

## Theme: Spiritual Blindness

Mark 10:46-52

St James' Lower Hutt

Preached by the Rev'd Murray Wills

8am and 10am – 28 October 2018

May the words of my heart and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, God my rock and redeemer. Amen

Today's Gospel story, tells the story of Bartimaeus who is blind. Bartimaeus calls out to Jesus despite people rebuking him.

Jesus asks what he wants him to do for him and recognising his faith, Jesus restores his sight.

The story then indicates that Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the way. A simple story with a lot packed into it, like a lot of scripture.

Mark is quite clear: Bartimaeus is someone to imitate. Unlike the disciples, who hadn't quite understood what Jesus was about, he is already a man of faith, courage and true discipleship, and this is recognised by Jesus.

He recognises who Jesus is (the son of David, the promised one, the Messiah) and he clearly believes that Jesus can help him ('your faith has made you well'); he leaves his begging and

follows Jesus on the way ('the way' was the early Christians word for what we call Christianity).

This is in stark contrast with the disciples. Remember when Jesus said to James and John "what do you want me to do for you?" all he got was a request for power, prestige and glory.

The healing of Bartimaeus is a sign that Jesus is trying to open his followers' eyes, and when Jesus says "your faith has made you well", whilst there was a physical healing from blindness it would have carried a wider and deeper meaning to early Christians, as it does for us. To be well is to be well in body, mind, and spirit.

Bartimaeus was physically blind, but there are different types of blindness, for example some wander through life trying to find their way. To be spiritually blind to the beauty of a joyous Christian life is one of the greatest sadness's. Living with God always begins with receiving healing and new life.

Early in my discernment for Priesthood which started 3-4 years ago I had to write what is called my spiritual journey. My spiritual journey started when I was christened in St Luke's Anglican church in Mosgiel. Otago at 3 months. My mother relates the story of me sitting on her knee as a 3-4-year-old and announcing that I want to be a Vickerman.

As part of writing this journey it became clear to me that there were several times in my life that I was being called by God. It is

clear to me now, that in my teenage years as a member of the youth group here at St James' on a youth camp in the Sounds, Jesus was asking me to follow him. I didn't notice at the time and instead of following Jesus 'on the way' other things got in the way of me following him.

Like many, and in particular many teenage boys, I stopped going to church in my teens. It wasn't cool; I had no youth mentors that I could relate to; we had services and music that I couldn't relate to and I had other things that took priority. I was blind to God's prompting, and had a large list of things that I put in the way of my relationship with God. I became one of those people who mistakenly still considered myself to be a Christian, I just didn't go to church!

God is patient though and God continued to call me until I listened, and did something about it.

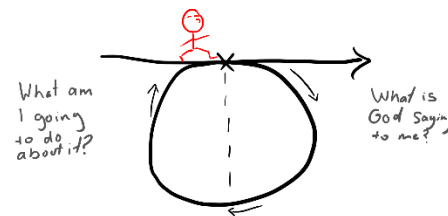
What I have noticed is that as I have come closer to God, that the things that get in the way become less. They just become unimportant when you trust in God completely to provide. These are all temporary things that are worldly not eternal things.

What are the things that make you Spiritually blind? What are the things that you know are getting in the way of you being the person God wants you to be?

As a teenager I didn't have the tools to equip me to notice what God was saying to me, so I couldn't really act on it.

The key first thing is to actually spend time with God. In prayer and in meditation. Get into the habit of spending time with God each day, or as you go for a walk. Ask God for help with an issue; ask God for direction, which path to take next, Listen.

God is active in all our lives but we sometimes don't take the time to notice or to listen. This point (marked by an x on the diagram) is a Kairos or God moment. This is when you have a clear sense of what God is saying to you. It maybe that God has put a situation in front of you; or a person; or you have clarity over a direction. Notice what God is saying to you, and then work out what you are going to do about it.



As you practice this, you will find yourself noticing more and more God moments; the challenge will be then to do what you hear God saying.

This is one of the purposes of our celebration time that we introduced into the 10am service. To give people the opportunity to give witness to the way God is working in their lives and share it with us.

I challenge you to notice what God is saying to you over the following week, tell someone what it is and what you are going to do about it.

Just like the blind man in our story today, Jesus is calling us. He is calling us to follow him, to be disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples. To follow “the way”. Not to lose “our way” or to put things in “the way”.

Will you accept the challenge?