

Wishful Thinking? The story of Bartimaeus

A positive kind of hope

Aims

To encourage us to develop positive hope in ourselves.

Assembly

Ask the children what they think is the difference between the meanings of the words 'wish' and 'hope'. You may like to read out the dictionary definitions. ('Wish' means to feel or express a strong desire or hope for something that cannot or probably will not happen; 'hope' means to want something to happen or be the case.) It seems that a wish is something that we can't really influence, although we would like it to come true. Hope, on the other hand, suggests a greater chance of something actually happening.

Explain that the theme for today's worship is 'hope', and that later in the assembly there will be a story about a man who hoped that Jesus could help him.

Ask the children to try to imagine what it would be like if they could never see because they were blind and they had to learn to rely on their other senses instead.

Tell the children the story of Bartimaeus from the Bible (Mark 10.46-52) using the story below.

One day, Jesus was walking along the road towards a town called Jericho. At the side of the road sat a blind man called Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus could hear lots of people walking by, so he called out, 'Who is coming along the road?'

'It's Jesus of Nazareth,' replied someone from the crowd.

Immediately, Bartimaeus cried out in a loud voice, 'Jesus! Son of David! Take pity on me!'

The people standing in front of him told him off. 'Be quiet!' they said. 'He's not interested in you!'

This just made Bartimaeus shout even louder, 'Jesus! Son of David! Take pity on me!'

Jesus stopped and asked someone to bring the blind man to him.

'What do you want me to do for you?' Jesus asked.

'Sir,' Bartimaeus said, 'I just want to see again.'

Jesus said to him, 'Then see! Your faith has made you well!'

At once, Bartimaeus was able to see and he started following Jesus, praising God as he went.

When the crowd saw what had happened, they praised God, too.

Time for reflection

In the story, the man called Bartimaeus was desperate to be able to see, so he put his hope in someone he thought could help him – Jesus.

Ask the children to turn to the person next to them and discuss the following questions.

- Why do you think Bartimaeus might have been a beggar?
- How do you think Bartimaeus must have felt when he realized that Jesus had healed him and that he could now see?
- Years 1–3: What new things do you think Bartimaeus would have done after he could see?
- Years 4–6: Is there a difference between wishing for something to happen and having hope that something will happen?

That last question is a tricky one!

Often, when we say that we hope something will happen, we often mean that we wish it would happen. If we say 'I hope I get an iPad for my birthday,' what we really mean is that we wish someone would buy us an iPad for our birthday. The kind of hope that Bartimaeus had in our story was a bit different. He didn't just wish that Jesus would make him see – he had the faith to believe that Jesus could make him see and he took action to make his hopes become a reality. This is a very positive kind of hope – the kind of hope that means that you really believe that something can change for the better and you are willing to do something about it.

- What are your hopes for the future?
- What are your hopes for this coming year?
- Are you willing to take the positive steps necessary to make your hopes become a reality?

Christians believe that God is interested in every aspect of their lives. They believe that they can ask God to help them fulfil their hopes.

Prayer

Dear Lord,

Thank you for today's story about Bartimaeus.

Thank you that Bartimaeus' dream came true and that he was able to see again.

Please help us as we move through this year and through the rest of our lives.

Help us to dream big dreams and never to give up hope.

Amen.