

# St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

22nd Sunday after Pentecost, October 24, 2021

## Words of Welcome

Sight is a valuable gift that we have been given to navigate our world. Anyone who has experienced difficulty seeing knows that challenges that go with that, but sight is more than what we see outwardly. Sight is also about seeing things through a different lens emotionally, socially, spiritually. Taking a look at the story of a blind man that Jesus spends time with may give us some insight into how we might live. First we share in a call to worship.

## Call to Worship

Take heart, Christ is calling us. He beckons us to come . . .  
Come near to him. Stand before Christ.  
“What do you want me to do?” he asks.

**We have come here; we're drawn here.**

**We desire to be here. To have our sight restored.**

<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/6331/worship-elements-october-24-2021>

Singing is one way we bring together heart, mind, and body into worship.

## Hymn

*Oh for a thousand tongues to sing*

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| 1. Oh for a thousand tongues to sing<br>my great Redeemer's praise,<br>the glories of my God and King,<br>the triumphs of God's grace.     | 2. Jesus, the name that charms our fears,<br>and bids our sorrows cease:<br>'tis music in the sinner's ears;<br>'tis life and health and peace.   |
| 3. He speaks, and listening to his voice<br>new life the dead receive;<br>the mournful, broken hearts rejoice;<br>the humble poor believe. | 4. Hear him, you deaf; you voiceless ones,<br>your tongues again employ;<br>you blind, behold your Saviour comes,<br>and leap, you lame, for joy. |
| 5. My gracious Master and my God,<br>assist me to proclaim,<br>and spread through all the earth abroad<br>the honours of thy name.         |   |

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The prayer of adoration and confession sets our hearts on the reason for our worship and the hope of our lives.

## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

O Lord our God,  
you hear the voice of those who cry out to you and you respond with love.

You reach out to us when others have turned away.  
You offer us compassion when others dismiss our worth.  
You heal us when we thought we were beyond repair.  
Your amazing love transforms our lives over and over again,  
and so, we offer you our humble praise in the name of Jesus, your love made flesh.  
Receive our gratitude in this time of worship, as we join with your whole creation  
to bring you honour and glory, now and always.

**Lord of love and mercy,  
we worship you as the source of every good and perfect gift, but we confess  
our gifts to you are less than perfect. We honour you when it fits into our  
schedules, not so much when we have other things to do. We forget that your  
love should set our priorities, and pursue our own desires instead. In your  
loving-kindness, forgive our wavering hearts and reawaken our commitment to  
you. Hear us call out to you and may we go into each new day trusting that our  
faith has been enough.**

O God, as we hear your Word read and interpreted today,  
open our eyes to the way you set before us.  
Let your Word, heard in faith, make us well,  
so that we are able to follow your Son, our Saviour and Friend. Amen.

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## **Assurance of Pardon**

Friends, we are promised that those who abide in love abide in God,  
and God abides in them. Claim your hope in this good news:  
God's perfect love abides in you through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Thanks be to God for such great mercy.

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

<sup>46</sup> 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.

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The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **Message** What do you see?

The cry of a baby invokes an immediate response from us, especially if it is a newborn child. We check diapers, swaddle, feed, and love the child as an automatic response to their cry. We watch them take first steps and try our best to protect them as they grow and they experience their world as that sphere expands. We see them for the child they are, a precious gift from God. We will often ask in some way or another, "What can I do for you?" to show our love and concern.

There are other cries that we hear as well, they seem much easier to ignore. We see the person at the intersection with a sign saying, "Hungry. Need money for food. Anything helps." But with windows rolled up and staring ahead, not daring to make eye contact, we wait for the light to turn green. This is not to mention the people we walk past as we hurriedly get into Walmart or the church. Those who ask us, "Can you spare some change?" we don't want to see, hear, or engage. We forget that they too were born as precious gifts from God.

This story from Mark is about the person that we all walk past; the one whose voice we do not want to hear or whose face we prefer not to see. There are many reasons we don't want to acknowledge the voice or glance their way; we feel afraid for our safety and of what we don't know. Some people are disapproving and think that the person got themselves into this, so they can get themselves out of it. I do get that it is complicated, both our reactions and the reasons people find themselves on the streets.

On the day that Jesus and a group of people were headed from Jericho on their way to Jerusalem, the person all wanted to avoid was Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus. Bartimaeus, was a blind beggar, sitting by the roadside. And he was doing what most of us will go to the other side of the street to avoid dealing with, he was shouting out. Calling out. Calling attention to himself. And of course, he was shh'ed. Think of it as how people react when royalty or someone famous is around; those closest to them want to protect them from the ugly parts of their community, whether ugly is the scenery or the messiness of lives.

But Bartimaeus somehow knows, either by reputation or by rumour that this Jesus fella has got something special. By this point he may have heard of other miracle healings that spur him on to hope, but there is no way he is going to let this opportunity pass without making a fuss. Blindness is not fun at anytime, but blind and begging in the time of Jesus meant that you were an outcast. Which is why he finds himself on the side of the road, outside the city, outside of the community, outside of care.

