**Job 42.1-6, Mark 10.46-end: 24th of October 2021: Year B**

I am completely in love with the readings we have just heard. Partly that is because the first reading we are given at Morning Prayer at the moment is so horribly depressing that anything else which are given looks amazing in comparison- which is surely an advert for Morning Prayer if ever I’ve heard one- but it is also because these are tender and beautiful readings about that perfect moment when seeing God and being seen by God are one.

The moment of gentle resolution in a beautiful and engaging piece of music where there is perfect truth. The moment where you climb out of the fog-filled valley into the beauty of sunlit uplands. The moment where the one you have been waiting for and yearning for comes home. The perfect moment when seeing God and being seen by God are one. And it can be yours, ours.

Job is one of the most sympathetic and appealing characters in the Old Testament. He is a credible and recognisable figure in his own right but he is also, in some ways, the embodiment of the exiled people of Israel, focusing the question of whether there is any point in God now that everything they treasured has been lost in sudden disasters. Towards the end God appears and reveals his power and majesty and self to Job and Job responds in the words we have just heard: “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you: therefore I repent in dust and ashes.” In other words, you have come to me and heard me and you have seen me, as I truly am. I see your creativity and power and I know my own fragility and smallness. You have seen me and come to me- and now I have seen you and my questions are scattered to the wind in your light.

The end of Job is complex and disputed but the line “but now my eyes sees you” seems to me the heart of the whole overlong argument. I have seen you. I see you. *I see you*. And my questions run into the sand. I am left standing here, a created being in the presence of my tender and responsive and glorious creator. You have come to me. I see you. I know you, or something of you, your nature, your truth. I see you. I see truth. The rest is silence.

In Mark’s Gospel, the road leads towards silence as well, the silence of the Garden Tomb. Jericho is only 15 miles from Jerusalem. The crowd which surround Jesus and the disciples are all going up to Jerusalem for the Passover. This is the last healing miracle Mark records- in the following verse Jesus will enter the Holy City riding on a donkey.

A few verses earlier Jesus asked James and John what they wanted of him and they asked for a seat of power. They are not truly seeing him, even now, even at this late stage. But Bartimaeus, who has no sight, sees Jesus. He has heard of him with his ears and now Jesus is walking right past his feet, the feet which are covered with a grimy blanket which people throw their loose change onto. It is a healing miracle, yes, but what follows is also a pure call narrative, like the call of the disciples away from their nets. And like them the Son of Timaeus leaves everything behind to follow the Son of David. He throws aside his cloak, the equipment he needs for his trade, and he stands up. He is healed. And he follows Jesus on the way.

On one level he only follows Jesus the short journey to Jerusalem but the fact that we know his name- the name of a blind beggar who the crowd tried to silence and hide away- when Mark records so few names in his Gospel strongly suggests that Bartimaeus was someone who was well-known in the early Church. Part of the reason I like the story so much is because I suspect that he told it to Mark himself- that Mark asked him what happened, that in this story we hear the true voice of the blind beggar whose life was turned upside down (or the right way up) when the Son of David walked past and refused to let him be sidelined a second longer.

And part of why I love it is because it is a call narrative, like that of Peter and Andrew and James and John.

And part of why I love it is because it is all about seeing and being seen- that perfect moment when seeing God and being seen by God are one. Bartimaeus knows who Jesus is- and Jesus sees him when he calls out to him. Unlike the rest of the crowd, he sees him, and values him, and calls him close. Which is what Jesus does for us and longs to do for us. He sees us and knows us and loves us. He is wounded by the wounds that are done to us and he delights in the things which cause us to dance. We all long to be seen. We all long to be known and loved and accepted and welcomed and that is what God in Jesus does. He sees the son of Timaeus. He sees you. He sees me. He knows him and you and me. And tenderly and calmly he holds out his arms in embrace to call us home, into the shadow of his wings, under the protection of the shepherd, at his side around the table in the upper room, home, with him. That perfect moment when seeing God and being seen by God are one.

And the other part of it is that Bartimaeus sees Jesus and knows him. It is easy to focus on the healing miracle, and wow, but there is more going on here- what Bartimaeus needs more than healing is discipleship, walking with Jesus on the way, being part of the coming Kingdom of God. Like us. It is his faith which makes him well. Faith is the focal point of the story. His recovered sight is an outward aspect of an internal miracle which happens because of his faith- God sees him and he sees God, which is a massive encouragement to all of us- to those who feel overlooked or unseen, to those who feel on the margins or not quite good enough, to those who believe or have been told or have had drummed into them that they are not lovely and not precious and not enough- Jesus hears you and Jesus sees you and Jesus loves you and Jesus says “What can I do for you?”. Then Jesus calls you to follow him, to be with him, to learn from him, to be his, and to see the world as he does- seeing others into wholeness and light also. Into their own perfect moment when seeing God and being seen by God are one.

The crowd want Bartimaeus to stay away, to stay on the sideline where they have planted him. They want him silenced, overlooked, ignored, forgotten. But Jesus will not have it. He hears a heart crying out to him and he calls him to come close. He asks him what he can do for him- he tells him that his faith has made him well.

And Bartimaeus follows- he follows Jesus on the way- he follows to Jerusalem and into the early Church, to a conversation with Mark and an eyewitness account which invites us into the same moment- that perfect moment when seeing God and being seen by God are one.

Jesus sees you. He knows you. He made you. He grieves over your wounds and he is thrilled by your triumphs, by the good you have done and long to do. He delights in you.

And he longs for you to see yourself and know yourself through his eyes. He calls you close. He places his hands on each of your cheeks. He smiles beautifully with a smile which shone like a blessing when creation was brought to birth, every cell and shaft of light. And in that perfect moment seeing God and being seen by God meet when you see yourself reflected in the eyes of the God who loves you so very, very, very much that he dies for you and does it gladly, for love, for love of you, to win your love, to bring you home.

You are loved. You are you. You are enough. And God is delighted.