

## Reflection for 24<sup>th</sup> October 2021

### **Mark 10: 46-52**

This is a vivid story told by someone who was there. It was the main road up to Jerusalem which passed through Jericho, and there were crowds heading to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover in the following week. A blind beggar sitting by the roadside senses something different, and is told that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. The healer! What an opportunity. He is not going to miss this. Jesus stops, calls him over, and asks what he wants. He asks to see again, and Jesus responds with an instant healing.

We are told Bartimeus attracted Jesus' attention by shouting. He had to, because of the noise. But the wonder is, we do not have to shout to attract the attention of Jesus. Whether we are in a quiet place or a noisy crowd, Jesus will hear us.

Fine, but I want to ask us a question, myself included. Bartimeus put absolutely everything into his call to Jesus. How heartfelt are our prayers? How deep? How sincere? We know God doesn't count the arithmetic of our prayers – how many or how long or how well-constructed are the sentences. He looks for how sincere they are, how meaningful. Bartimeus wasn't reciting Jewish daily prayers or telling the beads on a rosary or presenting to God a free church shopping list of petitions! He was shouting out "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me". You can't get much more heartfelt than that.

Bartimeus had to shout several times because of the noise, but we don't have that problem, although we are told to pray persistently. This is easier said than done. I suspect many of us pray for a few minutes, and that is it for the day. Not like the managing director of a company I read about. The factory controller wished to see him urgently, but the MD's secretary said he was in conference and could not be disturbed. The controller pushed past the secretary and opened the inner office door, to discover the Managing Director on his knees, praying.

We don't have to set aside large chunks of our day for prayer on our knees, even if we can still get down onto our knees. Yet we can pray frequently as we live our daily lives. I remember Richard Wurmbrand, a priest who was imprisoned by the communists in Romania, saying that he kept his sanity when in solitary confinement by constantly repeating "Jesus", "Jesus". We could try saying it several times, pausing, and then articulating our prayer.

Jesus asked Bartimeus "What do you want me to do for you?" When did we last hear Jesus say that to us? Supposing you heard it, what would you answer? Do we really know what we want? In the silence of prayer, we have the opportunity to ask Jesus for whatever we want. Bartimeus appealed to Jesus as the Messiah, Son of David. He had complete trust in Jesus. And he was healed on the spot in response to that trust, that faith.

This passage can perhaps teach us a lesson about asking Jesus for help. Of course we may not get the answer we want, we may not see the healing for which we pray. Paul prayed again and again for healing from some physical ailment but God told him he would have to

live with it, and he was content. We may pray for years without apparent result, yet there are many occasions when our prayers are answered in a way which we can recognize.

Only God can really know what is best for us. We may think we know what we would like, but we may be wrong. We may pray for a lot of money, a euro-jackpot if you like, and then find we have got ourselves a lot of worry. In the passage of Mark immediately preceding today's story the disciples asked Jesus for power, prestige and glory. How much better the response of Solomon when God asked him what he wanted, and he asked for wisdom.

We might ask for space and time to hear God's will. We could ourselves create that space and time if we had the will, but do we? We can hear God speaking in all sorts of conditions, but surely the easiest is in a time of silence. We don't have to shout then, and nor does God. To know that we can have this conversation is a real message of hope in this busy world where modern communications bring us instant news of crises anywhere on the globe. But as we read Mark's gospel, we have this message of hope to end this section, before the narrative enters on Holy Week. A note of hope and healing, not just for Bartimeus, but also for you and me.

I invite you who read this now to enter into a time of quiet prayer. Let us just look again to Jesus our redeemer, acknowledge our shortcomings, bask in his love, listen to Him, and if we have needs then bring them. And may your quiet time be blessed.