

# Telling our story

## story telling based on Mark 10:46-52

### AIM

To demonstrate one way of story telling using an example from Mark 10:46-52

### INTRODUCTION

One of the themes of our Vision4Life Evangelism Year is Telling God's story, telling our story. This piece of story telling is based on Psalm 34:1-8 and Mark 10:46-52. Story telling or retelling Bible stories is not new. It is important that we continue to explore ways or retelling Bible stories that speak to our contemporary society. This is just one example. You could read this or retell it in your own words or use it as a springboard to your own version of this story or other stories. It can help us to find ways of telling our story of the way God meets with us.

### Getting my sight back

It was only later on I realised how significant that day had been – how important that time in his life really was. That day when Jesus gave me my sight back was just before he and his followers got to Jerusalem and all those amazing and overwhelming things started happening to him there. I was the last bit of the story before it all began to get ugly and you wanted to turn away and not look. Trust me to get my sight back just at the point when things were going to get unbearable to watch – or at least they would be unbearable by the next week or so after that day I remember so well. Of course, there would also be things you'd never want to miss seeing too – Jesus sharing bread and wine with everyone at table just before he was arrested, the faces on that couple who walked back from Emmaus a few days after the crucifixion and said they'd had supper with Jesus again – a new Jesus, a risen Jesus - but I'm getting on ahead of myself there.

I should start at the beginning of the story. I wasn't born blind. I could see alright as a small child and well into my teens. It all started going wrong about the time I should have been starting to learn a trade, getting some skills with which to earn my living and follow my father Timaeus into his line of business as a builder. It was around then that I began to notice I couldn't see as well as I wanted. Slowly the edges of things began to blur. It happened so gradually at first that I thought I was imagining it – but I wasn't. It got so bad before it went altogether that I couldn't recognise people's faces properly and had to learn to identify them by their voices. In the end, after a few months of things getting worse and worse, I was unable to work because I couldn't be relied on to turn in a decent job. How can you help to build a wall when you can't see well enough to check if the stones are lined up properly and true? Who's going to want you around them with tools and heavy things to carry if you can't see where you're going and may drop something on someone's foot or hand by mistake? How can you judge which is the right stone to fit the pattern of the wall if you can't see the shapes of them properly and have to try to feel things instead? I was starting to be a liability, a waste of space. The light getting into my eyes gradually dimmed to the point when one day it went completely and I had to admit I couldn't see anything properly.

So there I was – a young man, with his whole life before him who found it being taken away within less than a year by this curse of blindness. I say 'curse' and that's a strong word but that's how it felt. People would whisper about it in the town, I know. They said things to my family, I'm sure – nasty, superstitious things about how one of us must have done something wrong to offend God and now I was being punished on behalf of us all. My mother felt it terribly – she somehow seemed to think it was her fault that I'd gone blind and I couldn't get her out of thinking like that, but I'd hear her crying quietly while she was

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cooking or doing the housework. I realised pretty quickly I couldn't stay in the house either. I was another mouth to feed and I was in the way all the time. Because I couldn't see people I'd be forever banging into them when I tried to move around the cramped space at home – especially the little ones, if they were playing with things on the floor. Even worse I'd be knocking things over, damaging my mother's cooking bowls, spilling hot food on the floor because I couldn't see what was on the table. I knew I'd have to move out and I knew the only thing I could do in the circumstances – I had to go out on the street and start begging.

I went about it properly. I got a little lad who would regularly help me to the main street, so I'd be able to catch the passing trade as people went by on their way to Jerusalem. It was tough at first because I was the new operator and all the old hands already had their established pitches. They weren't too keen to let me in on the high street passing trade to start with. It took a few years working my way up to find a good spot – nice and central, with a building to lean against, and a good chance of earning enough on a reasonable day to pay for my food and keep, as well as someone to take me back when night fell.

How it felt to sit there day after day, year after year, I really can't put into words. To say it was frustrating, soul destroying, is putting it too lightly. When I'd first gone blind I was a fit young man with decent strong legs and arms and a good straight back. Years of just sitting, of never being able to exercise, meant my body just wasted away. I was scraggy and rough looking, though I tried for the first few years not to let myself go too badly. Heaven knows how I looked that day when Jesus came by – I must have smelled pretty fragrant too because I think I'd pretty much given up on trying to keep clean by then. Anyway, I knew there was a strong chance he'd be coming because I'd heard people talking about it for days beforehand. One thing about being blind is that people say all sorts of things in front of you and forget your ears still work perfectly well – in fact they work better than when you've got eyes to rely on too. So I knew what was going on in Jericho better than the synagogue leader and the big wigs did most days.

