

'Don't you dare try to silence me' Rev Stuart Simpson

Sermon 28th October 2018

Jeremiah 31:7-9

Mark 10:46-52

It's really interesting that in the last couple of chapters, Jesus has been struggling to get his disciples to know who he really is,

Peter kind of got it, until he rebuked Jesus for telling him His ministry will lead to death on a cross

James and John get the idea that following Jesus means greatness the way the worlds sees it

The only person who seems to know Jesus is Bartimaeus – and it is the knowing the truth of who Jesus is that propels him to call on Jesus, to seek mercy and healing

He will not be put off

or put down

he will not be silenced and when he is sternly ordered to be quiet he cried out even more loudly!

He does not care what people think of him or how they might react – he's blind, not deaf, and although he

hears people mumble at how useless he is, how unworthy he is, how sinful he is, he knows Jesus will have mercy on him!

Let's face it we only call on people to help us, really help us, when we know who they are and when we know what they can do – a child will reach out to his/her parent because they trust them to get them out of the mess, the pain, the hurt, the bad situation

Out of all the characters so far, Bartimaeus, the least out of everyone, knows Jesus and says 'my life is rough, I can't do anything to change it but I know you can'.

I can't do anything to change the situation but I call out to the one who can – Jesus have mercy!

But I am told to be quiet

I want to cry out to the one who can heal me

And those around me tell me not to be so loud, to shut up – what they are saying is that they want me to remain in the state I am because it would make them feel uncomfortable if things we to change

Like Bartimaeus, I wonder, as we cry out for mercy, how often we feel we are required to keep silent?

How often are we asked to keep our voices down, just in case we might offend someone in our very controlled and contrive world? Lest there be an utterance that might tear apart that which we've constructed to keep out

What or who, we don't want to see, or hear, or acknowledge?

Or how often do we silence others, convinced that their cries for mercy are not worthy of God's attention?

If we are honest I believe there are times we all do this,
we keep silent
we urge others to do the same

Speaking out? That's risky!
Stating your opinion? That is cause for rebuff
Saying what you think is true about the Gospel? Get ready for rejection

At some point there is only so much you can take, we can take. There is only so many times that someone can say, "shut up" before we say

"No, I cannot be quiet. I will not be silent. And don't you dare try to silence me."

What will drive us, propel us to call out to Jesus for mercy, even when others might tell us to be quiet?

When will we find ourselves standing with Bartimaeus, for the sake of Bartimaeus?

There's been a recent story in the media about a disabled African woman about to travel. She was entering the plane and was ready to take her seat when the man next to her began to shout at her saying he didn't want her sitting next to her. Apart from her daughter, who told the man not talk like that, everyone else simply walked passed, ignoring what was going on.

Like the people who simply walked pass, although they didn't silence the woman's cry for mercy, their lack of response enabled the injustice to go on, we may not tell people to be quiet but I wonder if our silence is because we are happy to allow injustice to go on, as long as it doesn't affect me, rather than in respect of the call for mercy?

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The Me Too Movement, in a limited way, is a good example of standing with Bartimaeus, for the sake of Bartimaeus today

The movement was born out of one woman's cry for mercy. She had remained silent about her sexual

assault for so long because there were so many people, including her own inner voice telling her,

It was too late, it would only cause more pain, or it would do no good

Voices telling her to be quiet, to shut up – I don't know what caused her to finally say something, but she did, she called out the truth about her hurt – hoping it would be heard, and responded to

and it was, more and more people shared their pain and experience and for some, injustice was answered with justice, deep hurt was addressed and healing began to take place

the only problem is, is that when mercy comes from any place other than Jesus, it is limited mercy

I think it is really important to note that calling out for mercy isn't about making a noise for the sake of it, or for simply embarrassing the other. Rather it is about crying out to the only one who can make any difference, receiving mercy, and in the case I shared, justice and then following Jesus as people of His mercy and His justice

“No, I cannot be quiet. I will not be silent. And don't you dare try to silence me.”

Some of you know that Lala and I have been struggling to get her parents to visit New Zealand for a holiday. This process, something we thought would have been relatively straightforward, has been painful and hard.

Through this process I have heard of stories of grandparents being denied the ability to visit their grandchildren and vice-versa often because of limited funds.

Of course, these stories are not always clear-cut, but when a pattern emerges, that is, the majority of these cases concern poor people, then are we to remain quiet or ignore the catcalls for silence and call out for mercy?

As we've called out for mercy, called out to Jesus, we have been blessed by the support of so many. People have given advise and renewed our energy and our faith in the only one who gives real healing.

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