

## Seeing Again

*(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Mark 10:46-52)*

# Seeing Again

*(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Mark 10:46-52)*

Many years ago, my Dad, was driving a truck for his employer. He'd pulled out of the petrol station. He'd seen the traffic approaching from his right, but he hadn't seen the traffic on his left. Only because he was travelling very slowly, he avoided a potentially fatal accident. Incredibly shaken up, he worried about the harm he could have caused others and himself.

The time had really come for him to get his eyes tested, we, the family, were greatly relieved. Driving with him for a while had been hazardous, I would give him instructions as we went along and grip the seat. He didn't appreciate my assistance! Dad had been compensating for his failing sight for years. He had stopped reading books or newspapers or watching television, he said it was all "trash", and maybe he had a point there.

He went to a local optometrist and was told that everything was okay. Dad knew that all was not okay. He sought a second opinion and within days he had a diagnosis. His retina had become detached from the eyeball and he had cataracts forming on both eyes. He was effectively blind in one eye and had impaired sight in the other. It was a miracle there had been no tragic accident. Dad was beginning to accept his blindness, he'd begun to name it, doctors were finding a cause and he waited for healing.

After his diagnosis there was a two month wait for his first operation. So, he started preparing for the changes he would have to make in his life. He couldn't drive whilst he waited, so he became reliant on others. It also meant he had to change how he did his job. He had become convinced that the surgery would leave him blind, so he counted, he counted steps, the steps between his room and the bathroom and the fridge and the lounge room. Once, when Mum rearranged some furniture, he went absolutely ballistic, and then confessed he'd been trying to cement in his mind where each piece of furniture and the door were. He needed to retain his independence if he should go completely blind.

He had his retina reattached and a cataract removed from his left eye and then the cataract from his right eye. He waited to see what improvement had been made. Slowly his sight in his right eye improved. He would be overcome with joy when shapes and colours became more distinct. Amazed when he noticed a large freckle on the top of my nose, which had been there as long as I remembered, but he was seeing it for the very first time. He began to read again, he did the crossword puzzle in the paper everyday and could tell you exactly what was happening in the TV soaps.

Dad had finally named his blindness and with the help of some fantastic doctors, and it led to new discoveries, to greater enjoyment and to new life for him.

## Seeing Again

*(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Mark 10:46-52)*

In our bible reading from Mark, we have a story about another blind man on the road. Jesus and his followers are on the way to Jerusalem. Along the way, they are interrupted by a blind beggar, calling out. Calling out, not just once, but a number of times, and was getting louder and more insistent as some of the group travelling with Jesus attempted to silence him.

Bartimaeus was insignificant in the eyes of most. He called out to Jesus by name, seeking mercy and asking for both health and life. If he were healed, presumably, he would no longer have to beg either. Perhaps he saw in Jesus what others were yet to grasp – that Jesus was not just a healer but the one who had come for all and to save all. I wonder if he had any idea how radically his life would be changed after this encounter, because we are told he takes his place as a disciple – he follows after Jesus ‘on the way’. He is now on the road and no longer by the roadside.

Jesus for his part, teaches us something of the kind of kingdom we are part of and the way we should treat others. Jesus stops when this man calls out, and then, asks those who want to silence Bartimaeus to bring him to him. One, who others see as an insignificant interruption on the side of the road, invokes the compassion of Jesus. Before he does anything, he asks Bartimaeus what it is that he wants. Jesus listens to Bartimaeus. Jesus teaches us that people are not just objects of our generosity, assistance or charity but people who should be shown respect, who are listened to and asked what it is they need.<sup>1</sup>

This story isn’t just about blindness, it is about discipleship. It shows us how Jesus treats other people, and it reveals a little of what it means to follow Jesus on his way.

I wonder if we know what it is like to be Bartimaeus? Are we prepared to seek Jesus’ healing for our blind spots, because we each have them? When Jesus calls us, do we get up with a spring in our step or are we happier sitting on the roadside? Are we prepared to let Jesus ask us what it is we really need? After we have encountered Jesus, are we really prepared to give up our blindness and follow him along the road which will lead to the cross but also to resurrection?

Our first step is to name our blindness and want to have it healed. It is easy to name the blindness of another, much harder to name our own. Our blind spots stop us from envisioning a future that is different. This story shows us that Jesus is ready to take those blind spots from us if we will let him, but we have to want his help. Part of being a disciple is to get up off the roadside and let Jesus heal us and then to follow him down the road, a road we can see more clearly.

Bartimaeus knew he was blind, as did everyone else on the road that day. Bartimaeus knew if he called out insistently enough Jesus could and would help him. He may not have known the dramatic way in which this encounter would change his life, but the

---

<sup>1</sup>From Gutierrez p. 249-251

**Seeing Again**

*(Preached by Cheryl Williams at Footscray Baptist Church on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - Mark 10:46-52)*

moment after he sprang up from that roadside, was the moment he joined Jesus on the road.

Let me conclude with a reflection from the Iona Community about Bartimaeus and maybe you can hear Jesus calling you too.

‘Come,’ he said – and I did, following his voice through the crowd on the edge of town.

I needed wait no longer: my voice had been heard calling for change, crying out for a fresh start – even though it meant casting off old ways, no longer the needy person everybody knew.

‘Come,’ he said and I saw what God could do.

‘Your faith has healed you,’ he told me. ‘Now go.’

He never said, ‘Follow me’ – but as I could see, there was no other way.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> *Dandelions and Thistles* p. 49