has practically no bowel. She has to be fed overnight intravenously for 14 hours - every night; her system is always struggling for energy and yet she remains buoyant and faithful and interested in others and even drags her husband of a lifetime out dancing every now and again.

Jill has a deep faith which urges her to cry out to the Son of David for healing and he grants it! She is healed in her soul and inner faithful being despite her numerous infirmities. And she continues on his Way. Her 'healing' and faithfulness is a continuing inspiration to others. She truly sees and is healed!

The critical thing here for discipleship like Jill's is what Bartimaeus understands seeing to be.

And in case you consider that BB did what he did because he really had nothing to lose, let me draw your attention to another seemingly insignificant aspect of this encounter. When Jesus called BB to him BB arose and 'throwing off his cloak he sprung up and came to Jesus.' I hear you say – so what! Nothing remarkable there.

Wrong!

For this blind beggar at the gate, that cloak was his one means of survival. It was his one and only tool of trade. It was his only means of support. It was his instrument for surviving the elements, it was his instrument for collecting the pittance that was thrown to him by the roadside and upon which rested his survival.

But BLIND B 'trusts' enough to throw away his only means of survival! Everything, even his tenuous means of livelihood is thrown aside, 'in jumping to his feet and coming to Jesus.' It is little wonder that Jesus says to him, 'your faith has healed you.' And it is little wonder that he immediately follows Jesus into Jerusalem, right to the foot of the cross, I suspect.

But what specifically does the declaration of Jesus, 'your faith has healed you,' say to us at OUC – in fact, to all modern-day disciples.

Surely not 'throw away all your medicines, discontinue seeing your doctors and physios etc' – No! They are part of the miracle of 'new life' Jesus offers through the God given skills of others. But when they fail then there is still room for that healing that comes with faith. (In fact, it can also come in the midst of other medical healings.) What is the inner healing that comes with faith?

Well, it is to do with a deeply held conviction or transformation that whatever happens to me God's love is ever constant. This conviction is beyond feelings of loss and defeat and suffering, it is being utterly trustworthy in every circumstance, and particularly when all seems lost. I can trust that the worst illness and disease and disability life can throw at me

will never ever ever separate me from the source of all healing love and life. God through his Son Jesus Christ has promised that.

Am I personally scared of getting a terminal illness, am I scared of dying. Yes and yes! But, and it's a big big but, I know and trust, nothing in all creation, life, illness, death can separate me from that love of God. I can see, I can truly see. If I have that, I have all the healing I need. This is the seeing God calls us to. I can trust that 'sight' in my life. Bartimaeus had such trust, such faith, and he was a nobody in his society. God's love reaches out to everyone – free of charge!

For BB and indeed for any follower of Jesus, it is true to say that the saying is NOT 'seeing is believing,' but 'believing is seeing.'

Let me conclude with two brief comments. The Rich Young Ruler and BB stories are not necessarily asking you to give away all your money, leave family, give up all positions of power and status etc.

BUT these stories ARE asking you to make all of these and the whole of the rest of your life, your good health and your bad health, subject first and foremost, to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. "Son of David, have mercy on me!" "Go, your faith has made you well."

"He who has eyes to see, let him see!"

Amen

HYMN TIS 633: Lord we are blind *David Edge 1932*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE: Prepared by David Northwood

"As we prepare for our prayers for others, we light this candle to remember all those who are part of our church community but who are not at worship with us today."

Light the candle.

Let us pray

Dear Lord we pray hear our pray today

Creator, Spirit, Comforter,

We greet you this day with thanks for the blessings in our lives and for the blessings in the lives of the people of our community.

We pray especially this morning for the original people of this land as we observe that the Voice referendum was about this time last year.

A Voice to Parliament could have been a body enshrined in the constitution that would enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide advice to the parliament on policies and projects that impact their lives.

We confess that when we Europeans settled this land, we suppressed its people, the people who have cared for this country and its waterways and mountains and deserts for about 50,000 years.

We confess that we have willfully ignored the wisdom of the first people, wisdom about how to live in this country in a way that honours and preserves all life, that we have trampled their knowledge underfoot and treated it with contempt.

Healing and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people demands attention to ongoing issues of injustice, violence, and racism in our communities.

Our ancestors in this place agreed to share these sacred lands and attempt to live in peace as neighbours, respecting each other as communities of people with different customs and

traditions.

We know that there were misunderstandings and hardship in these early relationships, but we also know of bonds of kinship and love that grew out of some of these early encounters.

Help us to use our gifts, our knowledge, our skills, our positions in society, and our strength in Christ, as a community of faith, to support our neighbours. Give us humility and the wisdom to know when and how to follow their lead in seeking solutions, and in making positive changes.

Holy Spirit, fill us with the power and the courage to trust in you and to trust in others. Help us to trust in the deep wisdom and traditional knowledge that you have gifted to our indigenous neighbours.

Help us to accept the gift of learning from our neighbours that we may broaden and deepen our understanding of how to live together, to share resources, to put our complementary skills to work together, and most of all to build on our common desire to live in wholeness together as all your people.

Amen.

Now let us join in the prayer our Lord taught us to pray together

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

HYMN TIS 658: I the Lord of sea and sky (V I & 3)

Daniel L. Schutte, SJ 1947 - © 1981 Daniel L Schutte and New Dawn Music.

DISMISSAL:

Let us go to be God's blessings in the world.

With our lips and with our hearts, we will offer hope to all.

Let us go to be the ears and eyes and heart of Jesus.

**Listening to the cries of our sisters and brothers,
drawing them into the refuge of grace.**

Let us go with our arms full of the Spirit's gifts.

Welcoming every one, every moment of our lives.

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BLESSING:

Father bless us we go,

Jesus walk beside us.

Holy Spirit guide us.

Amen

WORD OF MISSION:

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen

POSTLUDE

You can find a copy of today's sermon along with other congregational information on the church website.

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Presider: Rev Ron Townsend

Music: Karen Roberts

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Tuesdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

Thursdays, 9.30am-2.30pm

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NEWS & NOTICES