



# Sunday Reflection Ordinary Time

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 24 October 2021

## Pentecost 22

In a world that thrives on speed, activity and acquisition, patience and searching are not readily considered virtues. But God rewards those who patiently and steadfastly seek divine truth, and worship enables us to meet the God who seeks our presence.

### Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'"**

*Mark 10:48*

### An Illustration to set the scene

We think of top predators as monarchs of their terrain, lording it over those lower down the food chain, masters of all they survey.

This perception has cemented the presence of such fearsome creatures on the heraldic arms of noble houses worldwide.



But the truth is that, unlike kings attended to by servants, supreme hunters must work extremely hard to obtain sustenance, frequently failing and missing a meal.

How often have you seen a kestrel floating over a verge, drop and rise again empty-clawed, returning to the wearing, energy-consuming task of vigilant hovering?

Or, in television nature documentaries, a pride of lions, perpetually chasing antelope herds, only to be rewarded with nothing more than a kick in the jaw?

Forbearance and determination are prerequisites for predators' success, along with, in many cases, pin-sharp eyesight and potent powers of observation.

In terms of our readings, they possess not only the patience of Job but also the persistence of Bartimaeus.

## **Looking at the teaching of the Gospel**

Today's Gospel events take place just before the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and immediately after Jesus has asked his disciples what it is they want him to do for them, to which James and John responded with a request for high office.

It is a short episode, but full of significant detail.

Crowds leaving Jericho may have attracted significant numbers of destitute people begging for alms, hopeful of generosity from refreshed and rested travellers.

Among them is Bartimaeus, now blind, but previously sighted (he asks Jesus if he will let him see again).

Having done his homework, Bartimaeus knows who Jesus is and his cries are personal – "Son of David", a title not previously used in Mark, but repeated soon after by crowds praising Jesus when he enters Jerusalem.

Attempted censure spurs Bartimaeus to redouble his efforts.

Hearing his cries, Jesus calls him into his presence.

Bartimaeus throws off his cloak – perhaps his only valuable possession – perhaps a sign that he already believes that his burdens will be lifted, or that he will no longer be hidden, an invisible outcast.

He springs up – again this might illustrate the strength of his belief – and Jesus asks him the same question he previously put to his disciples: **“What do you want me to do for you?”**

Bartimaeus’ response is in telling contrast to James’ and John’s: they desired glory, but he wants to see again.

He longs for sight, clearly physical, but it may well be a spiritual vision too, for he goes on to follow Jesus as his master.

Despite his blindness, Bartimaeus has already shown more insight, perseverance and patience than the disciples.

He recognises God at work in Jesus, throws off his previous protection, jumps at the risky possibility of healing and follows his Saviour.

Moreover, experiencing such faith marks a turning point for Jesus, who abandons his previous position of quiet healings privately offered, and heads towards Jerusalem to begin very publicly asserting his divine authority.

## **How can we reflect on the application to our lives?**

Bartimaeus may have waited by the Jericho gates for years hoping for some relief from his suffering.

His situation is akin to Job’s patient waiting for vindication by his Lord, and the exiled remnant in Jeremiah, holding on for hope that they would at last return home to Jerusalem.

Though blind, Bartimaeus has been blessed with inner sight and is perhaps already more in tune with Jesus' mission than the disciples, who believe that they are his chosen inner circle destined for glory, yet have profoundly misunderstood his message.

This short passage reminds us how easy it can be for our heads to be turned by success away from the sacrificial heart of the Gospel.

Sometimes we need to throw off the cloaks of tradition or familiarity that have kept us safe in the past, to be open to Christ's healing touch.

Remaining receptive to insights from those, like Bartimaeus, who are on the outside of our community is also vital if we are to grow into God's presence; but above all we are workers, not enthroned nobles in the kingdom, engaged in the task of living faithfully, which requires patient persistence alongside keen observational powers and inner sight if we are to be truly effective.

**"Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'"**  
*Mark 10:48*

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God' spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)