The scripture doesn't tell us who was demanding he shut up and be quiet, it just says, *many*, but pretty sure *many* of us would have been feeling or reacting the same way. But this guy Bartimaeus is not giving up, he cries out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" This causes Jesus to stand still and say, "Call him here." This is how much power Jesus has, he can cause everything to stop around him just with a word. It may have been that the people who were trying to keep Jesus from being bothered with

the man are now a little stunned, but they do a 180 and say to Bartimaeus, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you."

Let's pause for just a moment. Those who were the ones to shout at him to be quiet, are now quieted themselves as Jesus calls attention to Bartimaeus. They probably didn't know what to expect. Why would Jesus be bothered with this guy. Even after miracles and teaching over the years, those who followed Jesus did not get it. They did not understand that Jesus had a heart for the ones who were most in need. In their minds Jesus had a different purpose, one that would bring freedom to their people...but that was also the problem, they could not see that Jesus was bringing freedom, not just to the Israelites, but to all people. They saw a leader who would overthrow the government, but in the way *they* understood. Jesus was going to overthrow all governments, giving people freedom of heart, mind, and spirit. Some even got freedom from physical burdens and illness, but the focus for Jesus was always on freedom from sin and burdens of power, in ways that would restore relationships.

The response of Bartimaeus of being called over to Jesus is one worth noting. For Bartimaeus, or any person on the margins, his cloak was the most valuable thing he owned. This possession was his warmth, his security. It gave him a place to sit, to be covered, to provide some protection from the elements. It may even have been formed to shape a vessel in which to receive the currency he was begging for. Yet, in the moment Jesus calls him over, he threw off his cloak, sprang up and came to Jesus.

No hesitation, no clinging to his material possessions, no concern other than to be seen by Jesus. This in contrast to a story of a rich man who had come to Jesus and asked "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus' response was that he had to sell all he owned and give it to the poor. That man walked away sad. We don't know what he chose in the end, but when in the presence of Jesus, he too recognized Jesus as someone significant, yet he could not let go. Then here in our scripture reading today, we have Bartimaeus. He has one thing, and he leaves it behind. You may say, what did he have to lose, but when that is your only possession, all you can claim for your safety, I think it would be hard for most to let go.

Still, we know that Bartimaeus understands something about Jesus, and even though blind, he sees something in Jesus, about Jesus, that others cannot comprehend...this man Jesus is worth taking a chance on, he has power and Bartimaeus' faith, shown by his calling out, his throwing off his cloak, and by springing up, shows his faith in Jesus. Did you notice that all of this was action – calling out, throwing off, springing up – his faith was faith in action.

Jesus then asked the question that we spoke about last week in our reading from Mark, the same question that he poses to brothers James and John, "What do you want me to do for you?" James and John already had a relationship with Jesus, and their request to be able to sit one at Jesus right and one on his left in his glory showed how misunderstood Jesus was by those closest to him. Again in contrast, here is Bartimaeus,

with Jesus asking him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He responds, “My teacher, let me see again.”

How beautifully insightful for a man without sight. First of all, he calls him “teacher” not master, lord, friend, but teacher. Think about what teacher means to you. It may have been those who taught you in school, whether grade school, tech school or university. It may have been your parent or grandparent, a mentor, but to use the word teacher about anyone is to give a particular meaning for how they have impacted your life. Recognizing someone as a teacher means that you can learn from them. Teachers have a way of reframing things, of bringing understanding, and of course knowledge. They see things from perspectives that another may not have.

Bartimaeus called Jesus teacher, and then says, “let me see again.” Let me see again. Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” And immediately Bartimaeus regained his sight.

Bartimaeus is healed physically, not everyone experiences that, not in Jesus’ time and not now. It is easy to see this as purely a miracle story, one in which sight is restored, but it is more than that and to leave it there would not give the whole story. You see, when Jesus said, “Go; your faith has made you well” another way to translate that sentence would be, your faith has saved you. Your faith has saved you. Bartimaeus’ actions showed the kind of faith he had that Jesus could save him and Jesus responded to that faith.

Jesus said “go” and where did this now saved man go? He followed Jesus to Jerusalem. Bartimaeus was calling out to Jesus who was on his way to Jerusalem and then found himself also on the way with Jesus.

The lenses through which to view these eight verses are many. Who do we see? What do we see? Do we see people who are problems, discarded, not worth our attention or do we see and respond with compassion? Do we see ourselves as worthy of Jesus attention? If we don’t think Jesus would bother with us, it is pretty difficult to imagine Jesus caring about anyone else’s needs, immediate or otherwise.

Are we like the people in the crowd trying to ignore the cries of the vulnerable, hoping that others won’t notice the unsightly? Maybe we have finally stopped and are just learning to turn our attention to those who we have not wanted to see and are wondering how we can help them to understand the love and compassion that Jesus has for them, remembering that Jesus is not standing in front of them, but us as ones who represent that love and compassion.

