

# End the Week with CME - October 16, 2009

16th Oct 2009

Welcome to End the Week with CME! This weekly email is sent automatically to Clergy and Readers in the diocese (if you don't want to receive it, please send an email to [CovEW-unsubscribe@lists.covlec.org](mailto:CovEW-unsubscribe@lists.covlec.org)) but anyone is welcome to subscribe to the list, and we are especially keen to pass it on to any interested lay people, especially those who may have responsibility for preaching. To subscribe they simply need to email [CovEW-subscribe@lists.covlec.org](mailto:CovEW-subscribe@lists.covlec.org).

*Welcome back to End the Week. We're sorry that it was missing for the last two weeks due to illness. Normal service should now be resumed for the rest of the year!*

## Special Book Offer

My **SCM Core Text: New Testament** came out on Wednesday. It's an introduction to the New Testament, and some bits will be familiar to regular End the Week readers! It offers a fresh perspective for those who have been studying the NT for a long time as well as those who are just beginning, and is, I hope, readable and easy to follow. It provides a way in to some of the latest thinking about the New Testament and Jesus himself. The contents list can be seen at (diocesan resources page).

The RRP is £24.99 but by passing on the author discount I can offer you a copy for £17.50 (a saving of £3.74 on the Amazon price!). To reserve a copy please email [Sarah.Palmer@CovCofE.org](mailto:Sarah.Palmer@CovCofE.org) and we'll let you know when the copies arrive to be collected from the Cathedral and Diocesan Offices, or make alternative arrangements. Clergy will be able to collect copies at the Bishop's Study Day on 2 November.

## St John's Advent Book 2009

The new St John's College Advent Book for 2009 is now available direct from the college at £4.99 per copy.

**Anticipating the coming King** contains a series of readings covering the Advent period. The meditations and prayers have been written by staff and students at St John's College. As you are well aware, the season of Advent is a busy time in the life of the church. Clergy and Readers often find themselves right at the centre of this whirlwind of activity. Our prayer is that the Advent book we produce will bless those who read it by providing a framework for them to stop, think and pray. The book now includes a weekly resource for group reflection by popular demand.

All profit from the sale of the books will be used for the student bursary fund and the College development fund.

If you are interested in buying for a number of church members, we may be able to offer a bulk discount. Please contact us at your convenience to advise how many books you may require. Please contact Ruth Taylor on 0115 925 1114.

To order online, go to <http://www.stjohns-nottm.ac.uk/show/66>

## **Bishop's Certificate in Discipleship 2009-2010 Programme**

The new BCD programme can be found at <http://www.coventry.anglican.org/ministry/training/> as well as our general leaflet, FAQs and a registration form if you wish to register to complete the full certificate.

There's a whole range of exciting modules available for lay people. You can book, or send any queries, by emailing by emailing Sarah Palmer at [cme@covcofe.org](mailto:cme@covcofe.org).

## **CME Events Coming Up**

***Special Offer available – book three CME courses and we will invoice you for only two of them. This offer only applies until 2 November so please act now!***

## **Safeguarding Children and Young People**

This training will be based on the new Diocesan Guidelines and will cover all aspects of safeguarding, including types and indicators of abuse, how sex offenders operate, what to do if a disclosure is made, making a referral to Children's Social Care, ex-offenders in the Church, safe recruitment, Criminal Records Bureau and the Independent Safeguarding Authority. The training days will be led by Carol Clarke, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

**Monday 19 October**, 10am-3pm at St Margaret's Chapter House, Whitnash

**Tuesday 17 November**, 10am-3pm at St Peter's Church Centre, Wellesbourne

**Thursday 10 December**, 10am-3pm at Holy Trinity, Attleborough

This training is free. Please book through [cme@covcofe.org](mailto:cme@covcofe.org).

## **November 25, 2009 - Handling the Past**

How can we understand the role of historic churches as a positive mission opportunity rather than a negative burden? On this study day we shall look at Victorian strategy for mission, the situation we're in today, and share some ideas about the future.

An historic churches study day with Richard Cooke, Helen McGowan and Claire Strachan. Wednesday 25 November at St John the Baptist, Berkswell, 10am-3pm. Cost: £40 (including lunch). Grants of half the cost are available for clergy and Readers. Book through [cme@covcofe.org](mailto:cme@covcofe.org).