I'd heard that Jesus did incredible, miraculous things. He didn't do them all the time, everywhere he went, but quite often he would heal people of all sorts of sicknesses – even leprosy – and he'd healed people of blindness too. That meant Jesus coming to town – or perhaps coming through town, which is what it turned out to be – was my one big chance. I had to catch his attention – I had to get him to notice me. I knew it was going to be tough but even I hadn't guessed how many people were going to be on the main road that day. It was heaving – I could tell from the number of folk who parked themselves right in front of my pitch from early in the day, even standing on my collecting cloak. I kept trying to get them to move, because I knew I wouldn't have any chance of making Jesus stop if he couldn't even see me. A voice calling out from street level behind some great, sweaty mass of bodies - that wasn't going to be enough to attract his attention in the middle of all these people. That's why I hit on the idea of shouting 'Son of David' in the hope of making him stop. It was a calculated risk, I knew that. The danger was that anyone who felt threatened by Jesus, who didn't want to think that he could be the Great One, the Coming One, the One who would take up God's work where King David had left off, would use my shouting as an excuse for doing something. They might have arrested me or even gone for him. They might have been worried about other people taking up the Son of David thing and starting a protest against those darned Romans.

Anyway, the risk was worth it. When I could hear the people around me saying he was coming I hollered out as loud as I could 'Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me.' And I just kept on shouting it until the sounds changed around me and I realised people were moving and there was a space in front of me instead of a crowd of legs. Someone helped me get up – I don't know how my legs held my weight, I was so wobbly with excitement and fear. Another person was fussing about my cloak but I couldn't have cared less about the money on it at that moment. And then I was there right in front of the Teacher and I could sense

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his presence and I knew he was looking at me even though I couldn't see him. It felt as though he could see right into me – as though he knew all about me and there was nothing in my story he didn't understand.

Then he spoke and I heard his voice for the first time. 'What do you want me to do for you?' What a darned stupid question, I thought. How on earth could he ask me that? Wasn't it obvious that I was blind and I needed to get my sight back? And then I started thinking for the first time in 10 years or more what that would actually mean. If I could see again I'd need to get back on my feet, literally, to find a job, to get back into the community, to re-build all those relationships that fall apart when you're reduced to begging on the streets. Did I want that? Did I have the guts for that? All these things take a long time to say but it only took a second or two to think them. And all the time I was thinking these things I knew he wasn't being funny with me by asking that question, he wasn't laughing at me – I could tell that from the tone of his voice. So I took a deep breath and said 'Rabbi, I want my sight back.'

I'd hardly stopped speaking before everything started to lighten up and I began to see his face coming into focus right in front of me. Those eyes, that smile – I've never seen anything like it before or since. And then he said something about me going on my way, and touched my shoulder lightly, and turned to keep on walking down the road. In that instant I knew I couldn't let him go. I had to go with him too. I knew that was the road to Jerusalem and I felt in my bones that going there, to the place where all the powerful people wanted him dead was going to spell disaster, but I couldn't see him walk away without wanting to follow. And what did I have to stay for in Jericho after all? A smelly old cloak and a few bits of loose change. So I decided to join his followers – men and women from Galilee, people he'd met on the road who like me couldn't let him go but just had to keep moving on with him - a mad mixture of fishermen and tax collectors and housewives and posh ladies from court and freedom fighters, all of them trying to keep up with the pace he set on the road out of Jericho. The funny thing was when I was blind they always said I was in the way – they complained of falling over me. I heard later on that earlier in the journey to Jerusalem some people had said the children wanting to get to see Jesus were getting in the way too, and he told everyone they weren't and he wanted them at the heart things not pushed to the edges. And now, by following Jesus, I was getting 'in the way' in a new sense – they nicknamed us followers of his the people of the Way. I've never regretted that decision to join Jesus on the Way, and the fact my life has changed beyond recognition since then, and I'll never forget that first day in Jericho.

### Prayer

God of new life, you watch over us on life's way,  
and see deeply into our bodies, our minds and our souls.  
You want only what is best for us  
and you give us the courage to put our needs into words.

Help us to answer the question honestly  
when Jesus asks us what we want him to do for us.  
Help us to voice our deepest desires.

Then, when you answer our requests  
in unexpected and overwhelming ways,  
be with us as we unwrap the gifts you present us with  
and give us time and space to use them to the full.  
Amen

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### EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

### THE NEXT STEP

If you want more material please revisit the website. Remember that Bible Year material is still on the website under bible Year. This includes other story telling bible based material.

### Acknowledgements

The material has been prepared by Kirsty Thorpe to whom copyright belongs and who has given permission for this to be used by Vision4life.

### HOW TO FEEDBACK TO VISION4LIFE?

If you wish to offer any feedback – brickbats and bouquets are equally welcome! – you can do so in various ways.

You can email the Vision4Life steering group and the coordinator about general issues via the website or at [admin@vision4life.org.uk](mailto:admin@vision4life.org.uk)

Website issues can be dealt with through [web@vision4life.org.uk](mailto:web@vision4life.org.uk)

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email: Year 3 – Transformed for Evangelism: [evangelism@vision4life.org.uk](mailto:evangelism@vision4life.org.uk)