**Messy Church – 19th November 2023**

**Blind Bartimaeus and others**

The way Jesus’ healing and teaching change people’s attitudes to others.

The activities are:

1. **People stamps: Bartimaeus and the crowd:** Mark chapter 10, verses 46 to 52
2. **Clay begging bowl:** Mark chapter 10, verse 46
3. **Chocolate mousse: The man born blind:** John chapter 9, verses 1 to 41
4. **Fold over sheep: The man with a paralysed hand:** Matthew chapter 12, verses 9 to 13 **(in the celebration)**
5. **Bookmarks with memory verse: a blind man:** John chapter 9, verse 25 **(in the celebration)**

We will also make something in advance for Advent – you might want to have it ready for the beginning of December

1. **Advent rings**

**Stories and Activities**

**1. Bartimaeus and the crowd:** Mark chapter 10, verses 46 to 52

Mark tells the story of Jesus leaving Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. There is a big crowd of people around, watching, perhaps following him, and there is a blind beggar at the side of the road. We only know half his name – he is Bar Timaeus – the bible tends to run the two words together – but it means Son of Timaeus – like Johnson, son of John. Bartimaeus asks the crowd what is going on, and they tell him that Jesus is there. He has heard of Jesus, and that he makes people better, so he starts to shout. “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me!” The people around tell him to be quiet, but he shouts even louder! Jesus stopped walking and told his disciples to bring the man to him. When he heard that Jesus was asking for him, he got up, dropped his cloak and went to meet Jesus. Jesus asked him what he wanted, and Bartimaeus said he wanted to be able to see. Jesus told him that his faith had made him well, and that was the end of the conversation – except that Bartimaeus could see, and that he followed Jesus as he went towards Jerusalem.

**Crowd picture**

**You will need:** a piece of paper, stamps (we have small people stamps, and a large one, but you could make your own, with a potato – or any other method. Our large stamp is made with foam.) It would be possible to use people stencils, if that would be easier for you), paint.

Use the stamps or stencils to make a picture of a crowd.

**Talk about:** wondering about what is going on – close your eyes and think about what it would be like not to be able to see what is going on. Imagine what it would be like to have to ask, every time. Think about going shopping, and how you would find what you want to buy.

**2 Begging bowl: –** Mark chapter 10, verse 46

At the time of Jesus, people with disabilities found it very difficult to get work. Blind people were thought to be incapable of working at all. All they could do was beg. Today, people who beg are often thought to be lazy, which was not totally true in Jesus’ time. People were quite accustomed to seeing people at street corners, or by town gates, begging for money to buy food, or perhaps begging for food. They would stop and give some money – not a great deal, possibly, but in the course of the day, enough might be given to buy a meal. There might be some people who would check that the beggar had had a meal – and provide some food if that is what they could afford. Members of the beggar’s family might well take them to their “spot” in the morning, and bring them home at night. A beggar would usually have a bowl into which their monetary or food contributions would be put. Such bowls might be pottery, or wooden, depending on what was easily available.

**You will need:** some clay, or some playdoh. If you are using clay, you will also need some water, to keep your hands damp, so you can work the clay. If it gets too dry, you will be unable to shape it.

Take a lump of clay or playdoh, and shape it into a bowl. Try to make it with a flat base, so it stands up, with sides high enough to contain a little liquid. Air drying clay will keep your bowl nice – leave it on a window sill or table (until it is dry, put something waterproof underneath if it is stood on something wooden). When it is dry, you could paint it.

**Talk about:** being completely dependent on someone. We are all dependent when we are babies, but imagine not being able to even get yourself a mug of water, or go out into the garden.

**3 Chocolate mousse: the man born blind:** John chapter 9, verses 1 to 41

This is a second story of Jesus healing a blind man.

This story is set in Jerusalem, where Jesus and his disciples see a blind man in the street. The man had been blind from when he was born. It was thought that disabilities of any kind were caused by someone doing something wrong, so the disciples asked Jesus who had done something wrong here – the man, or his parents. Jesus said that neither the man nor his parents had done anything to cause the blindness, but that God could cure him.

It was the Sabbath day, when Jews were not supposed to do any work. Jesus spat on the ground – which was just hard earth – and made a little mud from the dust and his spittle. Then he put some on the man’s eyes, and told him to go and wash in the local pool of water. So the man went, and washed, and when he came back, he could see. The man’s friends were surprised to find he could see (Jesus had obviously gone away), and asked him how come he could now see. He explained what Jesus had done, but said he didn’t know where Jesus was now. The pharisees – the Jewish authorities – got involved. They didn’t believe he had been blind in the first place, since they did not believe that Jesus could heal people, and if he had done it, he shouldn’t, because it was the Sabbath. They went to the man’s parents and asked them if he had been blind, and if so, how could he now see? The parents said that he had been born blind, that they didn’t know how he could now see, and why did they not ask the man himself, he was old enough to answer their questions.

