



Kathryn Fleming *reflects on*
Job 42:1-6. 10-end and Mark 10:46-end

As Jesus meets blind Bartimaeus, his opening question might seem entirely unnecessary. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asks. The petitioner is blind. Of course, his prime need would be to have his sight restored. Surely it's a no-brainer. But actually what he has asked for is mercy. There's something deeper happening here, just as there is when Job realises that his search for answers will only lead him further into mystery. Though there are many and obvious physical issues to be addressed, the fundamental need for both Job and Bartimaeus is to recognise that God is God, and that in God's presence we are all alike in need of mercy, dwarfed by "things too wonderful for me, which I did not know".

Perhaps this might help us to hold on to our faith in hard times (even if those times are, please God, less cataclysmic than those endured by Job). Sometimes healing has more to do with experiencing God's mercy and recognising God's greatness, than with sorting out a physical issue. That may not always feel like good news but, as Job reminds us, God's picture is always bigger, and we glimpse but a corner. Sometimes, wonderfully, like Bartimaeus we receive both healing and cure. But when that is not our experience let's try cling to God as Job did, and hope to glimpse God's loving purpose. 🙏

Prison chaplaincy

by Heather Smith

Prisons have always existed. Think of Joseph in prison in Egypt, or Peter, rescued from prison by an angel in Acts 12. In the West until around two hundred years ago prison was seen as the waiting room for trial and, if someone was convicted, where they would be held until execution, or where debtors were put until they paid what they owed.

Before the Second World War prisons were filthy, disease-ridden places, and people were often imprisoned for crimes that would not now attract a custodial sentence. It wasn't uncommon for prisoners to be forced to exercise wearing hoods, or for the stalls in the prison chapel to allow the worshipper to see only the preacher.

Over time, thanks to campaigners like the chaplain of Wandsworth Prison William Morrison in the 1890s, the current model of the prison system developed, until eventually the purpose of prison came to be seen as both deterrence and reform and conditions were improved. 🙏

“The mission of the Church is to live the ordinary life of human beings in that extraordinary awareness of the other.”

John V. Taylor (1914-2001), Anglican bishop

Lord, you know our needs better than we do ourselves. Help us to trust you, so that our faith in you may heal us of our fears and bring us to worship at the feet of your Son, Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Walking with Rosie

Words of life

by Gillian Cooper

I talk to Rosie as we walk. People in the village probably think I'm a bit mad. But Rosie is a captive audience for my thoughts and feelings, and she is used to my burbling. She knows when to ignore it, and when to pay attention because I am talking to her. She recognises familiar words and phrases, even if she sometimes ignores them – come, wait, leave it, look who's there.

All my life I have read and heard the words of the Bible in English, and they are embedded in my brain. Sometimes they are just there, in the background. Sometimes they leap out at me and say – come, leave it, wait, look... Sometimes they inspire, sometimes entertain. They are both familiar and strange, needing thought and interpretation. As I walk the path of salvation, they are a gift for my mind and my heart, never to be ignored. 🙏