

Daily Readings

Week 1 - Journey into Seeing

Beginning Sunday 1 March with:

Bartimaeus receives his sight

Isaiah 42.5-9; 16-20

Mark 10:46-52

Theme of the week:

People whose spiritual journeys were changed by the encounter with Jesus

Monday 2 March

Seeing salvation

Luke 2:25-32

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;
³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation,
³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.'

How does this passage relate to the theme?

Simeon is an elderly person who is waiting for the culmination of his journey of faith. He knows that he is waiting to meet the Messiah, God's chosen one, but he does not know who the Messiah will be. Many Jewish people of the time thought that God would send a king or a mighty warrior to free them from the Romans. But the Holy Spirit leads Simeon to the temple where Mary and Joseph have brought the baby Jesus and he recognises the helpless *baby* as the one whom God has sent to humankind to bring salvation. Simeon cuddles the baby and gives thanks. His words are used in churches as the 'Nunc Dimittis' usually at evening prayer. Simeon has been privileged to see Jesus with his own eyes and calls him a 'light' for the people Israel who will spread God's truth beyond the Jewish people to all others. Others will see Jesus and in him see salvation. More people too will be changed forever by the encounter with Jesus.

Question for reflection:

How do you think Simeon felt when he saw the baby Jesus?

Tuesday 3 March

Zacchaeus sees Jesus

Luke 19:1-10

19He entered Jericho and was passing through it. ²A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. ³He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' ⁶So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' ⁸Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' ⁹Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

How does this passage relate to the theme?

Zacchaeus was too short to see Jesus in person, and he was being crowded out, but he was determined to set eyes on him and see him for himself. To do that he had to encounter Jesus by securing his own viewpoint, - up a tree. But Jesus looks at him directly and makes eye contact with him, inviting Zacchaeus to ask Jesus into his home and his life. This invitation, from a face-to face encounter with Jesus, changes Zacchaeus' life around. Salvation comes to his house, as he makes reparation for his sins.

Question for reflection:

Why was it so important for Zacchaeus to see Jesus for himself?

Wednesday 4 March

Saul is blinded

Acts 9:1-9

9Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' ⁵He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.' ⁷The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

How does this passage relate to the theme?

This is a different kind of encounter and leads not to sight but to blindness. Saul is going the wrong way, his sight is fixed on persecution of Christians and on stamping out the gospel of Jesus. His eyes are fixed on the wrong goal. God intervenes and he witnesses light from heaven which stops him in his tracks and overwhelms him. In this intense and dramatic encounter with God he hears Jesus and his life is changed forever as he is given not only the truth of the gospel but entrusted with a mission. Yet for three days he can see nothing. When later his physical sight is restored, his spiritual sight will be fixed on Jesus. He is a follower of Christ now.

Question for reflection:

What do you think it was like for Saul/Paul during the three days of his blindness?

Thursday 5 March

Stephen sees the glory of God

Acts 7:54- 8:1

54 When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. 55 But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' 57 But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. 58 Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' 60 Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died. 8¹ And Saul approved of their killing him.

That day a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria.

How does this passage relate to the theme?

Stephen stands at the heart of the persecution of the early Christians. Even in the midst of terrible danger, he tells them of the amazing spiritual vision he can see of Jesus with God. The vision of heaven is too compelling not to be shared, even at the risk of death. The encounter with God's glory and the vision of Jesus sustains Stephen as he is violently killed and enables him to pray for his killers' forgiveness.

Question for reflection:

Why were the persecutors so angry and frightened by Stephen's vision of God and Jesus?