

Basingstoke and Reading Circuit Service 24 October 2021

DO WE SEE – Prepared by Rev'd Martin Beukes

Welcome to worship. Whether you are leading this as a group in one of the Chapels, at home, or joining with us all in worshipping our great God as you read these words yourself: we all join together in prayer and praise of our great God.

Let us pray: Creator of every good thing, who offers us life, and love, and all we enjoy, we give you thanks for smiling over our lives. We have awoken by your grace and come to offer you our prayers and praise as we seek your face. Open our eyes to see you glory and our ears to hear the whispers of your Spirit in our worship this day and in our every-day. Amen.

Hymn: StF 20 Be still, for the presence of the Lord - David J. Evans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKfyudrhGK4>

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here; come bow before him now with reverence and fear: in him no sin is found — we stand on holy ground. Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here. Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around; he burns with holy fire, with splendour he is crowned:	how awesome is the sight — our radiant King of light! Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around. Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place; he comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace: no work too hard for him — in faith receive from him. Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Prayer

Gracious God, as we worship we become aware of your presence with us, and yet if we paid attention we would realise you are always with us. Always speaking. Always guiding. Always holding. Always healing. And yet in our busyness and distraction we forget your presence and care.

In each moment, if we saw you there with us, there would be so many things we would not have done.

And in each moment, if we saw you there with us, we would have been brave enough to do our part in so many acts of your love which you were calling us to.

We think of all that we have done or left undone and we ask your forgiveness... silence

Lord Jesus, teach us to be a people who are extraordinarily aware of your presence. Help us to see the places you are working and invest our best in these. Enable us to hear your Spirit's prompting when we would do our will against God's or when we would not do what God is calling us to. We want to see where you move and go where you go.

Lord's Prayer

Hear Jesus' words of grace which he spoke to all who asked for grace, 'Go in peace, your sin is forgiven.'

Hymn: StF653 O Christ, the Healer, we have come - Fred Pratt Green

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1O5vdLNE-Gw&list=RD1O5vdLNE-Gw&start_radio=1

O Christ, the Healer, we have come to pray for health, to plead for friends. How can we fail to be restored, when reached by love that never ends? From every ailment flesh endures our bodies clamour to be freed; yet in our hearts we would confess that wholeness is our deepest need. How strong, O Lord, are our desires, how weak our knowledge of ourselves!	Release in us those healing truths unconscious pride resists or shelves. In conflicts that destroy our health we diagnose the world's disease; our common life declares our ills: is there no cure, O Christ, for these? Grant that we all, made one in faith, in your community may find the wholeness that, enriching us, shall reach the whole of humankind.
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Reading: Mark 10:46-52

Sermon:

For the last two years I have been going through some of the most interesting training of my life. It has been an advanced driving training programme, but the most interesting bit of it has been learning about how you see things and make yourself seen. Too often accidents happen and one or both parties will say, 'Sorry mate, I never saw you.' And this is only because we haven't really been trained to see all that is going on around us.

Now, if we are so bad at seeing everything going on around us when we are literally holding our lives and the lives of others in our hands, what might we not be seeing that is happening around us every single day?

Not long before our story from scripture is another, rather different healing story in Mark's gospel. In it another blind man being healed at Bethsaida, but it looks very different to our story from a few chapters later. We are going to look at it now, but I want you to look out for the times which are different, because I think the differences in our story today may just be our scripture story's invitations to see things the way God sees them.

Jesus Heals a Blind Man at Bethsaida

22 They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. 23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"

24 He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

25 Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't even go into the village."

OK, let's look at all the things which are different between to very similar situations. And think a little about why.

In both stories the blind men are people who live outside of mainstream society. They have very few options or possibilities for making their lives better. They are most likely both seen by others as people being punished by God for their sin, or the sin of their parents. They both need to beg or rely on the charity of others to survive. They have no opportunities to make their lives better. Who do we not see in our society because they have no opportunities?

Bartimaeus' story starts with him sitting alone on the roadside begging. Because he is begging we can assume that he does not have the best life, and unlike the earlier healing at Bethsaida, we also know he has no friends to bring him to Jesus to be healed. He only encounters Jesus because Jesus walks right by where

Bartimaeus begs and he happens to hear that Jesus is there near him. If it isn't for a bit of luck, or an excessively large helping of God's providence, Bartimaeus would have remained hopeless and lonely on the side of the road. Who do we not see in our society because they are hopeless and lonely?