## **February 1, 2010 - Reconciliation**

A study day on the theme of Reconciliation with Canon David Porter (Coventry Cathedral). Monday 1 February at Red Hill Christian Centre, 10am-3pm with an abbreviated repeat from 7.30-9.30pm. Cost: £40 (including lunch) for the daytime course, £17.50 (including coffee and cakes) for the evening. Grants of half the cost are available for clergy and Readers. Book through [cme@covcofe.org](mailto:cme@covcofe.org).

## **February 25, 2010 - Mercy-Shaped Ministry**

'Since it is by God's mercy we have this ministry we do not lose heart'. 2 Cor 4.

Ministry is demanding and costly but Paul insists its source is God's mercy before all else. A day reflecting on what it means to live by the mercy of God and exploring what a mercy-shaped church might look like.

Through the day there will be input, prayer, personal space and shared discussion time.

A study day with David Runcorn, Thursday 25 February at Offa House, 10am-3pm with an abbreviated repeat from 7.30-9.30pm. Cost: £40 (including lunch) for the daytime course, £17.50 (including coffee and cakes) for the evening. Grants of half the cost are available for clergy and Readers. Book through [cme@covcofe.org](mailto:cme@covcofe.org).

## **April 22, 2010 - Seeking the Angel of the Church**

'To the angel of the church write...'

Churches and communities, like individuals, have their own character and spirit. The reason long term transformation is often missing is because the spirit has not been named and ministered to. Based on the work of Walter Wink, a day exploring the name and character and 'angel' of our communities and how to minister to them.

A study day with David Runcorn, Thursday 22 April at Red Hill Christian Centre, 10am-3pm with an abbreviated repeat from 7.30-9.30pm. Cost: £40 (including lunch) for the daytime course, £17.50 (including coffee and cakes) for the evening. Grants of half the cost are available for clergy and Readers. Book through [cme@covcofe.org](mailto:cme@covcofe.org).

## **April 27, 2010 - Learning from Luke**

A Bible Reflection day with Paula Gooder and Richard Cooke. Tuesday 27 April at Offa House, 10am-3pm with an abbreviated repeat from 7.30-9.30pm. Cost: £40 (including lunch) for the daytime course, £17.50 (including coffee and cakes) for the evening. Grants of half the cost are available for clergy and Readers. Book through [cme@covcofe.org](mailto:cme@covcofe.org).

## July 6, 2010 - Spanish Mystics

A Spirituality Reflection Day with Ruth Tuschling, Tuesday 6 July at Offa House, 10am-3pm with an abbreviated repeat from 7.30-9.30pm. Cost: £40 (including lunch) for the daytime course, £17.50 (including coffee and cakes) for the evening. Grants of half the cost are available for clergy and Readers. Book through [cme@covcofe.org](mailto:cme@covcofe.org).

## Other Events Coming Up

### Diocesan Board of Education Continuing Professional Development Opportunities

3rd November 2009 - **Transforming Collective Worship: A little light liturgy for pupils** 9.30am-3.30pm at Red Hill Christian Centre, Snitterfield, Stratford upon Avon CV37 0PQ

10th November 2009 - **Being a Governor in a Church School – An Introductory Session - Exploring the Roles and Responsibilities of Governors in Church Schools** 7-9.00pm at Clifton upon Dunsmore CofE Primary School, Main Street, Clifton, Rugby CV23 0BT

To book: contact Joanne Evans on 02476 521250 or email [joanne.evans@covcofe.org](mailto:joanne.evans@covcofe.org). A full list of the courses can be downloaded from <http://www.covdioc.org.uk/courses%20and%20conferences.htm>

## Ministry Where You Work?

Saturday 21 November 2009, 9am - 12.30pm at St Margaret's Chapter House, Whitnash (tea and coffee will be available) followed by a pub lunch (at your own cost) for those who would like to stay.

This is an invitation to all readers, OLMs and NSMs in the Coventry Diocese to attend a half-day workshop exploring 'What Sacraments Do I Discover At Work?' The programme will allow time to talk about what you actually do at work, and to explore how this might be ministry. In particular, the sacraments discovered in the course of that work will be explored. As well as talking together, there will be work in small groups and time for individual reflection. There will also be time for prayer, focussed on the issues of the workplaces discussed.

