

Mark 10:46-52

Aim of lesson

To show that faith in Jesus involves believing that he can perform miracles, and that Jesus gladly responds to people who have such faith.

Background study

Isaiah 35:5. Find a map showing the Jordan valley, Jericho and Jerusalem.

Suggested outline of lesson

Trying to understand being blind in a crowd

Introduce the lesson by attempting to convey the feelings of Bartimaeus as he was jostled by the crowd and could feel the excitement without being able to see what was happening. The following suggestions may be helpful: Ask the children to close their eyes while listening to a tape-recording of street or crowd noises, and ask such questions as: "What is happening? How many people are there? What sort of vehicles can you hear?" etc. It might be useful to ask someone in the class to help you with a dialogue along the following lines: "Don't you think this is lovely? I had it for my birthday." "Oh, yes, I have two of those. They are very useful", while the children keep their eyes closed. Another idea is to ask the children to put their hands into a bag of assorted objects. When the children have identified the objects, ask: "Whose photograph is it? What colour is the postage stamp? What is the title of the book?" These exercises should help the children to understand something of the frustration of not being able to see.

A determined Bartimaeus

Bartimaeus was forced to beg in order to live, since there was no welfare provision or suitable employment for the blind at that time. At the time of the story he was sitting by the side of the road near an entrance to the city when he heard the excited crowd approaching. Having acute hearing, which the blind so often have, he was soon aware that the cause of the excitement was the visit of Jesus of Nazareth. He had heard of the wonderful things that Jesus had done. Now Bartimaeus had one great hope: now was his chance. He knew he must speak to Jesus. His confidence in the power of Jesus to cure him was total. He must shout loud enough for Jesus to hear above the crowd. He listened carefully and judged the right moment to call out. Point out the implications of the expression "Son of David". The use of this title reveals that Bartimaeus knew that he was addressing the king, the Messiah. Bartimaeus underwent the extremes of tense anxiety, trembling hope, and then intense relief as willing hands helped him forward. In his eagerness he flung aside his cloak. Nothing must get in his way.

Healed because of his faith

Everybody, including Jesus, knew perfectly well what Bartimaeus wanted so desperately, so why did Jesus ask that question? Jesus evidently required Bartimaeus to declare his faith, not only for his own benefit, but for that of the crowd. Jesus' reply showed the importance of that faith which was now being rewarded. Jesus did not even touch the man. The cure was immediate and complete. What joy to be able to see at last! Now Bartimaeus could begin to do all the things he had been prevented from doing; and the thing he most wanted to do was to follow Jesus.

Worksheets

The jumbled words are:

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| (in the moon) | ROADSIDE, FEET |
| (in the leaf) | CROWD, FAITH |
| (in the star) | JESUS, RABBI |
| (in the sun) | BEGGING, JERICHO |
| (in the flower) | HEALED, JUMPED |
| (in the butterfly) | SON OF DAVID, DISCIPLES |
| (in the apple) | MERCY, CLOAK |
| (in the bird) | BLIND, SHOUT |
| (in the tree) | BARTIMAEUS, FOLLOWED |

Prayer

At this point, rather than voicing a prayer for the children to follow, suggest that everyone in the class will have his/her own words to say to God. A preliminary discussion will help the children to put their thoughts into words. Ask them to close their eyes and, after beginning in this kind of way, "Dear Lord God, today we ask you to listen to our thoughts as we each tell you about our own problems ..." allow a brief silence and then conclude: "We thank you, Lord, for hearing us" or words to that effect.

The children will react to the sincerity of your own example as you participate in this silent prayer.

Memory verse

"All things are possible for one who believes" (Mark 9:23).

Relevance to the children's lives

Bartimaeus must have wished: "If only I could see ...". We are not blind, but we may have similar feelings about other problems and disappointments. Do you sometimes wish: "If only I could have this ..." or, "If only I could do that ..."? Our best plan is to do what Bartimaeus did and call to Jesus. How can we do that? If we show the same confidence in him, we know Jesus will gladly answer our call. The answer may not necessarily be the one we expect, but we can be sure it will be the best answer.