

## Ordinary 27 to Ordinary 30

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Year B Ordinary 27

Hebrews 1: 1 - 4

### The enlargement!

*Hebrews 1. 2 Now, God has spoken to us through his Son ....*

#### The Mist Lifts

*In the early days of discipleship I thought I knew all about Jesus. Now I know I was seeing him as through a morning mist of words - the incredible truths of the Kingdom of God - the stories - an extraordinary birth - miracles and encounters with his opponents - the cross and his resurrection .... The mist was slowly clearing. Then almost in an instant the sun had broken through and I caught a glimpse of the glory of Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God.*

It was prompted by reading Paul's description of Jesus in his letter to Christians at Colossae and by these words in *Hebrews*.

It was an experience like that of John of the Cross which he called '*enlargement*'.

#### The glory of Christ

The writer shares the lifting mist experience when he says  
- *In the past we knew God through the words of the prophets*

**BUT NOW** - *we hear him - see him - know him*  
through his Son - **Jesus!**

We begin to imagine what that means for us who  
believe in him

live in him

share the life of his Spirit together with all his followers

#### He is the Son of God

**He reflects the brightness of God's glory**

**He is the exact likeness of God's being**

He is divine - co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit  
and he shares life with me!

#### God created the universe through him

then nothing is impossible!

#### He sustains the whole universe with his powerful word

then he has the whole world in his hands!

#### He is the one whom God has chosen to possess all things at the end

then the future - and my future - is all his

## **He achieved forgiveness for the sins of mankind**

a gift waiting for every single person to take from him  
then there is hope for a whole new world of new-spirit-born people

## **He sat down at God's right hand**

- the place of supreme power

and I may come close to the risen Lord who made himself approachable (*Phil 2.6f*)  
*Hebrews 4.16* *Let us have confidence then and approach God's throne where there is grace. There we will receive mercy and find grace to help us just when we need it.*

## **Living in the Glory**

The lifted mist, not only changes the view it transforms the viewer!

The 'enlargement' of the glory of Christ irradiates every part of our being  
- it shines on and through our life-adventure with him.

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**Year B Ordinary 28**

Mark 10: 17 - 31

## **A Straight look from Jesus**

*Mark 10.21 and 27* *Jesus looked straight at him ... at them*

It is interesting that the Good News Bible (Today's English Version) uses the translation  
'*a straight look*'

from Jesus to a young enquirer

from Jesus to his already committed followers.

The Jerusalem Bible translates it a *steady* look or *gaze*.

Most people will be familiar with a 'straight' look ...

probably more often a childhood experience ..

A straight look is

intense

strict

fixed

honest and direct

It says *no-nonsense* - this is serious - *I mean business*

*Modern practice knows how looking straight at another person*

*is said to increase the power of influence over them*

## **A straight look for an earnest enquirer**

The young man in this incident seemingly, has everything else except spiritual fulfilment

- eternal life

He is religious both in belief and practice

Jesus gives him the straight look while explaining that keeping the commandments is not enough without total surrender and commitment to God

The straight look says:

*You know. It has to be God first. It has to be the surrender of your life and all you possess .. Be prepared to give it all away - for Him*

*You know! There is no other way!*

Giving all for God is a constant theme of Jesus' teaching

It was the basis of his life

- fulfilled in Gethsemane - *'not my will but yours, Father* - and the Cross

The man did not argue. The straight look said it all.

### **A straight look for disciples**

Jesus' disciples had already understood this for themselves

But hearing Jesus say how hard it was to give up riches for the Kingdom, they suggested it was near impossible for many people

For reply they received the straight look from Jesus

which meant *No exceptions! You are thinking man's thoughts again. You are reckoning without God - without me!*

With God everything is possible!

and the key to possibility is in the words of Mark concerning the young enquirer

- which are probably Peter's observation -

*Jesus gave him a straight look **of love***

That's God's look. for God is love.

### **BUT with God!**

Did it become possible for the young man to give up his riches and have real life?

Did he *go away sad*

because he could not do what Jesus asked?

or because he was preparing to risk trusting Jesus

- it was a lot to give up without feeling a measure of sadness

Did LOVE make the difference

It did for Jesus' first disciples - and for billions of Christians since

It can for us if we let Jesus give us his *straight look of love!*



Year B Ordinary 29

Mark 10: 35 - 45

## The Fellowship of the Cup

*Mark 10.38 and 45 Jesus said: You don't know what you are asking for ... the Son of Man .... came to serve and to give his life to redeem many people.*

### Revolution

I am involved in a Revolution. The Kingdom revolution.  
It's leader is the greatest revolutionary of all time – Jesus – the Son of God!

A casual reading of the New Testament may often ignore how startlingly subversive was Jesus' teaching – and how revolutionary it is still.

His kingdom ideals were totally alien to many of his contemporaries.  
They still are to our society today.

Jesus summed it up in these words:  
*The Son of Man came not to be served  
but to serve and give his life to redeem many.*

### ***The Kingdom of God's love is all bound up with Jesus***

He is Lord of the Universe  
Who emptied himself of all heaven's magnificent glory  
- of all ambition and concern for his own well-being

Not seeking power or success in earthly terms  
Not wanting immunity from the suffering that is woven into the fabric of everyday life

His service was self-less and self-giving both to God and to all humanity

### ***Towards the Cross***

All this lay behind the events and conversations of our Gospel reading

Jesus had come to the time when he was making this message plain  
– the journey to the Cross was beginning  
His followers *had been nurtured in justice as being 'eye for eye'*  
- *but now they were being challenged to 'love your enemies'*

James and John were sons of Zebedee  
– heirs to one of the best fishing businesses on Galilee  
brought up in a family with social status  
They had caught the vision of the Kingdom of God and the glory of Christ  
And now, having thrown in their lot with the revolution –  
- they wanted to be in at the top

*'When the Kingdom comes – when you are enthroned - let us sit either side of you'*

We have to admire their faith in the success of the Kingdom  
BUT had they listened to only half the story  
It seems they may still have a concept of glory without a cross

**Jesus said to them**  
**You don't understand. You've only got half a message!**

He told them:

I can't give you those places – the Kingdom isn't like that.

The Kingdom is not about earthly glory

– it IS about earthy service

The Kingdom is not about worldly kingship

- it IS about everyday servant-hood

Can you share my life

Can you accept a way of suffering – a baptism of fire?

Are you willing to join **The Fellowship of the Cup?**

Of course, James and John claimed they could,

and Jesus affirmed that they would – when they understood!

Perhaps we still have only half the story

We are still not sure what being church really means

### **True Church**

*We say, Lord, we're with you in this church. We're behind you in the Kingdom revolution.*

But is Jesus saying *You've got it all wrong!*

You are looking for the glory

The success – the great numbers – the crowded buildings

Well maintained properties

Exceptionally pleasing ministries – someone who will do it for us and as we think it should be done!

Praise worship that makes other churches envious

Lots of meetings and activities on the notice-board

Well, yes

But 'what for?' Is that really what's it's all about?

### **What IS the Church's role?**

Jesus wants us to hear that it is

**not** first, success and places at God's top table

- that's the success of the world

**Buildings** can often become God-prisons and we the jailers

**Money** – even the lack of it ties a lead weight to a Kingdom agenda

**Numbers** - the more you have the greater the risk of dissension

Specially good **ministry** can hide the potential of the church,

stifling the joys and privileges of all the fellowship being the whole church

**Meetings** – and more meetings

– the press which can squeeze the life out of the most earnest believer

The earnest **praise** of God in word and music can become a congregational competition

Or would we rather celebrate our being **The Fellowship of the Cup**

Being part of Jesus' *Right Way Up Kingdom*

*Jesus spoke of the cup*

*Which is the symbol of all our happiest and our most painful experiences  
and the baptism*

*which means being immersed in the fellowship of the Cup*

being willing to engage in sacrificial service regardless of the personal cost

## **The Way of Service**

So, what sort of service?

Where do we begin?

How do we BE the fellowship of the Cup

### ***First – By Prayer***

Prayer is not the additional option

which oils the wheels of Kingdom service

Prayer **IS** the service And the service **IS** the prayer

### ***Leading to serving in the Christ life-style***

The life-style which makes the preaching ring true

- makes the words meaningful – powerful

- attracts people to Jesus

and the claims of his Kingdom

More souls are saved by the combination of words and life-style than by either words or life-style alone

### ***The life-style which is The Fellowship of the Cup***

It will mean being misunderstood - even despised

- made to look and be small in the eyes of the world

- called to endure difficulties - even persecutions - even a cross

But these costs are the seeds of the Kingdom

which will grow for the glory of God

- and for the day when it won't matter where we sit in the Kingdom

- only that Jesus will be there.

### ***So, Where do we begin?***

#### ***With the Fellowship of the Cup?***

Turn back to our Gospel story

The conversation between Jesus and his disciples took place on the road to Jerusalem.

Immediately following, they arrive in Jericho and the first person they meet is a blind beggar shouting for help!

Service in the fellowship of the Cup begins with the first person we meet after enlisting

See Jesus in them

Be Jesus to them

Service begins with the first challenge society presents

calling us to act as and for Christ in that situation

### ***Together in The Fellowship of the Cup***

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**Year B Ordinary 30**

Mark 10: 46 -52

### **Bring Back Compassion**

Mark 10.49 Jesus stopped and said, *Call him.*

### **Lacking Compassion**

It seems there is less compassion in contemporary society

There are reasons suggested for this:

We have become much more self oriented – *my rights – my home – my life – my church*

We have become somewhat blasé – about poverty, famine, war – because while the media brings it close it can also make it impersonal

Jesus faced the same thing in Jericho – where a noted tax officer had become a generous social benefactor

*Bartimaeus begging at the roadside was not the obvious subject for compassion before Jesus singled him out*

*Be quiet – don't be a nuisance – the teacher hasn't time for you*

- the law tended to call him *unclean* – a risk to the religious purity of others

- after all this must be a judgement – a punishment for something in his life

*His was a voice the majority did not want to hear*

But perhaps it had not always been like that

The detail of the story could suggest otherwise

He was obviously an intelligent man

He had keen spiritual awareness

In fact he could have been a man of position before his blindness

*[I want to see again* – indication that he had not always been this way]

Perhaps he had greater faith

and deeper spiritual understanding

than many of those who were dismissing him

In the eyes of the majority this was his lot in life

They would have him removed from their society

He had to be maintained – the law demanded that

– but put something in his bowl

– somebody else will see to him – family, friends, other beggars

*-Zacchaeus was generous now!*

*That has become a way of our society too*

*Put some cash in a bucket*

*write a cheque for charity*

*someone else will do the practical caring*

*We have to get on with our life*

*the family demands*

*the very pace of life and social commitments*

*– we are busy – no time*

*and others are trained and paid to care ...!*

*Most Aid Societies today recognise the importance of giving money, but also how much more vital is becoming partners with those in need and being prepared to speak and act against the injustices of power and greed which maim the poor and create the need.*

It is not causes that are needy – it is people  
NOT 'The Jericho Blind Beggars Society'  
BUT Bartimaeus by the roadside in Jericho.

It is the difference between generous concern and **compassion**

### **Compassion**

Compassion – a beautiful, powerful word, prominent in the life and work of Jesus

Compassion is right at the heart of Christian life

- it is to be like Jesus
- it has always been - and still is – our greatest means of Gospel witness to the truth and love of God

**Because** it is the heart of God - the life and way of Jesus

See it here in Jesus' attitude and dealing with Bartimaeus on the outskirts of Jericho

*Call him*

*What can I do for you?*

*Your faith has made you well*

Faith in Jesus was inspired by his compassion

Com-*passion* = with passion

Passion embraces the extremes of human emotions and experiences

Our highest joys

- *the joy of God over a sinner who repents*

Our deepest sufferings

- *the agony of God in Jesus dying on a cross*

Compassion = love which cares and suffers alongside others

*Paul preaches compassion in Romans 12*

***Be happy with those who are happy, weep with those who weep ..***

### **Recovering Compassion**

So we need to bring back compassion

As Paul suggests, compassion

is the out-flowing of passionate, caring, practical love

from the heart of God in Jesus

And from the heart of the people in whom Christ lives in every generation

### **Compass**

I would suggest that the word compassion itself contains an answer to how we recover this Christ-likeness

The word may be associated with the word COMPASS

## **Enfolded**

Picture the drawing compass we have all used  
– to describe a circle – make patterns of curves etc

The describing of the circle is like an enfolding - A God-hug

Real prayer may be described as 'God-hugging'  
We share the heart of God  
Learns what it is to feel the loves and agonies of a parent for family

Such prayers lead to action  
When love for others bursts out of the prayers  
with a desperation to DO something

God did! He came in Jesus! He died on a Cross!  
He rose from the dead! He gave us his Spirit!

Jesus, when confronted by a blind beggar – is so overwhelmingly bound up with love  
– that he can hear a cry above the clamour of the crowd  
- that he can make contact with one whom others call *the least*  
- that he can search the need and embrace it with healing words and touches  
- that he can include Bartimaeus in his own family of followers – as the man joins him on his journey to Jerusalem

*A heart-wrenching prayer for children in famine, cannot often give us the opportunity to feed or embrace those children  
But it can make us compassionate in our attitudes to young people all about us  
And cause us to consider what practical ways we can find to enfold them in God's love*

## **Directed**

There is another kind of compass - a direction indicator

As the magnetic compass will always point to North  
***The Christian compass will always point to Jesus***

*Bartimaeus – directed his call to the only one he believed really cared enough to change his life situation - Jesus*

Compassion is the natural outworking  
of a life centred in Jesus  
Every direction we take  
Every action  
Being the result of first checking where we are with him.

Compassion has its power and meaning in being Jesus-centred - Spirit – filled

## **Bring back compassion**

Let's bring back compassion  
It is the essence of Christian life  
It is the heart of Christian mission

It is love, signed with a cross  
It is love, trusting for the glory of God in the fulfilment of his Kingdom on earth.