To book, or to request further information, please contact Revd Dr Felicity Smith on 01926 492452 or at [felicity@fandi.me.uk](mailto:felicity@fandi.me.uk)

## **Preaching and Teaching about Science and Religion - a discussion group**

The Darwin 150 celebrations this year, and the continuing activity of few well known 'public figures' have combined to bring publicity to the interaction between science and religion. There have been strong views expressed from both sides of the (assumed) divide, promoting standpoints of either strict biblical or strict scientific infallibility. Preachers and Teachers in the churches are faced with the need to respond to the concerns raised whilst taking into account the scientific and theological backgrounds of their congregations.

The purpose of establishing this discussion group is to allow for the exchange of ideas, experiences and resources, so that those who 'labour in the vineyard' are enabled to learn from one another and so aid the understanding of those for whom they 'preach and teach'

The first meeting is on Thursday 26th November 2009 at 7.00 p.m at The Queen's Foundation, Somerset Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2QH

If you would like to attend, please contact Revd. Dr Adam Hood at [hooda@queens.ac.uk](mailto:hooda@queens.ac.uk) or John Parkin at [john.parkin@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:john.parkin@blueyonder.co.uk)

For details of all the events coming up, which have been advertised in recent editions of End the Week, please go to <http://www.coventry.anglican.org/ministry/learning/trainingstudy/>

## **Notes on the Gospel Readings for Sunday 25 October (Last after Trinity)**

### **Mark 10. 46-52**

### **Blind Bartimaeus**

Have you come across 'spoiler alerts'? You'll find them when the plot of a film or book is discussed on the internet and they're there in case you haven't yet seen the film or read the book in question, because what is written next may spoil your enjoyment if you read it next.

So here's a spoiler alert, because I want to talk for a while about Danny Boyle's Slumdog Millionaire, last

Spring's Oscar-winning film set in India. If you haven't seen it and want to do so, I hope this next bit doesn't spoil the film for you!

In *Slumdog* a group of child beggars earn a living for themselves, supervised by a kindly adult who transports them to the centre of the city where they can beg. Some of the children are blind and they are the big earners as people take pity on them and give them money. But it soon becomes clear that something more sinister is really going on. The motives of the man who runs the group are not as good as they seem. He himself takes a good living from the children on the pretext of providing food, lodging and transport for them. And then, in a horrific scene, we find that there's even more to the business of begging. [SPOILER ALERT] Because this man takes children from the street and then deliberately blinds the most appealing looking ones to maximise the profit. In this society blindness might be an economic asset to be exploited. (The rest of the film takes the story in different directions, and while it's not exactly the 'feelgood movie' which some of the advertising suggested, if you've not seen it yet it really is worth a viewing.)

We look at blindness as a disability, but as *Slumdog Millionaire* shows, in some places it can be turned to economic advantage. This is true of Bartimaeus, the blind beggar of Jericho (Mark 10.46-52).

It was not true of all blind people in Jesus' time. The blind man at Bethsaida, for example, seems not to be in the same category as Bartimaeus (Mark 8.22-25). His friends bring him to Jesus to be healed, as is characteristic of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. The story of this blind man's 'first unclouded seeing' (a phrase coined by the blind poet Evangeline Patterson) is richly symbolic as it is the prelude to Peter's own first clear sight that Jesus is the messiah and the vision of Jesus in the transfiguration (Mark 8.29-9.8). But this man seems to be definitely disabled, unable to earn his living and probably struggling to make ends meet.

Bartimaeus is a different kind of blind man. He has his pitch, just outside the Jerusalem gate at Jericho, on the busy road down which vast numbers of pilgrims, the joy of God in their hearts and pockets filled with money saved all year to spend at the Passover festival in Jerusalem, pass. His cloak is spread out before him to receive the alms of the generous pilgrims (Mark 10.50). His income wasn't on a par with the other Jericho resident we know about, Zacchaeus (Luke 19.1-9), but Jericho profited very nicely from its situation and its inhabitants knew how to make the most of the money that flowed through their city. Bartimaeus had almost certainly turned his disability to advantage. A blind man in honey-pot Jericho is very different from one up north in struggling Bethsaida.

