

Haverhill Methodist Church – Worship at Home  
Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021

Welcome Message – Revd. Peter Goodhall

United by the Holy Spirit we join in worshipping the living God. We welcome Jesus among us. He declared: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Luke chapter 4 verse 18)  
Today may he open the eyes of our hearts.

Prayer of praise

God you are our sun. Even on our darkest days you shine on us from behind the clouds, giving us warmth and light. God, you are our map. On our journey through lockdown, when we feel lost, bewildered, afraid, you show us the way to go. God, you are our shield. As we face the wounds that life inflicts, as we battle with sin, disease and pain, you protect our hearts and our souls. God, you are our lifeline. When our feet would slip or when we are in deep water, we cling firmly to you. You hold us. You rescue us. You are our strong deliverer. We bring you our thanks and praise. **Amen.**

Hymn/Song

Bible Reading

Mark chapter 10 verses 46-52

Prayer of confession

We call out to you, Lord, from the clamour of our lives and from the incessant cries of the world on our televisions, our radios, our mobiles and our computers. Beyond the noise, we sense you drawing near, passing by, and standing still. We call out to you our Saviour, as Bartimaeus did and we know that you will hear and have mercy upon us. In the silence let us confess our sins to God...

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner. Forgive us we pray. Help us to release anything we hold against others. Help us to forgive those who rebuke or rebuff us. Help us to forgive ourselves. In your mercy, grant us a clearer vision of ourselves, a clearer vision of our Saviour Jesus Christ and his love and a clearer vision of your purpose for our lives. We thank you that our sins are forgiven because of the cross of Jesus and his blood shed for us. **Amen.**

Hymn/Song

### Sermon

A lady walks into Specsavers. She tells the eye doctor:

"I think am having hallucinations. Every time I open my eyes, I see really dark things. I see plague, fire, floods, riots and economic disaster. I am seeing the worst in everything. Nothing looks like it used to. It's as if everything I see is shrouded in darkness."

"That's interesting," replied the eye doctor, "because from what I can tell, you've got 20/20 vision."

It is now time to test our spiritual sight as we explore today's Bible passage from Mark chapter 10 verses 46-52.

Let us walk through this healing miracle of Jesus stage by stage and let the word of God speak to our lives, our lockdown situation and global pandemic. May we find light in our darkness.

*Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means 'son of Timaeus'), was sitting by the roadside begging.*

Who does Bartimaeus represent today? The one today who has lost their job, the one today who has to put their pride on one side to use the Foodbank, the one today who feels ignored and left behind, the one who today feels overwhelmed by darkness, the one who cannot see a future. Yes, you can recognize Bartimaeus today. And we can recognize Bartimaeus in our own need and longings.

*When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'*

Bartimaeus had no sight but he had a voice and he must be heard. This was his one chance to meet the Lord. He had no sight but he had insight. He named Jesus as the Son of David, a title meaning Messiah. Bartimaeus believed Jesus to be the promised one who came to bring restoration and healing.

And humbly recognising his need and his sin he cried out for mercy. His cry inspired the 'Jesus prayer', used in the Orthodox Church tradition; 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner'.

But Bartimaeus faced opposition.

*Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'*

They saw him as a nuisance, an embarrassment and an unwelcome interference. They ordered him to be quiet and to stop his cries for help, which were causing them some embarrassment and discomfort. The crowd were just as blind. They had no insight, no perception that Bartimaeus mattered. They lacked compassion. To this day, the cries of the poor and needy can be drowned out or ignored. Perhaps, with a sense of shame, we recognize ourselves in the crowd for those times when we have walked on by or lacked compassion. Bartimaeus was strong and determined. The more the crowd tried to stop him and silence him, the more persistent his cry for mercy. Here is a lesson for us. For our wellbeing, we must not be afraid to speak up and ask for help, especially in these days of isolation. We all need a friend, and the greatest friend is Jesus.

*Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.'*

Jesus heard Bartimaeus. He always hears the cry from the dust. If you're feeling in the dust today – or left behind on the lockdown roadside - take heart! He hears the cry of your heart; he hears your cry in the dark. He hears your cry for mercy and wholeness. Jesus stopped in his tracks. He saw this interruption as an opportunity. He passes no one by. He has time for all who call out to him.

I think of these words of the Christian writer Gerard Kelly:

"May his voice reach you.

In the cracks where you are broken

in the pits where you sink low

in the tangled web of weeds that choke your dreams

in the bitter sharp-edged stones that pierce your feet

in your flaws and in your failings

in your fears may you hear him.

May you come to know the tone of his affection and recognize the accents of his love".

And Bartimaeus did! The crowd had a change of heart and tone.

*So they called to the blind man, 'Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you.' Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.*

We give thanks to God for those who bring a timely word of encouragement when we need it the most, who say to us “cheer up, be of good comfort, pick yourself up”. Bartimaeus was so enthusiastic, so expectant. He took a giant leap of faith to meet with Jesus. There was no going back. He was about to leave his old life behind and discover a new life. He came face to face with Jesus.

*‘What do you want me to do for you?’ Jesus asked him.*

How amazing that Jesus, the Lord of creation, the Son of God, the Messiah, should ask such a question. Christians are very used to asking, “What should I do for God?” At this time of crisis, such a big question can paralyse us; can make us afraid of doing the wrong thing, of not following God’s path for us. Bartimaeus reminds us it is Jesus who can do something for us, who can make a difference to our lives. He came not to be served but to serve. Today and this week listen for the voice of Jesus asking “What do you want me to do for you?” Have courage and faith to ask directly, just like Bartimaeus did. He was worthy of Jesus’ help and so are you.

*The blind man said, ‘Rabbi, I want to see.’*

It is a simple, direct request and a very big ask. Be like Bartimaeus, ask Jesus to do for you what you can't do for yourself. The best vision is insight. Ask Jesus your teacher to do what **he** wants to do in your life, so that your requests might be in line with His will and purpose. In faith let us act on the words of Philippians 4 verse 6 “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” And he will hear and will respond. With Jesus the impossible suddenly becomes possible.

*‘Go,’ said Jesus, ‘your faith has healed you.’*

*Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.*

Jesus was true to his word. Bartimaeus received his sight.

What a wonderful saviour! Bartimaeus could say with Job

“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you”. The first face Bartimaeus saw was the face of Jesus. What a beautiful vision. Faith was the key that unlocked his healing. It was faith that made Bartimaeus determined to reach Jesus, faith that knew who Jesus was, faith that humbly submitted to Jesus, faith that could tell Jesus what it wants. Finally, Jesus said “Go on your way” but in effect Bartimaeus said “Not without you Jesus! I’m going your way”. So Bartimaeus followed Jesus on the Way – on the Christian Way.

He had journeyed from sitting on the roadside blind and in the dust to following Jesus on the way of discipleship with eyes opened and with new vision and purpose. He will do the same for you. Let God open new, brighter horizons in your life and give you new direction. Jesus is passing by. Like Bartimaeus, call on him, believe in him, receive from him and follow him into new, resurrection life. Amen.

Hymn/Song

### Prayers of Intercession

Be exalted O God above the heavens, let your glory be over all the earth.

O Lord, we long to see more of your light and glory over the whole earth.

We pray for all those throughout the world who are grieving; may your comfort be with them.

You know, Lord, what it means to be a refugee; we pray for all refugees, that they will not be forgotten by heads of nations at this difficult time; that leaders will seek to alleviate their misery and squalor. You Lord are in the midst of all those suffering in so many ways.

There is so much violence throughout the world, whether through mobs, individuals, or in the home. We lift them all to you.

We pray for our Government that they will make wise decisions.

There are many problems to be faced; Lord please guide them.

Covid 19 has had such an impact throughout the world. We praise and thank you for the speed of developing vaccines. We thank you for the intelligence and intellect that many scientists have received from you. Thank you for the long hours that many are working in order to bring hope to many nations.

