Sermon: **What do you want me to do for you?** (Mark 10.51)

Jesus liked asking questions, often as a way of challenge. In Mark’s gospel only three times does he ask a question to someone needing his help. 8.23: “Can you see anything?” checking whether the healing was happening. Two others that seem odd, 5.9: “What is your name?” to a man with a legion of evil spirits and TEXT. The former based on power (if you knew the name you had power over the spirits), the latter TEXT still seems odd.

Simple question, with an obvious answer, so why ask it? There may be two answers:

[1] Is the answer so obvious?
The man is blind! He appears to be an impoverished beggar! Isn’t it patently obvious what the man wants? Why does Jesus have to ask? But Bartimaeus may want something else, he may have got used to being cared for, he may have heightened his other senses to compensate.

In a TV series there is one character called Alex who has cerebral palsy and is frustrated that he cannot get a girlfriend. At heart he *wants* to be loved; a cure, though important, is secondary.

[2] Bartimaeus still needs to ask

Parishes often struggle with ideas for mission and come up with all sorts of initiatives - helping those on drugs, youth club, soup kitchen, family services to ‘get them in’. Trouble is that those targeted may not only not want what is on offer, but feel they are being patronised, that they are merely helping the parish feel better about themselves.

A busy presbyter in a supermarket queue, grew impatient as a woman swapped coupons for groceries. With insufficient money, she one by one began elim­inating items till they met what she did have. Impatient, and needing to be at a church meeting, the presbyter put money on the counter to make up the difference. More to get on his way than to help her. She kept returning items from her basket. Confused & cross that one in apparent need refused his charity, he asked why his gift wasn’t welcomed. “You didn’t ask me,” she replied.

In our story Jesus stood, listened & then TEXT. How might this question help us to reimagine the way we serve? It is vital we don’t try to answer a question not asked, or satisfy a need not requested.

It is all about dignity & respect. One reason (& only one) why some refuse vaccinations is that they feel their dignity & respect are being infringed & that they are being patronised by *pakeha* in power.

This is why we need to pray – God says TEXT and needs to know what we are truly seeking, for ourselves, our church and our community.