

The Servant King Mark 10:46-11:11

Luke Bushman March 24th 2024. Adapted From Long Form Sermon

The triumphal entry being adjacent to this story of Jesus yet again bringing the outsider in seems important to me. It seems to exemplify an important point in Jesus' ministry. That Jesus is not like other rulers. Jesus is not like other messiahs. Jesus is not like other revolutionaries. The triumphal entry is the most majestic moment of Jesus' life, the closest he comes to acting like important people of the world act. The most earthly praise and adoration he receives. Yet it is blatantly apparent that Jesus' focus is not himself. The story of Jesus and the blind man stands out to me, because even at the height of Jesus' majesty, he is serving those on the fringes. If Jesus' main concern was gaining power, this moment of euphoria, and emotion would be his chance to mobilise his followers to do his bidding. The storm the gates moment of his career if he was a revolutionary, which he was tried for. And yet that isn't what Jesus does. Because gaining power isn't what Jesus is about.

The healing of the blind man, directly before his triumphal entry speaks to the nature of his ministry, so it is worth unpacking. As Jesus is leaving Jericho on the way to Jerusalem, he has a great crowd that is following him. People seem very excited about everything going on. It likely felt like they were becoming an important part of history, which they obviously were, since we are still reading about this crowd many years later. As the crowd is moving along, we are introduced to a new character in the story, Bartimaeus which just means son of Timaeus. Bartimaeus is on the side of the road, and seemingly alone. Unfortunately blind people, and all people with disabilities had negative assumptions around them at the time. These attitudes are still woven into our faith and our culture through ableism, and the assumption that God's will for everyone with a disability is that they are healed. As we progress as a society, these things are getting better, but unfortunately the assumption regarding Bartimaeus is that he did something wrong

We see this in the story of the blind man in the gospel of John. The story begins

“ As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” John 9:1-2

Right in front of this poor blind man, Jesus' disciples start a conversation regarding this man's disability, and how he or his family was responsible for it. Again these perceptions still exist in some circles today, but seem to be more prevalent when Jesus was going about his ministry.

This explains why Bartimaeus seems to be a social outcast in this story. He is out on the side of the road, and when he starts calling out to Jesus he is silenced by the other members of the crowd. The man refuses to be silenced, and is more perceptive than many of the others in the crowd. He announces Jesus as the Son of David, a kingly and royal title that until now has not been used in the gospel of Mark. (Keck) It is fitting with the upside down nature of Jesus' kingdom of equality that the first person to acknowledge his kingship is someone on the fringes of society. The good news is not restricted by attitudes of ableism and societal misconceptions. The good news is for everyone.

Jesus entering Jerusalem is a pivotal moment, preceded by a typical act of kindness and compassion. On Palm Sunday we celebrate Jesus' grand entrance into Jerusalem. The beginning of the end. As Jesus taught in Jerusalem and cleared the temple, authorities began to be disgruntled with his actions and popularity. While the religious leaders seem to dislike the controversial teachings of Jesus, they are able to get the Romans on the same page as them, using fear of revolution to gain support against Jesus.

These scenes of euphoria during an entrance, and counter cultural teachings, have so many parallels to previous revolutions and entrances from rulers. While there are similarities, the contrast is even more striking. Jesus does not fit the mould. Unlike other rulers and revolutionaries, his concern is taking care of the people on the fringes of society even at his most majestic moment. Jesus is truly different, and somebody worth following.