

Mark 10:46-52

⁴⁶ Jesus and his followers came into Jericho. As Jesus was leaving Jericho, together with his disciples and a sizable crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, Timaeus' son, was sitting beside the road. ⁴⁷ When he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was there, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, show me mercy!" ⁴⁸ Many scolded him, telling him to be quiet, but he shouted even louder, "Son of David, show me mercy!"

⁴⁹ Jesus stopped and said, "Call him forward." They called the blind man, "Be encouraged! Get up! He's calling you." ⁵⁰ Throwing his coat to the side, he jumped up and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said, "Teacher, I want to see." ⁵² Jesus said, "Go, your faith has healed you." At once he was able to see, and he began to follow Jesus on the way.

Begging to See the Way

Mark 10:46-52

Jesus is on the last leg of his journey. As we've seen for the past month, he is headed for Jerusalem and he invites his disciples, and us, to join him - yet his disciples cannot see it. Jesus is headed for persecution, torture and death. The controversy his ministry has created will finally come to a sharp focus, the cross. The opposition will grow from whispered expressions of suspicion into a shrill shout for the death penalty.

Soon they will shout "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And as we see from our perspective of 2,000 years, we know Jesus will be crucified - but the disciples cannot see it. They were blind.

Jesus is moving toward Jerusalem, toward suffering and death but the disciples don't understand. They cannot see what following Jesus is really all about. They do not see the way.

Jesus tries to teach them. Three times in Mark's gospel between chapter 8 and chapter 10. Three times! Three times Jesus tried to teach them he is going to die! He told them he will be called upon to make sacrifices, but they do not see it.

Peter vehemently resists when Jesus suggests that suffering and death lay ahead. James and John think they are headed to a victory party and ask for the seat of honor. These three, Jesus' closest disciples simply do not understand. They cannot see what is coming.

Then we come to Bartimaeus, dear Bartimaeus. Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem with his disciples. They pass through Jericho. A blind beggar, Bartimaeus, is there on the street and boldly cries out to Jesus, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Master, let me receive my sight." "Go your way, your faith had made you well."

I find it fascinating when Jesus addresses Bartimaeus, he asks the same question he asked James and John, just last week. "What do you want me to do for you?" James and John wanted Glory. "When you come into your kingdom allow us to sit at your right and left." Fred Craddock says, "With their request their *blindness* is complete." By their answer we can see that they don't see.

James and John are not the only ones to be blinded to the way Jesus sets out for us. The scriptures are full: Remember the rich, young ruler who wanted to follow so badly until he realized the cost?

In Matthew 25, the separation of the sheep and the goats. The goats reply, "If we had known it was you..." They didn't see the way.

Bartimaeus wants his sight and his faith makes him well.

It is perhaps only Solomon, young 21-year-old ruler of Israel, who saw the way. In 1 Kings, God tells Solomon, "Ask for whatever you want me to do for you." Solomon asks for wisdom, not power, not money, not fame, not security, not peace, not house nor home, but wisdom: "A discerning heart to govern and to distinguish right from wrong." Eyes to see and a heart to respond.

Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" How would you respond?

John Claypool, the once Baptist minister, then Episcopal priest said, "If all possibilities are open and there are no limits, then what one chooses in such a moment is an accurate reflection of what he or she really is and what he or she really values in life." What do you value in life? Health, wealth, power, popularity, peace, wholeness, a servant's heart? Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" How would you respond? It is a revealing question.

At the risk of being repetitive I'm building a case here – or rather Mark is building a case. A rich man sees and will not follow. Two disciples are blinded by ambition, so they cannot see. Then here comes Bartimaeus who is blind and knows it. Unlike James and John, Bartimaeus knows he does not see...and unlike the rich man, when Bartimaeus is given the gift of sight, he follows Jesus.

Mark tells of blindness and sight, of grace to see and courage to follow, follow Jesus. In our Bible study Wednesday, we decided that Bartimaeus demonstrates a bold, assertive, healthy, faithful way to live our faith. He admits he is needy.

He shouts- “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” and when the crowd tells him to shut up, intimating that Jesus should not be bothered by a person such as Bartimaeus, he shouts ever louder: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!!” He knows his need for Jesus.

Jesus demonstrates here two traits that we heard last week from our anonymous relatively new member when they wrote about what attracts them to this congregation. In case you weren't here: they were drawn here by your acceptance and thoughtfulness. Jesus accepted Bartimaeus even though the crowd tried to keep him from Jesus. The crowd wanted to exclude Bartimaeus. Jesus included him. 4

Jesus was thoughtful, “What do you want me to do for you?” How often have you heard a member of this church ask, “Is there anything I can do for you?” I know I've heard that a lot.

What draws us to this church, acceptance and thoughtfulness, is constantly being demonstrated here. These are the marks of the congregation of which I boast so often.

Do you see it? Do we see the kingdom of God already in our midst? Do we see the mission of this church moving us out to reach those in need: to offer acceptance to all and to share thoughtful deeds of compassion? Do we see? Or are we blind?

Jesus asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” Go ahead and answer. With humility and with confidence, we can honestly ponder that question. God's love for us invites us to be who we are, just as we are.

The way is set before us. May we follow. For those who have ears to hear, eyes to see, lips to tell, and hearts to respond. Amen.

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