

# MESSAGE- Living with clarity or confusion

3 April 2022 – Lent 5

## BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 34:1-8 (responsively)

I will bless the Lord at all times;

**his praise will always be on my lips.**

I will glory in the Lord;

let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

**Glorify the Lord with me:**

**let us exalt his name together.**

I sought the Lord, and he answered me;

**he delivered me from all my fears.**

Those who look to him are radiant;

**their faces are never covered with shame.**

This poor man called, and the Lord heard him;

**he saved him out of all his troubles.**

Taste and see that the Lord is good;

**blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.**

Luke 18:31-43

Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, 'We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.' The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.

As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.'

He called out, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'

Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'

Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?'

'Lord, I want to see,' he replied.

Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.' Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God.

MESSAGE Living with clarity or confusion

Perspective is our attitude or point of view on a particular issue ...

So just this week, for instance, the Treasurer has handed down the **Federal Budget**.



**yahoo! finance** **BUDGET 2022**

**WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

- **Fuel excise cut** by 50% to 22.1c per litre for 6 months, effective tonight
- **\$420 tax offset** for over 10 million low-to-middle income earners (earning < \$126,000 a year)
- **\$250 one-off payment** for 6 million social security and welfare recipients
- **\$6 billion** expected for flood disaster relief
- **Budget deficit** will be \$78 billion

From one perspective it looks like a carefully calculated series of promises of modest but welcome give-aways to address current cost of living pressures.

From another perspective it looks like a series of bribes to make people want to re-elect the government, but it fails to address many of the long-term issues we face as a country – things like addressing climate change, making housing more affordable, or making jobs more secure or better paid.



From yet another perspective it will offer permanent humanitarian visas to a further 16,500 Afghans over the next four years, which will help these Afghan families make a fresh start in Australia.

So, after the Budget, are we clearer or more confused about the intentions of the government? It all depends on our perspective.

Turning to our Gospel reading for today, from **Jesus'** perspective, he's made it very clear to the disciples what to expect when they reach the end of their journey in Jerusalem. He fully expects to be handed over to the Gentiles – the Romans – who will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. That's all pretty grim but also quite clear. The mysterious bit is Jesus' final prediction that on the third day he will rise again.



But where Jesus is **clear**, the disciples seem quite **confused**. They don't get it. They don't **understand**. Their minds can't grasp what Jesus is saying.

Uniting Church NT scholar Bill Loader, captures their confused state of mind in this retelling of what happened as Jesus passed through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem ...

That blind man in Jericho.

Why did he cry out?

Why interrupt our journey?

There's too much to do, too far to go.

Jesus is someone **special**.

He's on a **mission**, a **mission** to the holy city.

God is waiting for him there.

There will be **triumph** and **glory**.

They will hail him as **king**, the Son of David!

There's no time to stop.

In a moment we'll pass him by, that blind man;

he'll be gone like a fleeting image

and we will move on,

gathering branches for the big entrance into Jerusalem.

Let him fade from memory;

leave him by the side of the road.



let the Samaritans or someone else help him.

Jesus was ahead of us,  
Now he's nowhere to be seen.

I rushed on, walking with the other pilgrims going up to Jerusalem.

Where was Jesus?

Speaking with someone else, **up a tree?**

And wanting to stop and **eat** with him, a tax collector called Zacchaeus!

Then, suddenly, I saw the blind man –  
Bartimaeus was his name apparently –  
coming up behind us and Jesus was with him.

Jesus must have really **lost his way**.



Luke doesn't name the blind man as Bartimaeus, but does capture for us his **clear perspective**.

First, he is clear **who Jesus of Nazareth is**. He calls him Son of David, which is a messianic title. So Bartimaeus recognizes Jesus as king or messiah.

Next, Bartimaeus is clear about his **need**. He calls on Jesus to have mercy on him, insistently and loudly. Jesus hears his cries, stops and speaks with him, asking what he wants. Unlike most blind beggars, Bartimaeus doesn't want money. He clearly wants something much more important than money – let me see again, he pleads with Jesus!



It's also clear that Bartimaeus has heard of Jesus' **power to heal** and fully expects Jesus to restore his sight, which is what happens. Jesus comments 'your faith has healed you'.

Finally, Bartimaeus is clear that he wants to **follow Jesus**. He praises God for the

healing and follows Jesus on the road up towards Jerusalem.

So from Luke's perspective, Bartimaeus, the blind man, 'sees' clearly – who Jesus is, what Jesus can do and where Jesus is going. By contrast, the disciples – who have spent considerably more time with Jesus – are **confused** about Jesus. They can only see Jesus as a **triumphant Messiah** who is about to take his rightful place in Jerusalem. As we know, when the heat comes on they will variously betray Jesus, deny Jesus and desert Jesus.

They do **not** understand what is about to happen.

Coming back to our days, another recent high profile event was **Ash Barty** announcing her retirement from professional tennis.



It seems that most of her tennis colleagues and rivals, most of the media and most of her many fans – including some of us perhaps – were completely blindsided and confused by her announcement.



Barty is just 25 years old, and last year won Wimbledon. Earlier this year she thrilled local tennis fans by becoming the Australian to win the Australian Open in more than 40 years. She has been the world's number one ranked female tennis player for over two years ... and

is clearly a great tennis player at the height of her powers.

So why would she retire **now**? Why give up on a career that presumably had many more years and many highlights ahead? Sure, she is engaged to be married, but that hasn't prevented other top tennis players from continuing in the sport. And yes, she finds the constant travelling a drag, especially during covid. But heck, that's just part of being a tennis professional.

But if we listen to what Barty said about her retirement – in between the tears and the smiles – she has a very **clear** perspective on her **life** and her **goals**.



Tennis didn't define her. Winning or losing matches didn't define her or make her happy. Rather tennis was her **job** – and she was mighty good at it – but other things were **more important** – like her **family** and the people around her. Barty is very **clear** about who she is and what she wants to do – and is not controlled by the expectations of others. A characteristic she shares with Jesus.

Jesus was clear about his identity as God's Son and his calling as a prophet, a preacher, a healer and as a mentor to the disciples. Most other things were a distraction for him. But I wonder about us and whether we are **clear** or **confused** about who **we** are and what **we** are called to do.

How do we see ourselves? And does this change as we grow older?  
How are we influencing the lives of others?

This morning we have mostly been focusing on **individuals**, but the same questions are worth asking for us as a community of faith. How clear are we about our identity and our calling and how this might have changed over the years. What are we clear about? What are we confused about?

Are there aspects of our life that we could 'retire'?

Are there new things that God is calling us to embrace?

Later on this morning, the community here at Croydon will be holding its AGM, which is a good opportunity to reflect on our life together both from a rearview mirror perspective but also from a forward looking perspective.

May God give us both wisdom and courage as we contemplate the road ahead.