**Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost 28.10.2018 Mark 10. 46-52**

Blind Bartimaeus lived on the margins of society at Jericho. There was no social security, no Institute for the Blind to teach him a trade, no idea where his next meal would come from. His world was a long, dark night of unfamiliar sounds, of blunderings-ins, a series of shuffling shambles.

This sightless soul could have wallowed in sheer misery; he could have enjoyed a perpetual pity party as a victim. In the confusion of the noisy crowd of pilgrims, in spite of his condition, he sensed something unusual was happening. He called “Can anyone tell me what’s going on?” and his heart missed a beat, when someone answered “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” In that moment, he knew that Jesus had power to restore his sight, and, he knew his Scripture “Seek the Lord, while he may be found. Call on him, while he is near” [Isaiah 55.6]. Somehow, he sensed that Jesus was on his last march to the Cross and would not pass that way again, so he cried out for a cure. Faith believes when it cannot see.

He created such a ruckus, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me,” that onlookers shushed “Shut your mouth, son of filth. Busy Jesus is too good for the likes of you.” These piggy-eyed do-gooders had no sensitivity to Bart’s pain. These spiritually blind guides sought to preserve clean Jesus from a low-status waste of space, who, by his sin, deserved to be left in perpetual physical and spiritual darkness. He could never be anything more than a blind beggar.

The irony was, in spite of their going ballistic at the blind man, the negative bigots were not in touch with Jesus. They may not have lost their sight, but they had lost their vision. The great tragedy is to have eyes, but refuse to see. They may have thronged close, but, being close is not close enough. How close are you? To get through, ya gotta do!

Hope began to germinate a resolve in the dry dust of Bart’s broken self, and faith drove Bart to believe that it was for folk like him that Jesus “came to seek and save that which was lost” [Rom.5.8]. Bart resisted the intimidation to silence. He needed a miracle and he knew that Jesus was his only hope for one. He knew that Jesus had come to Jericho to give him a life-changing personal call, so, undeterred, he shouted all the more to drown out the naysayers. “Jesus, they tell me that I am a filthy beggar from a mixed-up, lousy childhood, pity me.” When someone pinches the parking spot we had eyed, we are quick to protest noisily. Why are we Anglicans too dignified or too ashamed to shout out to Christ, when we know that he wants to give us forgiveness, a clean heart, a clear conscience, an eternal home in heaven? Imagine what miracles he can do for you in this blessed gathering today. But, will we ask? Whittier’s words are “of all sad words of tongue and pen, the saddest are these, it might have been.”

Bartimaeus expected a cure. His faith triggered Jesus’ healing power, for, the Lord stopped and ordered those who sought to silence the beggar to become evangelists to him, to be bearers of good news: “Take heart! Get up! Be of good cheer! Jesus is calling you.”

Though blind, Bart was not lame. Undaunted, he sprang up in a leap of faith, tossing aside his limiting cloak in his eagerness. Thus he confidently prefigured that no longer would he sit on his spread garment, his only property, his bed-roll at night, into which passers-by cast coins by day.

Now, he wanted no money, only his sight restored. Do we have limiting cloaks in our lives? Do we use them to not let God work marvels for us?

Last Sunday, Jesus had asked covetous James and John “What do you want me to do for you?” Unwisely, they made a massive miscalculation on the nature of glory with their greedy demands for the best places as princelings in what they thought would be the Lord’s earthly kingdom.

Confidently, without hesitation, today, when asked the same, Bart simply answered “let me see again.” He could have asked for the name of a good eye-doctor, but, he believed Jesus was the Messiah, and had the power of God to restore his sight. Jesus answered, “Your faith has made you well,” and Bart regained his sight. Mercy sought and healing given. In his cry, “Son of David,” Bart showed more sighted understanding than his twelve followers had after three long years with the Lord.

After twelve long years of uncleanness, the woman with the issue of blood, adamantly insisted on making contact with her Lord, when he passed by in the midst of her crowd. Faith can make us well and Jesus makes it happen.

Does Jesus ask us this same question, “What do you want me to do for you today?” and yet, we fumble and mumble because we are not ready to receive the responsibility for all that Jesus gives us?

Given full sight, Bartimaeus became a true disciple, who, now open-eyed, saw the way ahead lead Jesus straight into a confrontation with the Temple-based priestly aristocracy that would end at the Cross, yet still he chose to follow. Full well, he knew “I once was lost, but now am found: was blind, but now I see.”

Had Bart procrastinated, he would have spent his lifetime blindness regretting his missed opportunity, for Jesus never passed through Jericho again. Do we have health issues, constant pain, spiritual blindness or blindness to a sinful condition? Are we facing hard times financially? It is no accident that you are here today, for Jesus is passing by and will stop in this prayer place. Bartimaeus received the miracle that he had longed for since his life of darkness began. Your darkest hour can become your brightest.

Let me end with a story. An Invictis soldier was blinded rescuing a friend from a burning tank in Iraq. Later he took up golf, how he managed, I don’t know. An Australian golf champ agreed to play against him a charity match for $1000 a hole. “How many strokes do you want me to give you?” he asked kindly. “No, no strokes. I’ll see you to tee off tonight. At midnight.”