We thank you for the medical staff, carers, and many others who are endeavouring to bring sick people through this pandemic. Bless them Lord in their dedication to help others and give them the strength that they so desperately need.

Lord we thank you for all volunteers who are endeavouring to bring help to many. Many of the charities are facing huge financial losses, please give them wisdom in the difficult decisions they have to make.

We pray for all children, young people and teachers who are struggling at this time. Please give wisdom and patience to parents also, many have worries of their own.

Jesus there are so many of our family, and those connected to us who are struggling with severe health issues at this time. In our hearts we lift them up in prayer to you now --- Jesus give us the faith of Bartimaeus who did not give up calling to you; he persevered and believed in your healing. May we have strong faith as we pray for healing for our loved ones. You are our teacher and healer and we will continue to believe in your love, grace and mercy.

In humbleness we come to you Lord knowing that we need your spirit upon us, to bring revival so that once again many in this nation will worship you and lives will be changed. As your children Lord may we seek you more. May we become bearers of your light and love. This we seek in your beloved name.

Amen

Unite your prayers with the whole church as you pray  
The Lord's Prayer. 'Our Father...'

Hymn/Song

The Blessing

We offer our lives and our gifts to the Lord.

Cast off the cloaks that cling so heavily upon you.

Open your eyes and look upon the world with new vision.

Follow Jesus in the way of God, rejoicing in faith and hope and love. May God's richest blessing rest upon you now and always.

**Amen.**

Coffee Time Conversation

- What do you value most about the gift of sight?
- "What do you want me to do for you?" asked Jesus. How would you answer Jesus today? Ask him, with faith.
- Healed Bartimaeus was sent on his way. He chose to follow Jesus. What will it mean for you to follow Jesus this week? What must you leave behind?

## Suggested Hymns and Songs

### More Traditional Music:

Amazing Grace

It is a thing most wonderful

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

What a friend we have in Jesus

### More Contemporary Music:

Open the eyes of my heart Lord

Everyone needs compassion

King of kings majesty

Soon and very soon we are going to see the king

Keep social distancing.

Keep safe.

Keep communicating.

God bless you and keep you until we meet again.

My prayers are with you.

With love,

Peter

## **Monologue: Bartimaeus – my story**

My brothers and sisters could see rainbows and flowers.  
They could jump in puddles and play in the sunlight.  
At night, they crept out onto the roof and watched the sky fill with stars.

But I couldn't do any of those things.

My world was always dark.

Inside my head it was just like midnight – not that midnight was any different to midday to me.

I felt useless and lonely and afraid.

When I went to bed, I used to pray so hard.

Please let me be able to see again.

But in the morning, it was just the same.

When I opened my eyes, I was still blind.

Then, one day, someone told about this man called Jesus.

And he was coming our way.

They said he was the most amazing person you would ever meet.

He said and did such wonderful things.

They said I had to meet him.

I followed the crowd as best I could, to try to hear him.

But people pushed me out of the way and ran ahead.

They forgot all about me. Or they just didn't want me there.

I crouched by the side of a wall.

And I felt such sadness and anger that I cried.

It was the same as always. Life was just so unfair.

I cried...and I cried out: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!

I said it over and over again.

Some were telling me to shut up, but I didn't. I wouldn't.

Then, suddenly, I felt someone in front of me, quite close.

For a moment I was frightened.

I didn't know who it was.

They didn't say anything, not a single word.

But then he – and it was he, him, Jesus – he reached out and touched my eyes with his fingers, very gently.

All at once, it was as if the darkness went out of my eyes.

I stood up and saw things in front of me, no more than shadows at first.

But slowly, very slowly, the shadows became a man's hands, and



then I saw he was looking right at me.

And then, one by one, I saw people behind him. Many people. A whole crowd!

I cried again. But this time they were tears of joy.

I was healed! I could see!

Jesus' eyes were the first I ever saw. But I'm sure I will never see eyes that are kinder, never in all my life.

I went home, and that night I saw what I had always dreamed I might see – I saw the stars.

Now I'm going to go everywhere, telling everyone what he did...and what happened to me.