Remember also, it is not for us to do the healing of body, mind, and spirit. We do not ultimately have the power to change a life, but through our love, our compassion, our attention, our seeing, we can bring others to Jesus so they can experience the life-giving, transforming, healing presence of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Maybe our take away from this scripture is to begin to notice who is around us, who are we avoiding, who are we stopping from seeing Jesus, where is Jesus, and what and who do we see when we see Jesus.

Eight verses about seeing packed full of meaning. May you be able to see how God is working in and through you and others as you go about your day and your life.

What do you see?      In Jesus, Amen.

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As we lift up to God our concerns for loved ones, community, and the world, there will be moments of silence for you to remember or name for yourselves people and concerns that come to your heart and mind.

Let us pray the prayers of the people.

### **Prayers of the People**

God of life,

You open our eyes on the world you love  
and show us your presence and purpose all around us.

We see the beauty and wonder of your creation in autumn changes,  
and in gifts of love and compassion offered through friend and stranger.

For these many gifts, we give you thanks.

We pray for those who cannot recognize these gifts in their lives  
and find themselves lost and alone.

Open their eyes to your presence through our companionship  
and our eyes for opportunities to reach out with understanding.

God, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

God of justice,

You open our eyes on the world and show us struggle and conflict.

We see the stressful times in which we live and the burdens many are carrying;  
Today, we pray for those whose businesses are still struggling as the pandemic stretches on;

For producers unsure their harvests will be sufficient this season;

For workers uncertain about their jobs or looking for new work;

And for families carrying the stress of economic uncertainty.

Open their eyes to new possibilities

and open our eyes to ways we can support them.

God, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

God of compassion,  
You open our eyes on the world and show us suffering and despair.  
We see the challenges for health care across our country and around the world.  
We pray for nurses, doctors, hospital staff and home-care workers,  
so weary and worried,  
for those facing acute or chronic illness, and delays in needed treatments,  
and for communities struggling with COVID-19,  
overdose deaths and mental health challenges.

Give strength and compassion to all who offer treatment  
and courage and hope to all who wait for healing.  
Open their eyes to your mercy and open our eyes to needs we can meet.  
God, in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayer.**

God of wisdom,  
You open our eyes on the world and show us its complexities.  
We see countries locked in old animosities  
and communities overwhelmed by anger and upheaval.  
We pray for the millions displaced by current conflicts and natural disasters  
and for leaders everywhere, trying to find solutions to complex problems.

Open the eyes of those who lead to recognize the suffering among their peoples,  
and open our eyes to ways we can participate in solutions.  
God, in your mercy,  
Hear our prayer.

God of hope, we offer you our prayers, longing for your peace and promise to break  
into the lives we care about, for the sake of Jesus Christ who taught us to pray  
together:

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## **Lord's Prayer**

**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.**

## **Invitation to make an offering**

The scriptures today speak of God's mercy reversing the suffering of those who turn to God. As we present our gifts to God today, let us remember times when God has given us strength in the face of our challenges, and know that our generosity will help others face theirs, as we reach out in Jesus' name.

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As we are people from different churches and places following this service. I encourage each of you to present your offering to God this day to your church community.

If you consider St. Andrew's your church, regardless of where you live, would like to learn more about St. Andrew's, get involved in our ministry and work, or make a donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian, in Thunder Bay visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> for more information or to connect with me.

Our closing hymn reminds us of the ways Jesus healed people in the Bible, but also how Jesus continues to heal today. Once more we lift hearts and voices to sing...

**Hymn**                      *When Jesus the healer passed through Galilee*                      203

1. When Jesus the healer passed through Galilee,  
Heal us, heal us today!  
the deaf came to hear and the blind came to see.  
Heal us, Lord Jesus!
2. A paralyzed man was let down through a roof.  
Heal us, heal us today!  
His sins were forgiven, his walking the proof.  
Heal us, Lord Jesus!
3. The death of his daughter caused Jairus to weep.  
Heal us, heal us today!  
The Lord took her hand, and he raised her from sleep.  
Heal us, Lord Jesus!
4. When blind Bartimaeus cried out to the Lord,  
Heal us, heal us today!  
his faith made him whole and his sight was restored.  
Heal us, Lord Jesus!
5. The lepers were healed and the demons cast out.  
Heal us, heal us today!  
A bent woman straightened to laugh and to shout.  
Heal us, Lord Jesus!
6. The twelve were commissioned and sent out in twos,  
Heal us, heal us today!  
to make the sick whole and to spread the good news.  
Heal us, Lord Jesus!
7. There's still so much sickness and suffering today.  
Heal us, heal us today!  
We gather together for healing, and pray:  
Heal us, Lord Jesus!



## **Benediction**

As you go from here, walk in the way of the Lord:  
with thanksgiving, with gladness, with insight.

Turn to the Jesus with all your needs,  
and pray for those who have no words today.

And may the God who hears our needs  
and answers the cries of our hearts  
be with you today and always,  
a sure and certain strength,  
throughout all the ages.

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