So they went back to the man himself. He told them the same story again, and then asked why they did not believe him the first time. There was an argument, and the man was told not to come to the synagogue any more, because he had insisted that Jesus had cured him. When Jesus heard this, he went to find the man, and explained that he, Jesus, was the Messiah, and the man believed. The bible does not say whether he then became a follower of Jesus, but he might have done.

**You will need:** chocolate mousse mix, milk, measuring jugs, bowls to mix in, cake cases to put it in, trays lined with greaseproof paper to put the cases on while the mousse sets.

Line a tray with greaseproof paper. Make up the mousse as given on the packet, and spoon the mixture into cases. Put the cases on the tray, writing the name of the child on the tray lining beside the cake case. Put full trays in the fridge to set. Any child can help stir the mix into the milk. Older children can fill their own cake cases.

**Talk about:** how Jesus cured the man born blind. Our doctors wouldn’t do this! Consider also how people talk about things that happen strangely – would we believe the man had been cured in such a peculiar way? What would people today think about it?

**4. Fold over sheep: the man with a paralysed hand:** Matthew chapter 12, verses 9 to 13 – **(in the celebration)**

This is another story of a man Jesus healed on the Sabbath. There was a man who had a paralysed hand, so he couldn’t use it. The man, and Jesus, were in a synagogue, with all the people watching. It was an occasion when some people wanted to make trouble for Jesus. They asked him if it was against the Jewish rules to heal someone on the Sabbath. They thought it was – healing someone was “work” – for a doctor it would be. But Jesus asked if they would not pull out one of their sheep from a hole on the Sabbath, saying that people were worth more than sheep. And then he said that the Law does allow helping people on the Sabbath. Then he made the man’s hand well again, so that he could use it.

**You will need:** a cut out of the sheep (with this booklet) some card to stick it to, glue, scissors, cotton wool

Either print the sheep on paper and stick it to the card, or print it on card. Cut it out, and fold it in half along the dotted line. Glue cotton wool to the sides of the sheep, and stand it up.m makers and fluff out the yarn, to make an apple with the stalk showing at the top.

**Talk about:** helping people – how can we help people? is there a special time to do it, is there any time we shouldn’t. How should we help?

**5. Bookmarks with memory verse:** John chapter 9, verse 25 **(in the celebration)**

The man who was born blind was interviewed by the Pharisees – the Jewish lawyers – twice after Jesus healed him. By the time they spoke to him the second time, they had also spoken to his parents, who didn’t want to get involved. On the second occasion, the Pharisees insisted that Jesus could not have cured him, because he (Jesus) was not a good man, and only a good man could have done it. The man said he didn’t know whether Jesus was a good man or not, all he knew was “I was blind, and now I see.” As the argument continued, the man said that he agreed that God would only listen to a good man who asked for a cure for a blind man – and therefore Jesus must be good, no matter what the Pharisees said.

**You will need:** a strip of card, a print out of the blind man (with this booklet), scissors, glue, colouring pencils or pens if you want to colour in, and a pen to write with.

Cut out the print of the blind man, and stick it to the card strip. Write the quote **I was blind, and now I see** on the card strip below the blind man. If you want to colour in the blind man, it is probably easier to do before you stick him to the card. When the glue is completely dry, you can use the bookmark to mark your place in the books you read.

**Talk about:** how happy the blind man must have been to be able to see – and perhaps how strange he found the world he had never seen before.

**6. Advent rings**

Lots of churches, and some homes, use Advent Rings to help them think about preparing for Christmas. In church, we light one candle on the first Sunday in Advent – this year it will be 3rd December – two candles on the second Sunday, three candles on the third, and four candles on the fourth. On Christmas day we light all five. Each Sunday candle represents one of the themes of Advent: the Second Coming, the prophets, John the Baptist, and Mary. In some years, instead of the Second Coming, we think about the people of God – all the people who go to church anywhere.

**You will need:** a bathroom tile or a piece of very heavy card, or wood, tin foil (to cover wood or card), blue tack, night lights – four white and one red or purple, (or one white, three pink and a purple, depending on what you have or can get). We are using electric night lights this year, which are all white. You might be able to paint the outside of the electric ones, if you have suitable paint. If you are using a tile, you might like to paint the tile, so you will need paint, paintbrushes, pencil for marking up the tile if wanted. You could use marker pens, sharpies, or specialist porcelain pens, rather than paint.