Dog-collars are good targets for Big Issue sellers. After all, if a vicar won't show charity out of their Christian faith, who will? Jesus falls into the same kind of category in this story. He's a good target. I suspect that, as in *Slumdog Millionaire*, Bartimaeus had some accomplices with sharp eyesight, from whom he hears that Jesus of Nazareth is coming (Mark 10.47). This is the kind of sting they wait for: a religious leader with lots of followers ready to show their piety by some extravagant giving (and some of Jesus' followers seem to have been pretty well-heeled, Luke 8.3). 'Son of David' – a nice bit of flattery here – 'Jesus, have mercy on me' (Mark 10.47, 48). It's a confrontation. How will Jesus react?

Bartimaeus's basic cry is his standard one: 'have mercy on me' means 'give me alms'. Jesus, if he's all he's cracked up to be, will surely have to produce some money himself or at least have a whip-round amongst the disciples. This could be good business.

Instead of just tossing money at another blind beggar by the wayside, even a famous one with a loud voice, Jesus stops and calls him (Mark 10.49). Here the scene morphs from a standard pilgrim experience, repeated hundreds of times in the lead-up to Passover, into an electric moment where the Kingdom of God is suddenly present.

Why do Bartimaeus's companions call on him to 'have courage' or 'be cheerful' (Mark 10.49)? It's a slim

basis, admittedly, but it's this little comment which leads me to believe that there was some kind of scam going on here. The implication is that, somehow, Bartimaeus is about to be found out and rebuked, perhaps for taking advantage of the generosity of others. After all, Jesus was pretty stern in his condemnations who used the provisions of the Law to their own advantage, as Bartimaeus may have been doing (perhaps this is why the companions of Bartimaeus abruptly change their tune when they see Jesus is making a bee-line for him, Mark 10.48). Beggars were supposed to take what they needed, not amass fortunes. Maybe Bartimaeus or his minder had a mansion with a swimming pool next door to Zacchaeus in Jericho's executive quarter.

So Jesus' question, 'What do you want me to do for you?' (Mark 10.51) may be calling Bartimaeus's bluff. Read one way it can be an enquiry whether Bartimaeus really needs Jesus' money. Read another it's a question which reaches to the depths of Bartimaeus's identity. What does he really want? More money - or something else? If Bartimaeus is really seeking God's mercy, what is the true desire of his heart?

Perhaps Bartimaeus too was surprised by the words he heard rise out of his mouth. 'Rabboni' (a form of address only used in this gospel so far only by Peter at the transfiguration, Mark 9.5) 'let me see again' (Mark 10.51). This will make him worse off. It will also kill the goose that lays the golden eggs as far as his companions are concerned. But it's what he really wants. Jesus grants his request and tells him 'Go your way' (Mark 10.52).

John Hull, a blind theologian himself, comments that 'The words of Jesus are given fresh meaning when we think of them from the point of view of Bartimaeus. "Go your way." In his life as a blind person he had not been able to go his own way, but had depended upon others and had to follow the ways that they chose. Now at last he can go his own way.' (In the Beginning there was Darkness: a blind person's conversations with the Bible SCM Press, 2001, p.44.) Jesus offers Bartimaeus sight, but more than that he offers liberation from the constraints of the past.

Briefly, succinctly, in characteristically abrupt fashion, Mark offers a final and surprising twist that it's easy to miss. 'And he followed him on the road' (Mark 10.52). Bartimaeus, offered his freedom by Jesus, at once surrenders it back. He joins the crowd of pilgrims heading to Jerusalem which has passed him by for so long. He enlists in Jesus' ramshackle army of ex-lepers, the lame and the blind; beggars and rich people, fishermen and tax-collectors, children, former prostitutes. Together they are bringing the Kingdom of God to Jerusalem. Just as the revelation of who Jesus really is, at Caesarea Philippi and on the mountain of transfiguration, followed the healing of the blind man in Bethsaida, so now in Jerusalem Jesus will be revealed as the real son of David, the true king who reigns from the cross, after the healing of Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus, ex-celebrity beggar at the Jerusalem gate, Jericho, will be there to witness it. For him perhaps the moment of Jesus' crucifixion will be, as it is for the centurion (Mark 15.39) 'the first unclouded seeing.'

(I'm grateful to Helen Cameron from Cuddesdon College for the link between this passage and Slumdog Millionaire.)

## And Finally...

You may have heard that Barack Obama has just received the Nobel Peace Prize, but did you hear about the local campanologists whose ringing is so loud, they have been awarded the No Peace Bell prize?

**That's all, folks!**

**Richard**

**Richard Cooke**

**Coventry CME**

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