

**PENTECOST 23**  
**27/10/24**  
**CAVES BEACH**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

God, creator of the universe, creator of planet Earth,  
**we adore you in our worship!**

God, inspiration of our faith community,  
**we praise you in our worship!**

God, who opens our eyes to the needs of faith communities throughout the world,  
**we are challenged to share through our worship!**

God, whose compassionate and merciful way is known in Jesus Christ,  
**we respond with our love to his love. Let us worship God!**

**Opening Prayer**

We glory in your creative miracle, O God.

**Your world is so wonderful: the sunrise, the vast seas, the mountain ranges, and the gift of life to each one of us.**

We glory in your sustaining miracle, O God:

**the certainty of the returning seasons, the growing awareness of young children.**

We glory in your miraculous Word, O God,

**which reveals your loving presence and which challenges us to bring hope.**

We glory in Jesus, the miracle of New Life,

**who enabled the blind to see, the disciples to have insight, and the despised to know power. God of miracles, we joyfully adore you! Amen.**

**HYMN 134** Praise my soul

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

**PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION**

We could not approach you, O God, were it not for the person of Jesus, Lord and Saviour, Servant and Friend. His perfect love and life could have widened the gap between us and you, but instead he offered himself as the way to you, by living out the truth of your love and by gracing our lives with the gift of his life. Accept our prayers and praise, our spoken and unspoken

words of thankfulness for being able to approach you, O God, through Jesus - the way, the truth and the life. May this time of worship increase our desire to live lives which honour and glorify you.

**God**, when Jesus passed through Jericho,  
a blind man cried out to him.

Many in the crowd told him to be quiet.

Now is not the time; this is not the place;  
you are not the person.

Be quiet.

We confess, God, that we have taken the crowd's voice to heart.

We have allowed the voices of those in need to be sidelined.

We have told them to wait for a more opportune time,  
for a different economic environment.

We have told the desperate to wait.

And we have taken these voices into ourselves as well.

We have kept our own pain and desperation hidden.

We have let ourselves be silenced.

We have pretended that all is fine  
and that we shouldn't make a fuss.

We confess that we have so often not experienced or shared  
your all-encompassing, all-welcoming love for us.

Amen.

## **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

Hear this!

There is no pain too great or hurt too small to be held in the heart of God.

Jesus welcomed the blind man;

God welcomes us.

All is forgiven.

Come, we are forgiven.

We are free!

## **READINGS**

- **Hebrews 7:23-28**

Furthermore, the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; 24 but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. 25 Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

26 For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

- **Mark 10:46-52**

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. <sup>47</sup> When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” <sup>48</sup> Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” <sup>49</sup> 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.” <sup>50</sup> So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup> 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.” <sup>52</sup> Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed Him on the way.

**HYMN 547** Be thou my vision

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

## **SERMON**

I can recall as a child having a friend of my father’s visiting us in Perth to be trained with one of the first Guide Dogs in Australia. I believe that he was the first blind man to be ordained in Australia. I was tasked with showing him around the manse in Claremont, WA where we were living. One of the things I tried to show him was the light switch in the bathroom. He commented that he didn’t think that he would need that!

Can anyone recall getting glasses at some stage and suddenly realising there was a whole world out there that you hadn’t been seeing properly?

Was it the hills in the distance for those with distance issues or reading the fine print on the food you buy, or even the newspaper, for those who are short-sighted?

When we come to the story of Bartimaeus we have a very different experience of blindness than most of us will ever have to face. Bartimaeus was sitting by the road trying to get enough money for food from travelers on that road. This man might not have been able to see physically but he was obviously well attuned to what was happening in the world around him. He obviously knew all about Jesus and His healing powers. This blind beggar believed that he could be healed if only he could get the attention of the travelling Rabbi called Jesus.

For Bartimaeus it was not so much about physical eyesight as having the insight to see a way out of his predicament. Not having physical vision didn't mean that he couldn't see how he could be healed. The interplay of blindness and insight is a recurring sub-text in much of this part of Mark's Gospel. It is not really about physical eyesight but the spiritual blindness of those who Jesus is talking with.

Jesus is trying to get the crowds, the religious leaders and His disciples to comprehend what He is talking about. Several chapters before this we have Jesus healing another blind man and that first occasion it took a second attempt for that man to have his sight fully fixed. The emphasis here for me is that it can be hard to get other people to see the obvious. After this story the themes of healing and sight are scattered in subsequent passages.

Jesus is constantly trying to get His message across but it seems that the audience are like the first man who only saw things initially in a distorted and vague way. It seems to take several tries to get people to see the obvious.

Jesus had asked his disciples who they thought that He was and Peter gives an insightful answer but even Peter doesn't fully understand the consequences of his statement. Three disciples accompanied Jesus to a mountain top for the transfiguration, but they still did not fully comprehend or see what Jesus had been teaching them. They are all blind in some way!

Repeatedly Jesus tries to get the message across. He keeps speaking about how He will suffer rejection and death but all the disciples seem to be interested in who is the greatest among them. Then there are the stories of

the children and the slaves as examples of how to approach His Kingdom. Leadership is a whole different experience with Jesus. The disciples still can't see what Jesus means.