A picture containing indoor, toilet

Description automatically generated

If you have white and one colour, the white night lights go round the outside of the tile, and the other coloured one goes in the middle. (With the other colour scheme, one white in the middle, three pink and a purple in the corners.) If it helps, work out where the night lights will go, and draw round them. Decorate the rest of the tile. Use blue tack to attach the night lights, so that they can be replaced when they burn out.

**Never leave a live flame advent ring lit if you leave the room!**

If you are using tin foil covered card, stand the card on a heatproof surface before lighting any of the night lights!

Younger children may need a lot of help with this – make sure they wear an overall if they are using paint!

**Talk about:** using things we can see to remember what Jesus said, or the people Jesus knew, or what Christians in other parts of the world find in their lives.

**Celebration**

We’ll sing “Lord I lift your name on high” <https://youtu.be/c12Ta6_WJrw>

There was a crowd, a big crowd. A special person was leaving the city and everyone wanted to see him go. Everyone except Bartimaeus. Well, he did want to see Jesus really. But he couldn’t. He couldn’t because he couldn’t see, he was blind. Poor, blind Bartimaeus. All he could do was beg. Beg and hope that he would get enough so he could eat, and maybe get some clothes to wear as well.

But just because he was blind it didn’t mean he couldn’t hear. He could hear lots of things. He heard people say “poor beggar”, or useless man. But he heard people say that Jesus of Nazareth was here. He heard people say that Jesus healed sick people, helped lame people walk, made blind people see.

Bartimaeus wanted to see Jesus, really, actually see Jesus. He thought that he might be able to. If Jesus healed him, if Jesus cured his blindness.

So he waited. He waited on the road that Jesus would go down. He waited for Jesus. But there was a crowd, a big crowd. They pushed him out of the way. They pushed him away from the road. How would he get to Jesus if Jesus couldn’t see him?

So Bartimaeus, blind Bartimaeus, listened. He heard the crowd. He heard them say, “he’s coming.” He heard the noise get louder as Jesus got closer. And he yelled. “Jesus. Son of David. Have pity on me.”

And what did the crowd do? They told him to keep quiet, to stop his noise, to keep away.

There was a crowd, a big crowd, a noisy crowd. But Jesus heard a cry over the crowd. A cry for help. And he stopped. And he said, “bring him to me”. “What do you want?” Jesus said to Bartimaeus. “I want to see!” he said. “Go”, said Jesus, “your faith has healed you”.

We’re going to make bookmarks to remember Bartimaeus.

Sing Make way, make way for Christ the King <https://youtu.be/tK6XuYhL7JI?si=sRM2JNWwaVr95yof>

Lots of people didn’t like Jesus. You might find that surprising, but it’s really not. You see, a lot of people thought they were clever. They thought they knew all about God. They thought they had worked out what to do. They thought everybody should do what they said.

But Jesus really did know about God. He knew what God wanted, and it wasn’t always what the important people thought it was. They tried to trick Jesus, they even used poor people and sick people as ways to try trick Jesus.

One Sabbath (that’s the Jewish equivalent of Sunday) they asked Jesus if it was alright to heal someone on the Sabbath. They had a man with a paralysed hand with them who needed to be healed, but healing was seen as work, and you weren’t allowed to work on the Sabbath.

But Jesus didn’t just give them an answer. He asked them, “if you have a sheep and it falls into a big hole, won’t you pull it out? Isn’t a person worth more than a sheep? It is perfectly right to do good things on the Sabath!” Then he told the man to stretch out his hand and when he did it was healed so it was just like his other hand.

This made some people hate Jesus.

We’re going to make sheep to remember this story.

Let’s pray.

Dear God, help us to learn what you really want from us, and what you want us to do. Help us to learn to love you and other people too.

Amen

Sing He’s got the whole world in his hands <https://youtu.be/PJhV_6vrGaE>

Next Messy Church is 16th December. See you then.

Enjoy our celebration on the Harlington Methodist Church YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTMWR_QCxujkh1zHjTFcoJw>

Then have tea or a treat if it isn’t tea time!

If you send me pictures of anything you do, I will share them on the Church Facebook page (if you want to send pictures that you don’t want shared, just tell me. I’ll only share the one’s you’re happy to share.)

Harlington Messy Church Team

We’ll have a Zoom meeting open for those who can’t come to the church. Our end of Zoom will go on YouTube during the celebration, but we won’t put pictures from your end on. Contact me if you want the link for Zoom. Look out for the broadcast on the Harlington Methodist Church YouTube Channel. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTMWR_QCxujkh1zHjTFcoJw/videos>