

## Tale From the Garden!

The Lectionary readings for Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> October explored the notion of seeing and being seen. The crowd following Jesus are stopped by a cry from the roadside. Bartimaeus – a man seen as an outsider, deemed not valuable enough for Jesus’ attention – sees what others didn’t or couldn’t. He recognised who Jesus was and the hope that could be found in him.

Bartimaeus had heard about Jesus, and now he called out to him with complete faith that the teacher could and would heal him. Jesus told Bartimaeus that his faith had cured him. In hearing the cry and responding, Jesus teaches everyone to see life in a different way, from a new perspective.

‘When it’s gone, it’s gone!’ This is a familiar sales promotion designed to get us to do something sooner rather than later. Most of us will probably have had a few ‘now or never’ moments in our lives – Bartimaeus moments. The Gospel stories are showered with such moments of opportunity. In this case, Bartimaeus seizes the moment and draws Jesus’ attention. And when, moments later, he is invited to get up, he does it again – he leaps up. Before this happened, there was a lot of time waiting. It would not have been easy. On the other hand, it would not have been difficult to have allowed the moment to slip by. We do not hear of Bartimaeus again, but today he is our wake-up call – a reminder to grasp every opportunity we are given to take the next step of our faith journey.

A young man was playing the violin outside the tube station. People were rushing by – places to go, trains to catch. A young girl listened intently for a while – but her parents pulled her away. She was reluctant to leave and looked back as they went on their way. In the violinist’s hat were a few small coins. The previous night, the same virtuoso violinist had played to a packed audience at a London venue. Everyone there had paid at least £50 for a seat! The music, however, was the same. The young player wanted to bring his music to everyone, no barriers or restrictions. Those passing by saw only a busker playing for his tea.

But for the little girl – did that moment kindle a desire to play the violin? Did she pursue that calling? Who knows? But vocations are made in such brief moments, if only we have eyes to see, ears to hear and faith to respond.

Read the poem ‘Leisure’ by Welsh poet W. H. Davies, which famously begins: **‘What is this life if, full of care, We have no time to stand and stare.’**

Leisure (1911) by W.H. Davies

What is this life if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare?  
No time to stand beneath the boughs  
And stare as long as sheep or cows:  
No time to see, when woods we pass,  
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass:  
No time to see, in broad daylight,  
Streams full of stars, like skies at night:  
No time to turn at Beauty’s glance,  
And watch her feet, how they can dance:  
No time to wait till her mouth can  
Enrich that smile her eyes began?  
A poor life this if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.

The poem’s theme is reflected in Davies’s own outdoor life, which was unconventional to say the least. Leaving Wales, he worked and begged his way across America, losing a leg in an accident when jumping from a train. He returned to England and, unfit for physical work, dedicated himself to making a living as a writer. His first collection of poems attracted influential admirers, such as George Bernard Shaw, who helped Davies publish a successful memoir, *The Autobiography of a Super Tramp*, which dealt with his life travelling across America. By 1929 his popularity and literary reputation led to the award of an honorary degree from the University of Wales and, ten years later, his home-town of Newport unveiled a plaque in his honour.

The last two lines, **'A poor life this if, full of care, We have no time to stand and stare'** are what really make this poem touch my outlook on life. How much richer our lives will be when we take the time to look at the world around us. So, what have I **stood and stared** at this week? I spotted these clusters of toadstools growing under a young tree on Ashwood Drive & was fascinated by how they grew in number from one day to the next:



In all turf there are hundreds, possibly thousands of fungi, though few produce toadstools and mushrooms. Fungi are the most active of all micro-organisms in turf. They help degrade thatch and other organic debris and supply the turf with nutrients. It is not wise to try to eliminate fungi from turf. They belong in the turf and are part of the reason that a lawn will be beautiful, if cared for. Most of the fungi in turf are difficult to see, but there are some that will display themselves. Toadstools and mushrooms are naturally occurring and can appear on any lawn or turfed area given certain weather or ground conditions. If you have seen toadstools in your lawn, don't worry, they are part and parcel of the growing environment and are generally a sign of a healthy lawn. They are common in turf, woods, pastures, and most places where there is dead plant material. The fungi that produce toadstools also degrade (recycle) dead plant material. The toadstool is not the main part of a fungus (or mould, another term that means the same as fungus). Fungi grow very fine threads called mycelium. Sometimes you can see the mycelium on the leaves of turf. It will look like cotton and disappears as the sun dries it. I've seen this amazing phenomenon with my own eyes on the grass space further along Ashwood Drive.

The appearance of toadstools and mushrooms on recently laid turf is not unusual as the action of harvesting, transporting and then laying new turf can sometimes stimulate the fungi to produce toadstools or mushrooms. They most commonly appear when the weather is warm and humid. They will usually disappear after a few weeks or when weather conditions change and are unlikely to re-occur.

Whilst some toadstools are poisonous, the type usually seen on new lawns are harmless, however, humans and animals should not eat them.

We see light and colour and shapes with our miraculous eyes. Our eyes allow us to see the faces of our friends and family, our pets, trees, flowers, lakes, streams, and mountains. They allow us to read wonderful books and we use our eyes to make things such as sewing, art or woodworking projects. We could go on and on about all the things our eyes enable us to see and do. There is also a different way of seeing that has to do with what we feel and understand. Do you ever find yourself saying, "Oh, I see. Now I understand."

You may experience this when you see and believe that someone loves you. Or when you realize that the world is a beautiful place – God's creation. Or you may use this different way of seeing to realize you have choices about what you do and that certain things make you happy. This is a different way of seeing and knowing.

Blind Bartimaeus could not see with his eyes, but he used this different way of seeing and he understood that Jesus had the power of God to be able to heal him. This man received the miracle of healing and was able to see with his eyes because he understood and believed in the power of God. Like Bartimaeus, use this different way of seeing to understand that God loves you. Like Bartimaeus, remember that as we go about our daily and sometimes noisy lives. Jesus hears us when we call to him – anytime, anywhere!

May we have eyes to see, ears to hear and faith to respond to our beautiful world.