Then there is the rich young man who has kept the commandments faithfully but was unable to complete the transition to discipleship. This passage leads into His followers talking about how much they had given up in order to follow Jesus. There is no thought of looking at the broader picture. Even in this discussion they are looking to better their position in the community.

Now we come to Blind Bartimaeus. Despite his apparent physical blindness there are things that this beggar can still see....

He can see that:

1. Jesus is not someone who he wants to throw a few coins onto his coat as he sits by the roadside and then just walk away. He can see that Jesus can restore his physical sight. Like the debate a few passages back when the disciples tried to exclude the children this blind beggar was not going to be sidelined by those gathered around Jesus, jostling for the best position.
2. Bartimaeus 'sees' that Jesus can do more than just restore his physical sight. He is the first person in Mark's Gospel to name Jesus as the one promised to follow David and become the Messiah. This was something that the Jews had been wanting for many generations. It is noteworthy that this story is the last one in this Gospel before Jesus enters into Jerusalem.
3. Bartimaeus sees that as a follower of Jesus there is no need to try and keep a second option. The old security of the past no longer applies. Some of the disciples left their fishing nets where they lay. Bartimaeus has no hesitation leaving behind his begging cloak where it lay as he could 'see' that it was no longer needed.

Can we now see that this poor beggar sitting by the roadside is being used by Mark to show us about much more than simple physical eyesight?

The things that really are central to faith do not rely on physical eyesight. We just need to think back a few verses to where Jesus said that it would be better to have our eyes plucked out than to miss out on the vision which would allow us to enter heaven.

Just choosing to follow Jesus does not, of itself, make it easy to see Jesus. There are probably three things that we need to do:

1. Ask for help from the Holy Spirit. Bartimaeus starts by calling out: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” It is by calling on the power of the Holy Spirit that we can start to see the full picture of Jesus’ teaching. There are many things that we can’t do by ourselves and we need to be receptive to the eye opening healing offered by the Holy Spirit so we can see the world as Jesus does. Even if it takes more than one attempt, don’t give up. Even Jesus could not help the first blind man to see initially. Jesus has patience beyond our comprehension.
2. We need to be prepared to get rid of the blinkers which narrow our vision. The rich young man walked away as he could not broaden his vision to see what Jesus was offering. Bartimaeus walked away from everything in his old life to follow Jesus.... So often there are things which we couldn’t think of living without which hold us back. It might be material possessions, some sorts of relationships or ingrained habits which are like a giant anchor stopping our movement. By letting go we need to be prepared to see the world in whole new light.
3. Rather than just relying on your own eyes we need to be prepared to draw on the perspectives of others. We need to keep open to new and differing ways of seeing the world which previously we have just taken for granted. Jesus taught us with the little children we need to be prepared to view the world through a child’s fresh eyes. To see and understand the freedom in our world, we need to look through the eyes of a slave or a child. If you want to appreciate the freedom that sight gives us just look through the eyes of someone who has been blind for a period.

- How about you sit in a different chair at home one day or even a different chair when you come to church?
- How about imagining how a refugee sees our culture and freedoms?

Let us take time this week to open our eyes and look at things without blinkers or any other restrictions. Let Jesus be our vision through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**HYMN 161** Tell out my soul

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6ji4y9Q-K0&t=57s>

## **PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING**

God of all the earth, of all that is and ever was,  
we bring here money that represents  
our labours and our security.

We know as we share this with others  
that our true security is in our relationship with you  
and with your creation.

We know that our labours,  
if they are to be of lasting value  
must be for the good of all that you have made –  
the earth, its creatures and each other.

Amen.

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

‘Take heart,’ the crowd tells Bartimaeus in our reading for this week.

Today, God of compassion,  
we pray for all those among us and around us  
who have lost heart.

We pray for those who have heard  
over and over, ‘Be quiet!’

We pray for all who have learnt  
that they are required to be silent  
in the face of injustice, abuse and neglect.

We pray today, God, for noise!

We pray for a new community,  
a new culture, a new set of relationships  
where everyone is heard, where every voice matters,  
and where no one is silenced.

We pray, God of all hopefulness,  
for a world where every person will know themselves heard.

We pray for a world where the deep needs of every human being  
will be able to be spoken aloud, and where we will,  
together address those needs.

Make us a community that seeks, prays for,  
and works for such a community, such a culture.

Give us the courage to speak and the courage to act.

We pray in the name of the one who pays attention to the needs of all.

Amen.

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 forever. Amen.

**HYMN 152** Joyful, joyful

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eMY3ivdNzwE>

## **BENEDICTION**

'Take heart; get up, he is calling you.'  
We go in the name of Christ.  
The one who calls us.  
The one who calls us by name.  
We go in faith that God makes all things well.

I bless you in the name of God,  
father to the world,  
I bless you in the name of God,  
Jesus our companion,  
and I bless you in the name of God,  
Spirit that makes us live.  
Amen.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH\\_HdkWs74](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH_HdkWs74)