

Reflection for Tuesday of Holy week 2020

Mark 8: 22-25

They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, 'Can you see anything?' And the man looked up and said, 'I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.' Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

This is such a delightfully simple little vignette from Mark's gospel but, in its simplicity, it embraces so much. First we have the nameless blind man and I think it would not be wrong to assume that this was a blindness caused most probably by trachoma, an eye disease which was endemic in that part of the world partly caused by dust which was continuously being swept into people's eyes. Whatever the truth this man had true and loyal friends who longed to see him cured of his lack of vision. A lack of vision which meant he could no longer work and was reliant on the goodwill and generosity of others to keep him from starving to death. And friends he did have who having heard of Jesus and his powers of healing, gently but forcibly, led their friend to him and begged him to help. This was so important not just to their friend but to them as well. They were not being wholly altruistic as any cure would undoubtedly help convince them of the truth that this man Jesus was indeed no ordinary man; this was a man unlike any they had ever encountered before and in their friend's healing so too they would find healing.

And then we read of Jesus taking the man by the hand and leading him away from his friends, away from the village into the silence and solitude of the open countryside. What trust the blind man must have had in this man whom he could not see but who grasped his hand so firmly within his. That touch alone must have brought such comfort and the unspoken hope that somehow all would be well. And then we have an even more intimate detail as Jesus with his own spittle touched the man's eyes; can we not imagine the tenderness and the love in that scene of primitive but extraordinary healing.

And with that first touch the man started to see again but, as yet, his vision was still blurred and the people in the distance (who had undoubtedly followed the two of them) appeared more like walking trees than humans. Once again Jesus spat and placed his hands on the man's eyes and now, miracle of miracles, his sight was fully restored. Those were no longer walking trees that he could see but humans in all the amazing, intricate detail with which each one of us has been made. Can we not imagine the joy of that man as he found himself once more enabled to open his eyes and see all the wonder and the glory of God's world? How his heart must have leapt and I would like to think, although we are not

told this, that now it was his turn to embrace and share a long and meaningful hug with Jesus in heartfelt thankfulness for his mercy, his healing.

And for us now as we continue our Holy Week journey in this time of crisis this little story has much to teach us. Are we not in some ways blind? Can any among us see the future? Can any among us picture how this world will look in a month's time, six months' time, or indeed six years' time? The answer is 'No!' And looking back could any of the crowd who followed Jesus on Palm Sunday have had the insight to see what would happen a mere five days later? Were they not also blind? Indeed, were not most people blind to the reality of who Jesus really was during his lifetime?

But if we are in some ways blind that does not mean that our sight cannot be restored? Are we willing, like that blind man to trust, to be led away by the hand to a place of solitude and there let Jesus touch our spiritual eyes so that we too are enabled to see with perfect clarity what is in front of us? At first our vision may be blurred as we strive to continue to look into the future where trees appear to walk and we cannot make sense of such an illusion. But then, if we allow ourselves to embrace the silence, the solitude so that we can feel that healing touch of our Lord then surely, we will be given the gift, the blessing of seeing what is in front of us now this day, this moment of time.

Looking to the future is not practical but looking to the here and now is. Looking and seeing, with perfect clarity, for signs of the wonders, the glories and the mysteries of God's world all around us. Looking and seeing, with perfect clarity, the love and the friendship that surrounds us at this time. As Jesus walked towards calvary did he merely look and visualise all the horror and the agony of what lay ahead or did he continue to live in the present; live within the name God gave Himself 'I am': 'I am' the name that tells us that God is ever present with us; for God time has no meaning; all is present. I firmly believe that Jesus was enabled to walk in that knowledge and understanding and in that belief can we allow our eyes to be opened, our vision clarified by Christ's touch so that we can see this present time not in fear and trembling for the future but within the here and now where we will find for comfort and healing, solace and hope and above all the grace of God for whom time is ever present.

So. let us bravely continue our Holy Week journey, held firmly within the hand of God, with our eyes wide open to all that this day may bring and with our hearts open in thankfulness and joy.

Psalm 139: 7-10

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.