Sadly, for Bartimaeus his story gets even more bleak. In the earlier healing at Bethsaida, the blind man has friends who led him to Jesus to find some help for him. There were people with faith around him, people who cared for him, and who valued him enough to lead him to Jesus. For poor Bartimaeus he has plenty of faith of his own, but no one to point the way to Jesus, or tell him that Jesus doesn't see him as a useless sinner and can restore his hope and dignity. Surely some people of faith in the crowd saw Bartimaeus, or did they just look away embarrassed. Who do we not see in our society because despite their searching for Jesus we are too embarrassed and self-conscious to look for them?

So, rather than being helpful, the crowd in Bartimaeus' story are mostly consumed by their own needs. They want to see Jesus, not have this noisy beggar demand Jesus' attention. Maybe they want to be healed of something, or to hear Jesus tell them that they were worthy of God's love. And yet, only Bartimaeus declares that Jesus is the Messiah, the 'son of David.' The crowd, overcome by all their own needs and desires fail to hear what Bartimaeus is saying about Jesus. He lives outside of the notice of society until he shouts out the most important thing the crowd needs to hear, then he is important enough to be told to shut up. Who do we not see in our society because we think they are not important enough for us to see their point of view?

We live in one of the strongest economies in the world and yet there are people who go hungry all the time, there are people who are lonely and hopeless, there are people whose opinions are not heard, there are people with zero opportunity, and the Jesus name is shouted down rather than shouted out by the faithful!

Not everyone has options. Not everyone can help themselves. Too many are crying out in need. Too many will never hear that Jesus loves them. Most will never see or be seen as who God created them to be. And the way that all this starts to change, is by us learning to see them with Jesus' eyes.

Lord Jesus, the blind ones who need to see are us. Amen

Hymn: STF 693 God of the poor – Graham Kendrick

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08utbDFP9AE>

Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair, Lord, in your suffering world this is our prayer. Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace, sunrise to sunset, your kingdom increase!	cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share. Peace to the killing-fields, scorched earth to green, Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.
Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills, work for all people, trade for their skills; land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak, voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.	Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams plundered and poisoned — our future, our dreams. Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed; make us content with the things that we need.
<i>God of the poor, friend of the weak, give us compassion we pray: melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain; come, change our love</i>	<i>Refrain</i> Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame until your justice burns brightly again; until the nations learn of your ways,

<i>from a spark to a flame.</i>	seek your salvation and bring you their praise. <i>Refrain</i>
Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear,	

Intercessions:

Is there anything you would like to Give thanks to God for? Or is there anything you want to ask prayers for?

Spend a few minutes answering these questions. Give thanks for or pray for those things which come to mind.

You may wish to thank God for all you have and pray for the poor, the hungry, and the hopeless.

You may wish to thank God for friends and family and pray for those who are lonely, angry, or feel unloved.

You may wish to thank God for the safety and prosperity of our country and pray for people who live in fear, conflict, or squalor.

God our Mother and Father, who gives us life, cares for us in our affliction, and sustains us with energy for every new day, we offer you these prayer we have spoken, and with them the prayers of our hearts which are too close for us to speak out loud.

Open our eyes to see as you see, and give us the courage to act on your prompting. Amen

Hymn: Stf 407 Hear the call of the Kingdom - Keith & Kristyn Getty and Stuart Townend

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WL-UdwB0Qvc>

<p>Hear the call of the kingdom, lift your eyes to the King; let his song rise within you as a fragrant offering of how God, rich in mercy, came in Christ to redeem all who trust in his unfailing grace.</p> <p>Hear the call of the kingdom to be children of light with the mercy of heaven, the humility of Christ; walking justly before him, loving all that is right, that the life of Christ may shine through us.</p>	<p><i>King of heaven, we will answer the call. We will follow, bringing hope to the world, filled with passion, filled with power to proclaim salvation in Jesus' name.</i></p> <p>Hear the call of the kingdom to reach out to the lost with the Father's compassion in the wonder of the cross, bringing peace and forgiveness, and a hope yet to come: let the nations put their trust in him.</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Blessing: 2 Corinthians 13:14 The Message

The amazing grace of the Master, Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen