

2nd Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: Genesis 15.1-12, 17-18

Psalm: 27

2nd Reading: Philippians 3.17 - 4.1

Gospel: Matthew 20:29-34

During Lent we are learning about healing by looking at the experiences of people who met with Jesus as recorded in the gospels. This morning, we focus on the story of two blind beggars who receive their sight.

Last week I commented that when we look at Jesus' healing power in the gospels, we need four qualities to exercise that ministry now. Compassion; Confidence that it is God's will to heal and we do so in Jesus name because he has given us power to do so; Courage to take risks to offer healing to other people; and finally perseverance – healing might not happen immediately and so we need patience and commitment to follow it through - sometimes healing takes a lifetime, sometimes it is instant but healing is happening whether we see it or not.

In the story we have just heard we see two blind men, probably homeless, probably left on the scrap heap of society and they hear that Jesus is passing through and so they cry at the top of their voices, 'Lord, son of David, have mercy on me' and the crowd begin to tell them to shut up but they cry even louder 'have mercy on us' and then the unthinkable happens... Jesus stops in his tracks and begins to engage with them. He asks them, 'what do you want me to do for you?' They seize the moment and take a risk and say they want their sight. Jesus is filled with compassion and he touches their eyes and IMMEDIATELY they can see.

If we want to see more healings, we need to ask God to soften our hearts and give us hearts of compassion, hearts that love. In fact, compassion should always be our starting point because healing is now simply for us, it's for others. It can be easy for us to want the healing for ourselves, so that we can talk about ourselves as having a ministry of healing – come to worship with us on Sunday at Pomona/Cooroy Anglican Church and see God at work!

Instead we are called to see others the way God sees them and to feel what God feels. How often when you meet someone in need do we feel 'our heart goes out to them'? How often do we feel such empathy with those in need that we could cry with them and for them? Jesus always heals out of his compassion – the Bible accounts of Jesus' healing all show he was moved with compassion or pity...

Through the week, like many other weeks, I visited a lady in her home. She'd just been released from hospital after three weeks. She was telling me of a horrible experience she'd had in hospital. She is too frail and unsteady to walk to the bathroom on her own and following a fall in hospital, her doctor had given orders for her to be assisted to the bathroom – and not to go on her own. She was ordered (and her chart was marked) to say she could not walk across the room on her own. And in the middle of the night, she had rang for the nurse 3 times and had moved from feeling she wanted to go to the toilet, to feeling she had to go, to being in pain because she had not been.... but the nurse had not come. She rang the buzzer again and the nurse came. While she was relieved to see the nurse, the nurse was not relieved to see her and grabbed this frail

little old lady by the wrist, yanked her up, scratching her on the way and dragged her to the toilet, all the time telling her how demanding she was.

As she related this story to me, she began to cry. And as I heard the story and saw her distress, I too began to cry. By the end of the story, she was sobbing and I was sitting with her tears running down my face. This frail, gentle, kind lady had experienced every elderly persons nightmare. I felt helpless that this person, who I know to be kind and gentle and one of the least demanding people I know, felt so utterly alone at that time. While we prayed, there was no fireworks, no miracle healing, not even an end to the tears... but in that action I hope she experienced love.

When we pray for people they should feel they have been in Jesus' presence and been loved, heard, cared for and more valued than beforehand. And Jesus in our gospel today: of course he knew they were blind, everyone knew they were blind, it was obvious! but he gave them the dignity of saying what do you want me to do for you... he didn't tell them what he wanted for them or what they needed – he had compassion enough for them to say for themselves what they wanted.

After the service there will be an opportunity for prayer at the communion rail. I invite you to come forward for prayer for yourself, for your friends or for anyone. There will be someone to pray with you... and Jesus asks you, 'what you want me to do for you'...