

**Call to Worship** - "Whoever trusts in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these" (John 14: 12)

**Hymn - STF 317** - At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow

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| <p>1 At the name of Jesus<br/>every knee shall bow,<br/>every tongue confess him<br/>King of Glory now.<br/>'Tis the Father's pleasure<br/>we should call him Lord,<br/>who from the beginning<br/>was the mighty Word.</p> <p>2 Humbled for a season,<br/>to receive a name<br/>from the lips of sinners<br/>unto whom he came,<br/>faithfully he bore it<br/>spotless to the last,<br/>brought it back victorious<br/>when from death he passed :</p> <p>3 Bore it up triumphant<br/>with its human light,<br/>through all ranks of creatures<br/>to the central height,<br/>to the throne of Godhead,</p> | <p>to the Father's breast ;<br/>filled it with the glory<br/>of that perfect rest.</p> <p>4 In your hearts enthrone him ;<br/>there let him subdue<br/>all that is not holy,<br/>all that is not true ;<br/>crown him as your captain<br/>in temptation's hour :<br/>let his will enfold you<br/>in its light and power.</p> <p>5 For this same Lord Jesus<br/>shall return again,<br/>with his Father's glory,<br/>with his angel train ;<br/>all the wreaths of empire<br/>meet upon his brow,<br/>and our hearts confess him<br/>King of Glory now.</p> |
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Caroline Maria Noel (1817–1877)

## Prayer

We ask your presence among us, O God, Creator of the universe, Sustainer of life, Redeemer of humankind; bring your healing light and power into our wounded hearts, bodies and minds and souls, clear the way for each of us to discover within ourselves the fulness of your power and all of your wondrous blessings; help us dear God to respond to your vast love and to bless you, so that we may be a beacon through which you may shine into the world and be everlasting citizens of your Kingdom, both in heaven and on earth. Amen.

**Scripture:** Mark 10: 46 - 52

## Reflection

Bartimaeus is the paragon of faith in Mark's Gospel. In the final verse, Jesus names *faith* as what impels Bartimaeus. The rest of the story shows us what that faith is. Bartimaeus' faith is not about reciting the correct confession or subscribing to certain dogmas. It is his unrelenting conviction that Jesus can and will rescue him from his need. We see this faith in what Bartimaeus *does*:

- *He grasps who Jesus is.* Bartimaeus, despite his blindness and all its connotations of spiritual ignorance (compare 4:12; 8:18), sees the royal dimensions of Jesus' identity. As the story progresses, we discover that Bartimaeus also discerns that Jesus is especially able to show mercy and heal.
- *He persists despite hindrances.* Others in the crowd rebuke Bartimaeus, demanding he be silent. This detail reminds us that blind beggars dwell near the bottom rung of social privilege in ancient (and contemporary) society. In the people's ignorance about Jesus, the focus of his message, and his concern for blind beggars, their reprimand of Bartimaeus threatens to limit the range within which Jesus might dispense his compassion and grace. Bartimaeus knows better, and so he yells "even more loudly" until his words penetrate Jesus' ears.
- *He expects a transformation.* Presumably Jesus could have walked to Bartimaeus to talk with him. Instead, he tells the onlookers to summon Bartimaeus to him. Now those who sought to

inhibit the beggar must assist in Jesus' ministry to him. When Bartimaeus casts off his cloak, he confidently prefigures that he will no longer sit on his garment dependent upon handouts from passers-by.

- *He asks for the right thing.* When Jesus asks Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" his reply is a simple request voiced with the confidence that Jesus can deliver. "That I would see again," declares resolutely that Jesus can bring the wholeness and deliverance that people seek.

### For you to think about:

This story invites us to consider how faith is manifested, nurtured, and indeed stunted within communities. It compels us to consider the various roles characters play in this scene, and also the various situations in and around our congregational and communal life: **Bartimaeus** with his needs and prophetic insights, **Jesus** with his compassion and grace, the **crowd** with its determination to keep Bartimaeus both blind and invisible, and **others** with the opportunity to guide him to Jesus with the hopeful words, "Take courage; get up; he's calling you!"

- Are there ways in which you could help guide people to Jesus?
- Do you have prophetic insights? How do you share them?
- Are there ways in which your faith could be nurtured?
- Have you experienced healing in your own life? God's healing is not just physical infirmities but also the healing of relationships and communities.

### Prayers of Intercession

Father God, we pray for all those sitting in darkness, whether it be literally or metaphorically, We ask that you will provide light for them, to guide them, to strengthen them, and for those around them to be inspired to help them, to intervene and intercede on their behalf. We pray for those who are unsure of the way ahead & struggle to discern the right thing to do. Give them insight and wisdom, that they may perceive the right course of action & understand what is needed.

We pray for those who have been hindered by unhelpful or untrue expectations, asking that you would untangle the muddle that they find themselves in, & allowing them to see your truth and grace. We ask in the name of the living Christ. **Amen.**

*(based on a prayer published in Roots for this Sunday)*

*Our Father, who art in heaven .....*

**Hymn – STF 440** - Amazing grace – how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me

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| 1 | Amazing grace - how sweet the sound -<br>that saved a wretch like me!<br>I once was lost, but now am found,<br>was blind, but now I see.           | 4 | The Lord has promised good to me,<br>his word my hope secures ;<br>he will my shield and portion be<br>as long as life endures.                   |
| 2 | God's grace has taught my heart to fear,<br>his grace my fears relieved ;<br>how precious did that grace appear<br>the hour I first believed!      | 5 | And, when this heart and flesh shall fail<br>and mortal life shall cease,<br>I shall possess within the veil<br>a life of joy and peace.          |
| 3 | Through many dangers, toils and<br>snares<br>I have already come ;<br>God's grace has brought me safe thus<br>far,<br>and grace will lead me home. | 6 | When we've been there ten thousand<br>years<br>bright shining as the sun,<br>we've no less days to sing God's praise<br>than when we first begun. |

John Newton (1725–1807) *(alt.)*

### Blessing

The blessing of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you & those you love, this day and for ever more. **Amen**